

# BRIDGING CONSUMER PREFERENCES AND CULTURAL NORMS IN SRI LANKAN LINGERIE RETAIL THROUGH VISUAL MERCHANDISING STRATEGIES

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**Abstract:** This research aims to explore the interplay between Visual Merchandising, Consumer Preferences, and Cultural Norms within the context of Sri Lankan Lingerie retail. As the fashion retail sector in Sri Lanka undergoes transformative shifts, the challenge of aligning modern retail aesthetics with traditional values becomes increasingly significant. This paper seeks to investigate how Visual Merchandising strategies can effectively bridge this gap by resonating with Consumer Preferences while respecting cultural sensitivities. Using a mixed-methods approach that includes interviews, observations, and case studies of selected retail stores, the research intends to uncover successful strategies that enhance consumer engagement, influence purchasing behaviour, and foster a harmonious retail experience. The findings of this research hold practical implications for retailers aiming to create a retail environment that not only meets consumers because it's not only a customer experience but patronage of the brand/ product's lifelong relationship with the consumer.

**Keywords:** Visual Merchandising, Intimate Fashion Retail, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Retail Image, Self-congruity

## 1. Introduction

In the retail sector, Visual Merchandising is an artistic and strategic technique used to attract customers, arouse their interest, and sway their purchasing decisions. To create a captivating retail experience, it includes the imaginative placement of goods, displays, signs, lighting, and other sensory components. In the context of Sri Lanka, a country rich in cultural diversity and traditional values, the integration of Visual Merchandising strategies presents an intriguing challenge and opportunity.

While taking into account cultural influences and societal conventions, it is necessary to explore the specific tactics that appeal to local consumers to apply these findings to the Sri Lankan setting. The lingerie sector, in particular, struggles with social stigmas that limit open discussion and customer acceptance. However, the lingerie market stands out as a distinctive and developing sector in Sri Lanka's retail landscape and has witnessed significant growth, driven by changing consumer preferences, increasing brand awareness, and shifting cultural norms. The importance of Visual Merchandising is becoming increasingly apparent as lingerie stores fight to stand out in this competitive market and attract discriminating customers. On top of that, "Consumer Behaviour is influenced by their personal preferences, contextual aspects such as themes, type of store, and brand or branding, gender, to some extent, the quality of Visual Merchandising display and sensory and cognitive aspects" (Semini, n.d.).

To investigate the relationship between Visual Merchandising and brand preference, and the psychological processes involved in patronage intentions, Park et al., (2015) have developed a framework (refer to Figure 1) adapting "the theories proposed by Keller's (2007) customer-based brand equity model to a retail setting and corporates insights from conceptualization of how the store environment can influence consumers' decision-making (Park et al., 2015 as cited in Baker, 1998; Bitner, 1992).

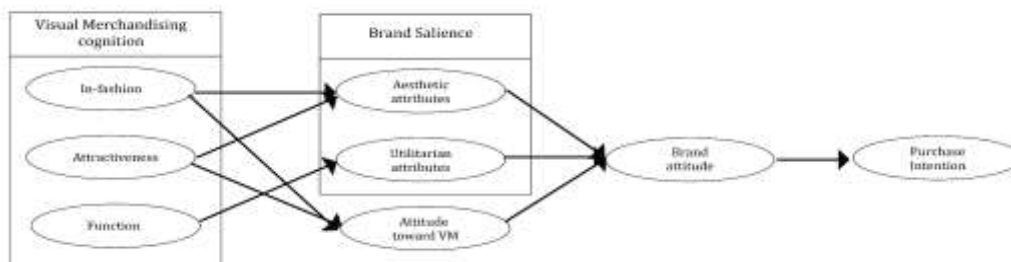


Figure 1, The relationship between visual merchandising and brand preference, and the psychological processes involved in patronage intentions adapted from (Park et al., 2015)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31705/FARU.2024.45>

In essence, understanding and delivering what consumers truly seek is crucial for sustained success. Moreover, consumers' responses can be affected by cultural differences. Chan and Tai (2001) found that Chinese Hong Kong people rely on cultural values (e.g. practical realism) to evaluate store displays and are less susceptible to environmental cues than American consumers. "In ancient times, Chinese women had very low status; they could not wear sexy lingerie to show their breasts. They were ashamed to talk about the lingerie. But in Western culture, people use lingerie to make good body shapes" (Xuan, 2015).

Furthermore, Xuan (2015) clarified that there's a major difference between Chinese culture and US culture when it comes to Lingerie retailing and consumption. Also, Crisnaro (n.d.) pointed out the fact that those two countries had different purposes in the past towards lingerie and still have different grounds between them as mentioned in Figure 2.

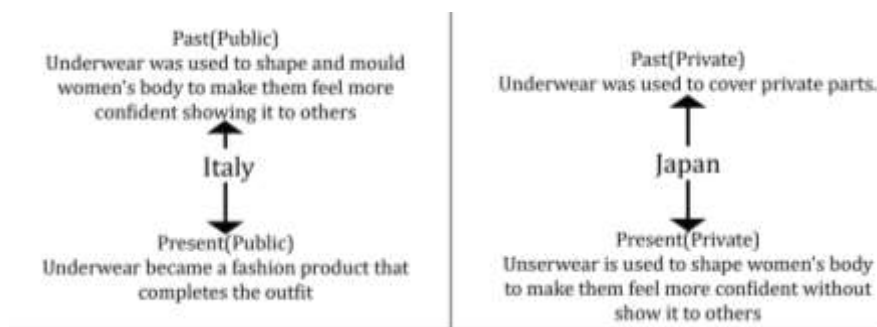


Figure 2, A comparative study of consumer perceptions towards Lingerie between Italy & Japan adapted from (Crisnaro, n.d.)

These research papers refer to how much of a contrast one can perceive between Eastern and Western countries. Moreover, "Sri Lanka is a country that is heavily influenced by Eastern culture. Therefore, the subject 'lingerie' is still considered taboo by most parties" (Wickramasinghe & Liyanage, n.d.). For brands, Sri Lanka's cultural taboos against nudity provide a problem, especially in sectors like lingerie where the items are intimate in nature. This suggests that companies doing business in this area need to be sensitive to and conscious of cultural differences when developing their marketing and product offers. At the end of the day, the diverse demographic and cultural fabric of Sri Lanka necessitates a strategic approach to Visual Merchandising that not only resonates with consumers but also upholds the cultural ethos of the society.

## 2. Importance and the relevance of the study

This paper provides a look into how consumer preferences, cultural norms, and visual merchandising interact in the Sri Lankan lingerie retail environment. The study fills a significant gap in the literature by exploring this particular scenario. It offers insights into the tactics and procedures used by lingerie shops in Sri Lanka through an in-depth study of specific retailers, providing a strong framework for additional research in this field. The study also has an impact outside of academia by offering suggestions for action that are relevant to the Sri Lankan market. This research provides immediate, practical insights and also develops a solid theoretical basis for further investigation by using a hypothetical preliminary rational literature review approach.

## 3. Research Design & Methodology

This paper was conducted from an empirical perspective to provide practical recommendations for lingerie retailers to create an effective and harmonious Visual Merchandising approach that reshapes lingerie, resonates with Sri Lankan consumers and respects cultural values. Table 1 provides a full overview of the research methods which were used to answer the Research Questions and achieve the research objectives. Further, the table highlights all the data collection techniques that were used and what kind of sample strategy was later used to collect data in relevant areas. The final column sums up the data analysis procedure that was carried out by the author.

First, to address Research Question 1, before getting into the core of the research, a pilot study was done on a weekend day within the Colombo city & Negombo city areas, in order to understand the sample areas in Sri Lanka and ultimately to select only 3 retail stores for the case studies. Just for the record, these cities were chosen because they are the exclusive locations of the head offices for lingerie stores in Sri Lanka, indicating the limited options available in the country. Then, an Expert interview was carried out which involved purposive sampling, targeting an individual with specific expertise in the field. The interview was semi structured and conducted via Zoom, allowing for in-depth discussions. The objective was to identify areas where local visual merchandising practices differed from global standards. This dual data collection approach significantly contributed to achieving Research Objective 1. The author carried out three case studies in the selected three shops to resolve Research Question 2. Afterward, a survey was conducted as the second phase which required gathering data in two different stages. First, a carefully planned online survey was used to gather insightful data about the patterns of consumer activity while a series of semi-structured interviews with the marketing teams of particular stores served as the second step. These interviews provided a comprehensive viewpoint from industry experts, highlighting the multifaceted

relationships between cultural influences, visual merchandising tactics, and customer involvement. The integration of case studies and survey techniques provided an in-depth exploration, resulting in addressing Research Objective 2 & 3.

Table 1, The Structures of the Research Design

Research question	Research Objective	Research Method	Data collection method				Areas in which data were collected	Data Analysis Procedure
			Types of data collected	Data Collection Technique	Sampling Strategy	Sample size		
RQ1: How do current VM practices in lingerie retail align with CP and CN?	ROB1: To Examine the current landscape of VM and to identify and analyse VM strategies that successfully align with both consumer expectations and cultural sensitivities locally and globally.	Literary Survey method Survey	Qualitative	Pilot Study	Opportunity sampling	12 (Lingerie retail shops Colombo city & Negombo city )	To get a basic understanding of these strategies' implementation on consumers' mind-set in its natural setting while being in the shoes of a consumer	Descriptive content analysis
			Qualitative	Semi-structured expert interviews	Purposive sampling		to decide on the best retail shops to carry out the case studies and their peak days and times	
RQ2: What is the interplay between CP, CN, and VM strategies in the context of Sri Lankan retail?	ROB2 : To explore the interplay between CP and CN and to assess the impact of these strategies on consumer engagement, purchasing behaviour, and overall retail experience.	Survey	Qualitative	Case Study	Purposive sampling	3 (Selected lingerie retail shops)	To understand how Vm plays a role in SL CBB in lingerie retailing	Thematic data analysis (Grouded theory)
	ROB3 : To provide practical recommendations for lingerie retailers to create an effective and harmonious VM approach that reshapes lingerie, resonates with Sri Lankan consumers, and respects cultural values		Qualitative	Semi-structured open-ended expert interviews	Purposive sampling	4 (1 Global visual merchandiser & 3 marketing teams of particular stores)	To get a comprehensive viewpoint from industry experts, highlighting the multifaceted relationships between cultural influences, VM tactics, and customer involvement	
RQ3: How does this interaction influence consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour?	ROB3 : To provide practical recommendations for lingerie retailers to create an effective and harmonious VM approach that reshapes lingerie, resonates with Sri Lankan consumers, and respects cultural values	Survey	Qualitative	Likert scale based Close-ended online questionnaire	Voluntary response sampling	100 (consumers from a diverse range of regions within the country)	To get first hand & statistical data about the relationship between VM and brand preference, and the psychological processes involved in patronage intentions	statistical data analysis

#### 4. Data collection procedure

The Data collection process consists of three case studies. However, a pilot study was done prior, on a weekend day within the Colombo city & Negombo city areas, to understand the sample areas in Sri Lanka. Just for the record, these cities were chosen because they are the exclusive locations of the head offices for lingerie stores in Sri Lanka, indicating the limited options available in the country.

Table 2, The lingerie retail shops selected for the Pilot study

NO.	RETAIL STORE	THE TYPE OF STORE
1	Amanté -Negombo	Stand-alone Boutique
2	Amanté Boutique - Race-course Mall, Col- 7	Department-store Boutique
3	Gali’s Lingerie- Pelawatta	Stand-alone Boutique
4	Gali’s Lingerie- Nugegoda	Stand-alone Boutique
5	Midnight Divas- Negombo	Stand-alone Boutique
6	Midnight Divas- Stratford Avenue, Col-6	Stand-alone Boutique
7	Midnight Divas- Thurstan Rd., Col-3	Stand-alone Boutique
8	Secrets Boutique- Liberty Plaza, Col-3	Department-store Boutique
9	Senorita Boutique- One Galle Face Mall, Col-2	Department-store Boutique
10	Triumph- Alfred House, Col-3	Stand-alone Boutique
11	Triumph Boutique- Liberty Plaza, Col-3	Department-store Boutique
12	Triumph Boutique- Majestic City, Col-3	Department-store Boutique

Then, three cases were selected out of the above retail stores based on the author's observations & the answers given by the marketing teams of the stores, during pilot studies with consideration to the following criteria.

- Consideration into Visual Merchandising displays, Store atmosphere & Retail image
- Having reliable salespersons/ marketer team who would be down for interviews
- Special attention is given to the exterior and interior of the retail store by an Interior Designer/ Visual Merchandiser or a Salesperson
- Diversity of being a Stand-Alone Boutique (SAB) or Department Store Boutique (DSB)

Selected Three Case studies are:

1. Amanté Boutique - Race Course (RC) Mall, Col-07
2. Gali’s Lingerie - Pelawatta
3. Triumph Boutique - Majestic City (MC), Col-03

#### 4.1. CASE STUDIES

##### 4.1.1. Amanté Boutique - Race Course (RC) Mall, Col-07



Figure 3, Logo of Amanté. Source: Google

Amanté is a Sri Lankan company with a turnover of over one billion dollars. It has 40 factories across Sri Lanka. (Amanté: Aiming to Be India's No. 1 Lingerie Brand, 2013). With decades of experience, Amanté is dedicated to creating intimate wear that perfectly blends comfort, fashion, and thoughtful design. By understanding the South Asian woman, Amanté designs intimate wear tailored to unique silhouettes, styles, and shapes. However, it was confirmed within the context of the pilot study, that Amanté showrooms continuously displayed unique characteristics. Interestingly, the most prominent example of this was the Amanté store at the Racecourse Mall, Col-07.



Figure 4, Store Atmosphere of Amanté - RC Boutique. Source: Google

#### 4.1.2. Gali's Lingerie - Pelawatta



Figure 5: The logo of Gali's Lingerie. Source: Google

Gali's Lingerie is a brand that has been in the market for around ten to eleven years. In Sri Lanka, the landscape of high-quality underwear is dominated by three prominent brands where Gali's is being one of them. Originally specialising in the manufacture of bras and underwear, Gali's Lingerie eventually expanded to include nightwear, sportswear, and lingerie. The brand briefly ventured into the creation of body jewellery, a move that was subsequently discontinued. At its inception, the brand's primary focus was to cater to the needs of working women, emphasising the production of T-shirt bras designed to provide a seamless appearance under office attire.



Figure 6: Store Atmosphere of Gali's Lingerie - RC Boutique. Source: Google

#### 4.1.3. Triumph Boutique - Majestic City (MC), Col-03



Figure 7, Logo of Triumph. Source: Google

“Since 1886, Triumph has dedicated themselves to quality: unrivalled fit, technical craft, comfort without sacrifice. From an atelier based out of a barn in Southern Germany to a global brand with stores across the world – their values remain true”

(Our Story, Triumph.) Having been in the Sri Lankan market since 1995, and being a global leader in the innerwear field, Triumph is well regarded for its high-quality offerings across all 125 countries in which it operates. (Triumph Offers Truly International Quality Lingerie to Suit Every Sri Lankan Woman, 2014). Besides, Wickramasinghe and Liyanage have interestingly analysed how a Global lingerie brand like Triumph has adapted its marketing strategies to align with Sri Lankan cultural norms. They further mentioned that they quickly saw how crucial differentiation and target audience segmentation were to increasing the success of their marketing. They distinguished three main consumer groups which are:

Table 3, Three main consumers according to Triumph (Wickramasinghe & Liyanage, n.d.)

SEGMENTATION OF TARGET AUDIENCE	CHARACTERISTICS
Culture Custodian	More conservative, traditional women
Wannabes	People who want to be fashionable and look smart, but do not have a large pool of disposable income to spend on being so.
Career Warriors	This segment is the main market, they are career-oriented women who thrive in being fashionable, and who have large amounts of disposable income to spend

Furthermore, they highlighted the fact that “Triumph had finally focused on the sectors known as "Wannabes" and "Career Warriors," which are made up of powerful, independent, and style-conscious women between the ages of 18 and 35” (Wickramasinghe & Liyanage, n.d.). Moreover, Triumph was able to adjust its marketing strategy to various consumer groups' unique demands and preferences because of segmentation. That specifically highlights the significance of acknowledging cultural sensitivities.

Based on the findings of the pilot study, it was observed that Triumph's outlet located at MC in Colombo-03 displays better visual merchandising practices & has a reliable marketer team in comparison to other boutiques and it operates as a DSB concept.



Figure 8, Store Atmosphere of Triumph Boutique – MC. Source: Google

After a thorough investigation of the Visual Merchandising strategies each shop follows, a survey was taken place under two phases.

- A Likert scale-based close-ended Online Questionnaire &
- A Semi-structured open-ended Expert interview

## 5. Data Analysis and the Findings

### 5.1 DATA ANALYSIS OF THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Park et al. (2015), the framework presented in Figure 1 was built by the use of multiple measures, as listed in Table 4. Within the context of Sri Lankan lingerie retail, this framework provides a basic structure for exploring the links between Visual Merchandising, brand choice, and the psychological processes behind customer patronage intentions.

Table 4, Multiple measurements used for model testing

Visual Merchandising Cognition	In-Fashion	--New manner of presentation is interesting --Up-to-date fashion was nicely presented through an effective colour scheme and presentation skill --The store nicely conveys a new fashion image because of effective visual merchandising
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	Attractiveness	--The interior design in the store is attractively arranged --I am motivated to walk into the store because of its external appearance, signs, and advertising screen images --Colour combinations are nicely coordinated --Use of appropriate lighting makes merchandise attractive
	Function	--The positions of the dress forms, mannequins, theme-related properties and POP are appropriate --POP displays and sale promotion signs nicely deliver merchandise information --Enough space is given between aisles to allow the customer to move around easily
Brand Salience	Aesthetic attributes	--The design is excellent --The colour is good
	Utilitarian attributes	--It is comfortable --It is nicely coordinated with other clothes --It is easy to manage
	Attitude towards Visual Merchandising	--VM appeals to me --VM is fascinating
	Brand Attitude	--I like xxx brand --I am in Favor of xxx brand --I am pleased about xxx brand --I am satisfied with xxx brand
	Purchase Intention	--In the future, I intend to buy the brand in the store shown in the pictures --I will readily purchase the brand in the store shown in the pictures

The findings of the online questionnaire highlight the beneficial impact that both utilitarian and aesthetic factors have on brand attitude.

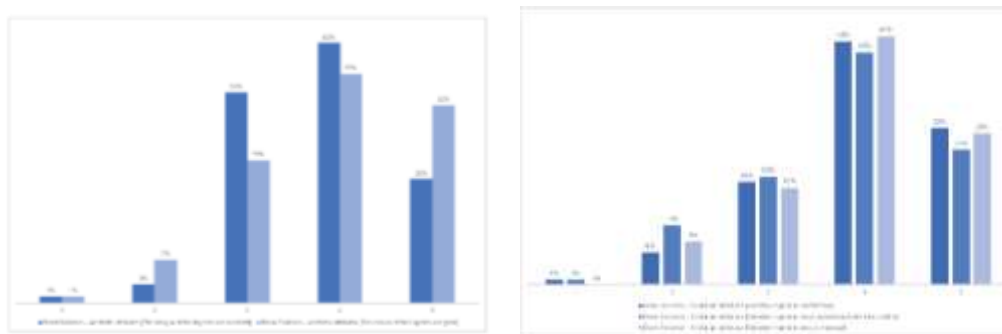


Figure 9, Brand Salience-Aesthetic attributes (left), Brand Salience-Utilitarian attributes (right)

Interestingly, a brand's utilitarian characteristics had a greater influence on creating a positive brand attitude than its visual characteristics which is the total opposite from global platforms.

This implies that while creating their opinions about a brand, Sri Lankan people give more weight to the brand's functional value. Thus, according to Park et al. (2015) “for a fashion brand that emphasises utilitarian attributes, the company needs to consider the functional aspects of Visual Merchandising, such as signage, to appeal to their customers”.

### 5.2 DATA ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERT INTERVIEWS

According to experts in the industry, consumers in Sri Lanka look for products that fit their sociological, physiological, and psychological needs. This pursuit of relatability is known as Self-congruity which “can be thought of as the level of ‘sameness’ that a consumer perceives between herself and her idea of the typical user of a certain brand.” (Sung & Choi, 2010). So that’s how a brand can gain loyalty from a consumer. Self-congruity is impactful on business outcomes since the consumer creates, reinforces, and communicates his or her self-image by purchasing from brands with self-congruent images (Sung & Choi, 2010).

In the case of lingerie brands in Sri Lanka, if they properly apply this approach, it might improve consumer identification with the brand and hence encourage more purchase behaviour. This underscores the potential for Sri Lankan businesses to align their brand strategies with local consumer identities, thereby potentially reaping significant benefits. However, this approach has become a failure due to numerous reasons such as cultural taboos in Sri Lanka.

After a closer look, it was clear that a wide range of causes influenced these events. The modesty preferences of the models are a key trait that stood out during the interviews. It was highlighted that models from Sri Lanka carefully consider whether or not to take part in lingerie photoshoots, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to their own comfort zones. That raises an important question regarding the difficulty of obtaining self-congruity in Sri Lankan lingerie advertisements. The cultural context significantly influences the viewpoints of consumers. Retailers must strike a careful balance between honouring cultural norms and sensitivities while presenting items in an accessible way. However, according to the Brand manager of Gali’s lingerie, they are trying to make their models more approachable and inclusive in their advertisements by trying to match their physique types and skin tones with Sri Lankan bodies. This shows that they are conscious of the diversity of their clientele and are working to improve the usability and appeal of their offerings for a larger market.

However, the consequences of failing to adapt to customer preferences, particularly about self-congruity and cultural sensitivity, can be significant and have an effect on a retailer's overall success and longevity. One of the most significant long-term effects could be the negative brand image. This is especially significant in the modern era of accessible social media when negative experiences and viewpoints tend to spread quickly across consumer networks that are linked. There's a great potential to improve a brand's image by using the same platform that may be utilised to spread unfavourable information about it.

The analysis showed that the discrepancy between the impact of retailers' use of visual merchandising on intimate apparel and consumers' reception of it, especially in the Sri Lankan context, can be better understood when considering Self-congruity in relation to utilitarian attributes. This concept is based on a number of sources, such as retailers' religious convictions, the intimate nature of lingerie, and models' modesty preferences. A significant tendency was revealed by the subjects' reactions to the functional values of lingerie visual merchandising. Apart from conventional factors such as window display, signage, and mannequins, there became a noticeable emphasis on the alignment of the retailer's portrayed body image with the customer's actual body. This phenomenon is relevant not just in the Sri Lankan context but also globally, as female consumers see lingerie as having a significant impact on their sense of femininity. Craik (1994) stated that being female refers to a biological classification whereas being feminine relates to social and cultural attributes.

Anyways, creating long-term solutions is, in fact, a wise way to deal with these issues. Figure 10, as provided by an interviewee, which provides how Makeup businesses showcase their make-up palette work on different skin colours is a great way of showing things simply yet comprehensively. This shows that the company is being proactive in responding to customer psychology. In the Sri Lankan environment, such innovative tactics can greatly support a more successful and long-lasting retailing strategy.



Figure 10, Tactics used by make-up businesses. Source: Amanda Yates

It is important for stores to take the initial step in catering to the feelings and sensitivities of Sri Lankan models, particularly in a society that is culturally conservative. Making use of social media platforms can be a useful strategy for taking the first steps in addressing societal norms and customs as it offers a strong and convenient means of reaching a large audience for communication.

## 6. Findings

According to Ashworth et al. (2006) “lingerie is the most successful fashion product purchased online and has a substantial virtual community.” (Heller, 2022) While social media offers lingerie stores a workable temporary solution to interact with



their clientele, it is crucial to understand that this paradigm could change as the millennial and Gen Z generations continue to develop within the context of a changing social scene. However, the most important and fundamental finding is related to the self-congruity concept. Retailers in Sri Lanka need to change how they think about this aspect. The current framework, which is depicted in Figure 1, requires a modification or improvement. In particular, a new adaptation that goes beyond visual merchandising cognition—specifically, functional values—is required. This addition has a direct impact on utilitarian attributes, which in turn has an indirect impact on purchase intention and a direct impact on brand attitude.

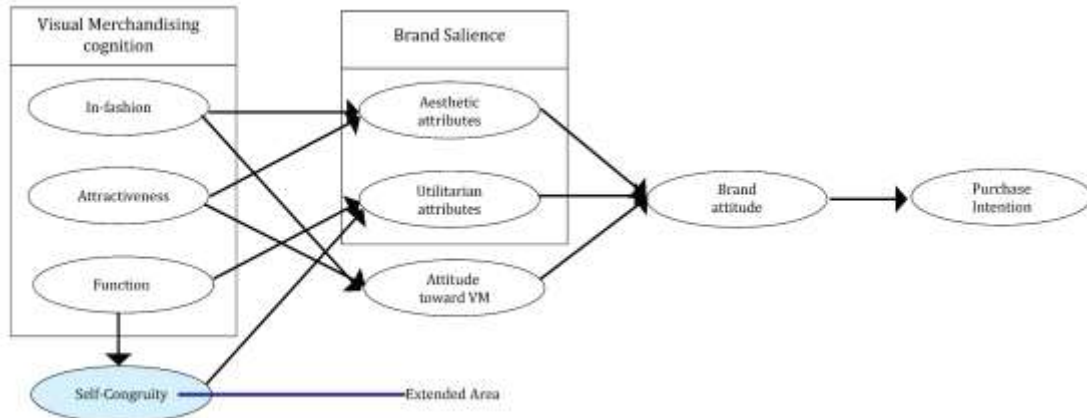


Figure 11, Extended version of the relationship between visual merchandising and brand preference, and the psychological processes involved in patronage intentions. Source: Author

Precise measurements must be used to enable this, as shown in Table 4, to guarantee accuracy and uniformity in the evaluation procedure. Self-Congruity theory consists of 4 sub-concepts which “are actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity. Actual self-congruity is a congruent comparison between the typical brand user as depicted by the model and the consumer’s actual self or current, true self. On the other hand, ideal self-congruity is a congruent comparison between the consumer’s ideal self, or who they want to be, and the typical brand user. Also, according to Kim & Hyun (2013), “as actual and ideal self-concept effects have stronger effects than the other self-concepts (e.g., social self) on brand evaluation,” these are the only types of self-congruity that will be a concern in the measuring chart.

Table 5, Extended version of measurements used for model testing

Visual Merchandising Cognition	In-Fashion	--New manner of presentation is interesting --Up-to-date fashion was nicely presented through an effective colour scheme and presentation skill --The store nicely conveys a new fashion image because of effective visual merchandising
	Attractiveness	--The interior design in the store is attractively arranged --I am motivated to walk into the store because of its external appearance, signs, and advertising screen images --Colour combinations are nicely coordinated --Use of appropriate lighting makes merchandise attractive
	Function	--The positions of the dress forms, mannequins, theme-related properties and POP are appropriate --POP displays and sale promotion signs nicely deliver merchandise information --Enough space is given between aisles to allow the customer to move around easily
	Self-Congruity	--Congruent comparison between the typical brand user as depicted by the model and the consumer’s actual self or current, true self --Congruent comparison between the consumer’s ideal self, or who they want to be, and the typical brand user as depicted by the model
Brand Salience	Aesthetic attributes	--The design is excellent --The colour is good

	Utilitarian attributes	--It is comfortable --It is nicely coordinated with other clothes --It is easy to manage
	Attitude towards Visual Merchandising	--VM appeals to me --VM is fascinating
	Brand Attitude	--I like xxx brand --I am in Favor of xxx brand --I am pleased about xxx brand --I am satisfied with xxx brand
	Purchase Intention	--In the future, I intend to buy the brand in the store shown in the pictures --I will readily purchase the brand in the store shown in the pictures

*\*Extended Area is coloured in Blue*

## 7. Conclusions

While the existing literature on the subject is relatively scant, the combination of different study articles and analyses has clearly shown how inadequate Sri Lankan visual merchandising and lingerie retailing are in comparison to international standards. This paper's approach was intended to identify these shortcomings from a retail standpoint, with a focus on consumer demand. In line with the conclusions drawn from the literature analysis, it is clear that Sri Lanka, like other East Asian countries, values functionality above everything else, even despite the assertions made by retailers regarding the importance of aesthetics. This research aimed to close the gap between the objectives that are perceived and those that are important in the lingerie retail industry in Sri Lanka. This research used the customer-based brand equity model by Park et al. (2015), which has been modified for use in a retail setting, to investigate the relationship between visual merchandising and brand preference. Based on the conception of how the retail environment might influence consumers' decision-making processes, this framework was found to be the most relevant and proximate model available. The results of pertinent research were then carefully included to improve this framework's suitability for use in the Sri Lankan setting. One important finding is how self-congruity theory influences how consumers view intimate clothing. This emphasizes how important relatability and authenticity are in brand interactions, especially in niche markets. The significance of body depiction in retail imagery is one important finding that is consistent with larger patterns in South Asian customer behaviour. The study also highlights the growing use of social media as an intermediate between consumers and brands, a trend that is common within the retail industries of East Asia.

With a focus on cultural sensitivity, changing cultural norms, and the subtleties of self-congruity, Sri Lankan lingerie retailers can use these findings to improve their visual merchandising tactics. Similar to this, international retailers venturing into Sri Lanka or other South Asian markets can use these insights to customize their approaches, making sure they meet local standards and comparing them to East Asian models that have proven successful.

By highlighting the necessity of consumer-centric techniques in culturally different contexts, this study makes a substantial contribution to the limited body of research on visual merchandising in South Asia. The research offers practical insights for enhancing brand engagement and loyalty in a highly competitive and culturally complicated industry by bridging gaps between consumer expectations and retail practices.

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