

On Users Experience and Knowledge: Understanding Female Consumers Intimate Apparel Product Preference

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Abstract: Today, the female consumers often base their purchase decision on products comfort as well as visual appearance. They became more objective on their purchase decisions by utilising experience and knowledge on using products. In the case of intimate product, such as bra, female consumers often base their purchase decision on product's comfort although their interactions with product are mostly through visuals. Despite its function as being an undergarment, bra is now highly considered as a necessity to aid the dynamics in females lifestyle. Pursuant to the issue, appears a question that underlies this research of how a product understanding can influence female consumer's product preference. This research objective is to identify relationship between the product that is worn and wanted by the consumers to understand female consumer's preference towards bra products. The study applied survey as its research approach with questionnaire as a tool for collecting data from samples of female consumers in the city of Bandung. Results indicate that female consumers' product experience and knowledge responds through cognitive process in consumers' interpretation on valuing the chosen product and its suitability to their wants and needs.

Keywords: intimate apparel, female consumer, product preference

1. Introduction

Nowadays, females active lifestyle demands practical and functional, yet attractive bra designs. This demand thereafter is responded by various intimate apparel brands prioritizing on the aesthetics of the design [1]. One of the obstacles is to adjust function and aesthetic factors with taste, lifestyle and physical condition of female consumers that vary. Various designs of bra product emerge as a result of attempts to meet the demand, which make female consumers tend to consider product appearance as the product preference. In addition to the absence of reference about suitable products for Indonesian women, at the other hand, it also causes a lack of understanding among female consumers about bras that can meet the functional and comfort aspects. Pursuant to the issue, appears a question that underlies this research of how a product understanding can influence female consumer's product preference. This research objective is to identify relationship between the product that is worn and wanted by the consumers to understand female consumer's preference towards bra products. It is expected that this research can

be used as reference for practitioners and producers of intimate apparel to understand female consumer preference towards bra in Indonesia.

1.1 Cognitive and Perception Systems

Cognitive system in human can be used to understand, evaluate, plan, make decision, and think in higher level than affective system. One of cognitive system's main functions is to interpret, rationalize, and understanding significant aspect in someone's experience. Cognitive interpretation can be in form of a deeper symbolic understanding about a product meaning and do a thinking process to identify an objective that results a behavior. Intensity level in cognitive system can be vary depends on situation, kind of product, and consumer. Different with emotion that is influenced by affective response, perception is part of cognitive response that includes memory, sensation, problem solving, and language processing [2].

1.2 Design and Mental Asset

Design made by human is majorly divided into two categories: sensory and behavioral [3]. Sensory design includes product that can be sensed by sensory neurons of vision, touch, smell, and hearing. Behavioral design includes all activity related to product planning, production and representation. Culture and environment are factors that influence final result of behavioral design. In general, product design involves those two categories which response is perceived through sensory system and interpreted in form of behavior. Nevertheless, behavior that comes from a perception towards product design depends on value and mind set of user. Product that is designed to meet functional (behavioral) and psychological (sensory) needs of the users is a successful product [4]. This evaluation is also influenced by the experience when wearing the product, whether the product is well functioned to meet the objective. There are three levels to process information on human: visceral, behavioral, and reflective. In cognitive system, behavioral and reflective levels influence a behavior towards a product. Behavioral level relates with function of the product, personal experience in wearing the product, and product performance.

There are four basic principles in designing product on the behavioral level: function, benefit, understanding, and sense. Design in good behavioral level shall focus on the users and has the objective to give understanding and satisfy the users. In reflective level, human starts to interpret appreciate and understand the reason behind a design. There is some aspects refer to reflective level: meaning, culture, and product use. Aspects in reflective design may be influenced by knowledge, learning process and culture. When making a design product in reflective level, relationship between user and product is important. Users that have a positive experience with the product will have a positive perspective towards the product. Design in reflective level can be seen from the advertisement influence and refer to as prestige and product understanding. Respond

towards this product in this level can be fluctuated based on culture, trend and fashion, and influenced by relationship between product and user. Fashion, style, mode, and vogue are design products in reflective level. Those terms are used to explain a condition where the community accepts a product. This condition is vulnerable towards change that may happen as the effect of advertisement and popular culture.

1.3 Bra as an Intimate Apparel Product

Bra innovation is based on a modest concept regarding the use of strap to support breasts weigh and to create a substitution for corset that is expected to be more comfortable and healthy for women [5]. In general, bras can be categorized based on function, material, and shape, because every product has its specific usage and it depends on kinds of outfit and activity the users have. Below are some categories of bra – intimate apparel:

Table 1. Types of Bra

No	Type of Bra	Description
1	<i>Full cup bra</i>	Cup fully covers breasts to support breasts better.
2	<i>¾ Cup bra / Balconnette</i>	Its main function is to bring breasts to the center of chest to give full-busted impression.
3	<i>Half cup bra / Demi cup</i>	Cup merely covers part of breasts.
4	<i>Strapless bra</i>	Bra without strap and is supported merely with band and underwire.
6	<i>Wonder bra / Push up bra</i>	Bra using special padding that can lift and support breasts to give full-busted impression.
7	<i>Underwired bra</i>	Bra with wire or plastic sewn on the under part of cup to be able to lift breasts stably.

There are four main parts of intimate apparel bra as follows: band, cup, strap, and fastener. Below is the explanation [6]:

- (a) Bra band can be in form of single layer or covered with lining.
- (b) Cups in variation of lace, commonly covered by tricot.
- (c) Bra straps can be in form of stretch or non-stretch material with wide or smaller elastic material and can be adjusted according to the user's comfort using slide, d-ring, or Velcro.
- (d) Position of fastener can be at the front or at the back with two or three hooks and eyes to adjust its size with user's torso.
- (e) Lower part of cup curve, underwire is usually used to firm the cup and support breasts to give full-busted impression.

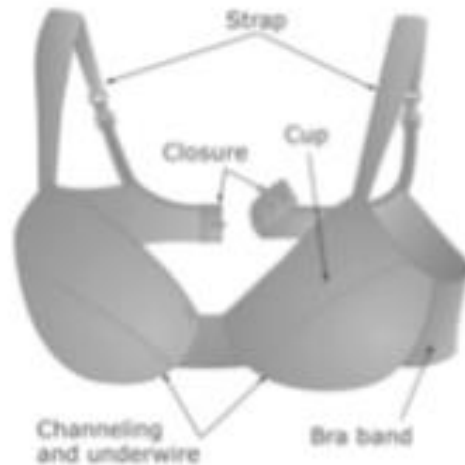


Figure 1. Bra Parts

There is several factors influence woman’s decision making to buy bras as well as to wear it. Based on a research performed regarding factors influencing women in wearing bras are aesthetics or visual appearance of the product, comfort, practicality, function, and psychological impact [7]. Several supporting conditions when a woman decides to buy bras are [8]:

1. When she finds a brand that fits to her and will return to repeat the purchase.
2. When she has unlimited budget to buy bra she wants.
3. When she wears a standard-sized bra that has more design variation.
4. When she tries to adjust it with her outer garment for a particular occasion.

In buying a bra, a woman always evaluates product or brand she will choose. This condition is based on previous experience of wearing the product and wants (desire) to have another bra with different design.

2. Methodology

This research uses quantitative survey approach. This approach is performed to identify relationship between visualization of bra design and Indonesian women’s perception. For small population or sample, survey is a right approach where it can give data of opinion or perception that interview or observation cannot give by asking respondents to fill in the questionnaire regarding research object. Questionnaire comprises of questions about age, occupation and experience when wearing the product and what is wanted for intimate apparel bra. Further, those questions include decorative and structural aspects, brands, and consideration in purchasing intimate apparel bra. Random sample of each individual in population has the same possibility or as known as probabilistic sampling is

used to gain the most representing samples to enable generalization [9]. Complex Random procedure with probability basis is used to take sample in stratified population as follows:

- (a) Indonesian women domiciled in Bandung, at the age between 18-40 years old and have or are studying in university where reflective thinking of these respondents, which is influenced by age and education background, is needed when giving opinion, perception, and comment towards research's object [10].
- (b) Come from middle up class. According to ADB (2010), between the years of 2008 – 2009 there are 102 million people or 46% from total population in Indonesia has joined middle up class society [11].

Based on the stratification, sample of 103 female respondents are gained in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. Questionnaire survey is a group survey where questionnaire sheets are directly spread to each respondent in a group in a particular place. Respondents are given information about this research's objectives. 3. Research Result and Analysis Based on questionnaire result to 103 female consumers in Bandung, data of bra demography, demand, and wearing by the consumers are gained with biggest percentage as follows:

Table 2. Result

Indicator	Result
Age	62% of <25 years old, 38% of 25-40 years old
Occupation	62% students, 19% employees, 13% civil servants
Size	34B (35%), 32A (21%)
Brand (worn)	Wacoal (23%), Pierre Cardin (19%)
Brand (wanted)	Victoria Secret (40%), Pierre Cardin (19%)
Model (worn)	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (17%), Push-up (14%), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (13%)
Model (wanted)	Push-up (16%), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (13%), $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (11%)
Color (worn)	Black (35%), Other color (16%)
Color (wanted)	Black (26%), Nude (25%)
Decorative (worn)	Cotton (19%), Stretch (15%), Plain (14%), Ribbon (10%), Lace (9%), Satin (7%), Geometrical Motif (7%)
Decorative (wanted)	Cotton (19%), Plain (12%), Silk (12%), Lace (11%), Stretch (11%), Geometrical Motif 7%, Abstract Motif (7%)
Product Parts	Underwire (17%), Small Strap Kecil (12%), Back Band Opening (9%)
Reason to Buy	Comfort (21%), Material (16%), Size (14%), Color (13%)

Most of 103 female respondents in Bandung wear 34B followed by 32A bra sizes. The most intimate apparel brands for bra worn by the respondents are Wacoal and Pierre Cardin. Pierre Cardin is not merely the most worn bra product but also the most wanted

bra brand among respondents in addition to Victoria Secret. Consistencies of bra models between those being worn and wanted by the respondents are $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, push-up, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Further, model that most respondents' wear is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup and model that most respondents' want is push-up. Consistency of color between those being worn and wanted is black. Further consistency is found in decorative aspect in wearing and wanting a bra product with cotton, lace, stretch materials, without motif (plain), or with geometrical motif. For wanted bra, there are some decorative aspects changed such as the usage of ribbon with abstract motif and satin with silk. Part of bra that gets the respondents' attention are underwire, small-sized bra strap, and back band opening bra system. Comfort, material, size and color are respondents' main consideration in purchasing bra.

3. Conclusion

Based on the research result and relational analysis towards 103 female respondents in Bandung, it may be concluded that the experience in wearing bra may influence women's preference through their response in their cognitive system. Relationship between cognition and preference in behavioral and reflective stages can be explained as follows:

1. In behavioral stage, female respondents feel that bra product of Wacoal and Pierre Cardin, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup model, push-up, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, cotton, lace, stretch materials, without motif (plain), geometrical motif, and black colored, are comfortable to wear. Therefore, the product satisfies the needs of comfortable bras.

2. In reflective stage, female respondents understand that underwire, small-sized bra strap, and back band opening bra system are the main considerations of bra preference in terms of comfort. Respondents assume that Victoria Secret bra, which is considered having similarity with Pierre Cardin bra in structure and decorative aspects, can give the same positive experience as previous. Further, higher expectation can be seen in Victoria Secret bra, with striking motif and material (abstract motif and silk material). Demand for Victoria Secret bra may be triggered by advertisement, trend, and prestige imaged by the brand to create positive perspective of female respondents.

4. References

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