

# The Role of Cultural Dimensions in Shaping Impulse Buying Behavior among Young Consumers: A Study of the Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka

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## ABSTRACT

With the advent of digital connectivity, customers, especially young customers are getting more and more exposed to world trends and apparel styles in the world of fashion today providing opportunities for marketers to promote impulse buying of products or services that are greatly influenced by the cultural background of these customers. This study aims to determine the role of the cultural dimensions in shaping the impulse buying behavior of young customers in apparel shopping, specifically in Sri Lanka. The study is based on the qualitative research that uses primary data through twenty semi-structured interviews, and secondary data related to cultural dimensions of Sri Lanka collected through Hofstede's official website. Moreover, a thematic analysis technique has been adopted to analyze the interview responses. The findings revealed that young customers in Sri Lanka engages in impulsive buying occasionally. Usually, the categories that get bought impulsively are cloths, beauty and personal care products while their purchase decisions is generally based on others' opinions as Sri Lanka is a collectivist society where people value family, extended family, or extended partnerships. It was observed though Sri Lankans prefer a more long-term orientation, this study found that most customers saw short term utility value in their clothing based on the most recent trends and styles rather than buying for their future usage.

**Keywords:** *impulse buying behavior, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, power distance, long-term-short-term orientation, masculinity-femininity*

## 1.0 Introduction and Problem Statement

In a world that is highly competitive as it is today, understanding buying behavior is critical as much as understanding consumer behavior for crafting and executing a comprehensive marketing strategy. Therefore, “shopping” has become a major focus area as a “moment of truth” in present-day marketing strategies and activities (Shamini, 2016). Customers' way of life, their interests, their life experiences, and preoccupations all have a significant influence on their purchase decisions. These differences are critical for businesses because they in turn have a significant

impact in crafting marketing strategies and planning promotional tactics of a business (Istudor, & Pelau, 2013). Impulsive buying behavior has economic significance in the retail industry (Verplanken & Sato, 2011), with retail profit accounting for up to 80 percent of total sales revenues and growing further (Lim & Yazdabifard, 2015; Lewis, 2013). This trend provides opportunities for marketers to promote impulsive purchases among customers, especially in some product or service categories such as apparel, which in turn help to enhance the overall sales income for businesses (Yue & Razak, 2018). The purchasing decisions of individuals are greatly influenced by their cultural background (Li, et al., 2015; Kalose, 2019). Considering the cultural dimensions of impulsive purchasing may assist both practitioners and scholars develop a more comprehensive knowledge of impulse buying (Muruganatham & Bhakat, 2013).

Especially as marketplaces worldwide become more interconnected, technologically advanced, and globalized, the influence of cultural variations on customer behavior cannot be underestimated nor overlooked (Pornpitakpan et al., 2017). This has led to the belief among some researchers that cultural factors play a significant part in how customers receive and interpret product/service-related information, as the cultural variables may influence anticipated emotions associated with purchasing a specific product or experiencing a service. Hence, it is essential to understand cultural differences to comprehend impulsive purchasing because cultural variations influence how customers perceive and react to various product cues and marketing stimuli (Nguyen & Cakanlar, 2016). Numerous studies have been conducted by both academics and industry professionals in an effort to get a better understanding of the factors that lead to impulsive buying behavior (Lim & Yazdanifard, 2015). There has been a large amount of research on the impulsive purchase that relies on data from Western cultures and industrialized nations, with a strong focus on the United States (Kaur & Singh, 2007; Chowdhury, 2021).

Investigation of previous research on impulse buying behavior has shown that underdeveloped and developing countries have received minimal or no attention (Kacen & Lee, 2002; Ghani & Jan 2011). Impulse buying is purchasing a product or experiencing a service without previous preparation, with the objective of either purchasing a certain product type or experiencing a service meeting a specific desire. When a buyer makes an impulsive purchase, they are experiencing a sudden, usually overpowering, and persistent urge to buy something right away. The desire to acquire something is a hedonically complex propensity that can lead to feelings of anxiety and stress when unfulfilled (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate cultural dimensions in-depth to establish a distinctive framework of relationships with culture's various elements. Hofstede's perspective is widely regarded as fundamental and dominating in cultural studies (Hofstede & Bond 1988; Hofstede, 1980). Various experts in marketing and advertising, both academicians and professionals in the field, are of the opinion that Hofstede's cultural aspects are the most important and relevant variables for their research on the subject. Previous studies have shown that researchers and marketers have predominantly focused on power distance and individualism/collectivism at the cultural level (Zhang et al., 2010; Shoham et al., 2015). According to Lee and Kacen, (2008), customers in individualist societies prefer to disregard the possible negative repercussions of their impulse purchases and tend to spend more impulsively when they do their shopping alone. Marketers and scholars have recently begun to pay attention to the other dimensions, in addition to power distance or individualism/collectivism, at the cultural level (Shoham et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2010) that influence impulsive purchase behavior of customers (Park & Choi, 2013).

In contrast, the research conducted by Park and Choi (2013) showed that, in addition to individuality and collectivism, additional cultural variables may also influence impulsive purchasing behavior. Furthermore, scholars in the area of consumer behavior have begun to ask for further studies incorporating the dimensions provided by the Hofstede model, which are very significant in identifying various elements of consumer behavior. Culture is likely to impact consumers' early instinctive reactions, but its influence reduces when buyers perceive that more thought and detailed responses are necessary (Briley & Aaker 2006). In this context, consumer behavior experts advocate for more studies incorporating various facets of Hofstede's theory, which may provide crucial insights into understanding impulsive purchase behavior in the future (Shoham et al., 2015; Park & Choi, 2013).

Though the study on consumer impulsive purchasing behavior is a well-established field around the globe, only a few studies have been undertaken in the Asian region and more specifically related to the Sri Lankan market. Further, a notable absence of a study in the Sri Lankan apparel retail market is identified as a gap in research, although the country is a major manufacturing destination and a supplier of leading global brands in the global apparel industry. The apparel industry of Sri Lanka is the most important contributor to the Sri Lankan economy and is a key foreign exchange source to the country. It has generated \$5 billion in export earnings last year that is 44 percent of the country's total export revenue. Moreover, close to 1 million people are engaged in the apparel business, which accounts for approximately 15 percent of all employment in the country (BOI Sri Lanka, 2019).

With the advent of digital connectivity, customers, especially young customers (with in the age group of 15 to 15 years), are getting increasingly exposed to world trends and apparel styles that is fast getting globalized in today's fashion world. Despite a few studies conducted to determine the elements that influence impulsive purchase choices among customers there exists a considerable gap in understanding their shopping behavior (Brici et al., 2013). Additionally, no specific study has been conducted in the field of impulsive purchasing behavior in the young consumer market segment, which is a significant gap and a major concern. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the role of culture on phenomenon of impulsive purchasing which are very significant in influencing numerous aspects of buying behavior, most notably impulse buying behavior (Park & Choi, 2013; Shoham et al., 2015).

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### *2.1 Impulse buying behavior*

An impulsive purchase is defined by Piron (1991) as a purchase undertaken on the spot in response to a marketing stimulus without any prior plan or deliberation. The customer displays both emotional and cognitive responses immediately after making a purchase. Impulse purchasing happens when a customer strongly desires to purchase something but does not want to be significantly bothered with the consequences. It is not considered an impulsive purchase if the product has been out-of-stock for a while and the customer is reminded of its availability and now the purchase can happen (Beatty and Ferrell 1998).

In other words, impulse purchasing may be defined as a purchase behavior that occurs immediately and without consideration of the consequences of the purchase in the future. Another viewpoint is that impulsive buyers have an unreflective thinking prompted by the physical proximity to a

wanted object, predominately due to an emotional attachment to it, and absorbed by the promise of immediate fulfillment (Khuong & Tran, 2015). Stern (1962) revealed essential foundation for impulsive purchasing by categorizing buying behavior as unplanned, planned, or impulsive. Pre-planned purchases involve thorough information search and evaluation of alternatives leading to rational decision-making, whereas unplanned purchases are made on the spur of the moment. Unplanned shopping differs from impulse buying in that a lack of thought characterizes it before making a purchase. Impulsive buying is unplanned and characterized by a strong, urgent, and overwhelming desire to buy on the spur of the moment (Stern, 1962).

## 2.2 *Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions*

Culture is described as "collective training of the mind that distinguishes the individuals belonging to one group of people from the individuals belonging to another" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001). Culture is a dynamic process in society that produces insights, beliefs, and attitudes that shape people's perceptions, inferences, and interrelationships (Chowdhury, 2021). The variations in cultural perspectives on the collectivist-individualistic component may affect these normative judgments and, therefore the customer impulsive buying behavior. According to Kacen and Lee (2002), cultural element individualism-collectivism influences impulsive purchase behavior and should be carefully considered. Traditionally, scholars have focused on individualism-collectivism aspect and its implications for impulsive purchase behavior (Zhang et al., 2010). Customers' early reactions are likely to be influenced by culture, but this impact diminishes if they believe that more considered and thorough replies and responses are desired in a particular situation (Briley & Aaker, 2006).

However, culture greatly impacts impulsive buying since it is an unexpected purchase that takes place instantly without any prior consideration (Chowdhury, 2021). Cultural differences in individuality, collectivism, and power distance have been largely ignored by scholars in marketing and advertising (Shoham et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2010). According to Park and Choi (2013), impulsive purchasing may be influenced by cultural variables other than individualism/collectivism. To better understand impulsive purchase habits of customers, academicians in consumer behavior are calling for further research that considers several Hofstede's dimensions (Park & Choi, 2013; Shoham et al., 2015).

### 2.2.1 *Individualism versus Collectivism*

Rather than emphasizing the group, individualism is a cultural attitude that emphasizes the distinctiveness, independence, and uniqueness of an individual. Individualistic cultures tend to produce persons who are more likely, than members of other cultures, to have an independent perspective of their self-image. Therefore, individuals are more driven to attain personal aims by their own preferences and ambitions, they place a premium on reasonable connections with other individuals, and they are less sensitive to the influence of collective opinion and dynamics. However, collectivistic cultures emphasize the interdependent relationships between individuals and groups such as relatives, friends, families, and social and professional networks. People in individualistic societies are more inclined to purchase impulsively than those in collectivist cultures. However, previous studies have indicated a favorable relationship between collectivism and impulsive shopping (Kacan & Lee, 2002; Kongkaradecha & Khemarangsarn, 2012; Dameyasani & Abraham, 2013).

Moreover, individuals who live in collectivistic societies are more prone to listen and respect other people's views and collective preferences than they do for their own needs and preferences. As a result of these characteristics customers in collectivist societies are less likely than those in other cultures to make impulsive purchases of products and services. Thus, customers in collectivist societies are less likely to participate in impulsive buying and are more likely to make deliberate judgments about their buying decisions (Nyugen et al., 2003).

### 2.2.2 *Uncertainty Avoidance*

Uncertainty Avoidance does not mean the same concept as avoiding danger; rather, it refers to the tolerance for ambiguity that exists within a community in some situations. It indicates the extent to which a society has trained its citizens to feel uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured conditions, depending on their past experiences. Unstructured circumstances are ones that are new, unprecedented, and full of unexpected twists and turns which are quite different to what a person has encountered before. Cultures that aim to reduce the chance of such events often enforce very rigorous behavioral standards, laws, and norms as well as they often reject unusual points of view and have a firm faith in the existence of ultimate truth (Hofstede, 2011). Consequently, customers from cultures where uncertainty is highly avoided would be more reluctant, and as a result of this hesitation such customers would want to prepare more and reduce the risk of negative implications and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, customers who live in an environment with a low degree of uncertainty avoidance are more willing to take chances and accept uncertainty. Compared to those who live in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people who live in low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more engaged and sensitive to new ideas and changes (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

Individualistic cultures are more likely than other cultures to encourage impulsive purchases because individuals in individualistic cultures do not place as much emphasis on the negative consequences of their purchases and they act on their wishes and needs. When it comes to individuals from collectivistic cultures, they tend to be more worried about the negative consequences of their purchases, which lead to them in delaying their purchase decisions (Kacen & Lee, 2002; Cakanlar & Nguyen, 2019).

### 2.2.3 *Power Distance*

In organizations and institutions (such as the family), power distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members accept and anticipate that power needs to be distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2011). A low power distance culture is associated with a lower level of self-control and is believed to be a predictor of customers' impulsive purchase behavior in the marketplace. Furthermore, people living in low power distance cultures are more likely to exhibit less socially acceptable response inclinations because they believe they are not required to follow or demonstrate strong self-control (Lalwani et al., 2006; Cakanlar & Nguyen, 2019). However, in high power distance societies, all individuals' desire high social status, as one's social standing must be obvious to others for them to offer respect (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

Studies have identified an association between high-power-distance cultures and increased levels of self-control (Lalwani et al., 2006; Hofstede, 2011; Cakanlar & Nguyen, 2019). Individuals in countries with an exceptionally high-power distance often perform regular acts of self-control, and one of the most desired societal norms is the suppression of impulsive purchasing behavior. Therefore, Zhang et al. (2010) suggested that high power distance influences and reduces impulse buying through the relationship of restrictions depending on power distance, and the findings of

their study show that people who live in cultures with a higher power distance can activate their self-control more quickly when compared to those who live in cultures with a lower power distance (Cakanlar & Nguyen, 2019).

#### 2.2.4 *Masculinity versus Femininity*

The distribution of values between men and women is a fundamental problem for any community, and a range of solutions may be explored. Similarly, masculinity vs. femininity is a societal phenomenon rather than an individual characteristic, and it has to do with the distribution of values between men and women in a particular society. According to Hofstede (2011), masculine civilizations strongly emphasize accomplishments, heroism, assertiveness, and pecuniary rewards for success. Men in these societies are traditionally supposed to be severe and powerful and place a great value on monetary performance, whereas women are expected to be sensitive, caring, and loving towards their families.

On the other hand, femininity is associated with features such as modesty, compassion, and good quality of life, and these characteristics may be noticed in both men and women who originate from traditionally feminine cultures. Individuals who live in societies that place a high value on masculinity are more likely to value knowledge and information than those who live in societies that place a higher value on femininity (Cakanlar & Nguyen, 2019). Therefore, in high-masculinity cultures, rational conduct should predominate instead of emotional behavior such as impulsive purchasing (Shoham et al., 2015).

#### 2.2.5 *Long-term Versus Short-term Orientation*

In the long term, values like persistence, thriftiness, and a feeling of shame to fail are associated with the long-term pole, whereas values like returning social duties, respecting tradition, maintaining one's "face," and personal stability and steadiness are associated with the short-term aspect. The cultures with a low score on this dimension seek to hold on to conventional rules and laws while being skeptical of new ideas. Societies with high scores, on the other hand, see obstacles as a necessary part of growth and progress (Hofstede, 2011). In the case of young consumers they are innovative and follow latest market trends thus they follow a long-term orientation as illustrated by Holbrook and Schindler (1994), when consumers have a mindset that is more rooted in the past, these customers are more likely to purchase things that are familiar to them rather than those that are creative. Thus, customers who are focused on the short term have a lower degree of acceptance towards innovative products, while consumers who are focused on the long term have a greater level of acceptance of such products (Hsu & Burns, 2012).

### 3.0 **Methodology**

This research has made use of both primary and secondary data to find answers to the research question articulated. The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and secondary data related to cultural dimensions of Sri Lanka was collected from the Hofstede's official website. A qualitative approach was selected as it is thought to be best suited for conducting this research to get deeper insights related to cultural dimensions related to online impulse buying behavior. The qualitative data captured is highly valuable since they are not organized and can be modified and recast readily and relatively easily. When the researchers looked back at previous research, they discovered that most studies on impulsive purchase were based on questionnaire-based surveys (Iram & Chacharkar, 2017).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study among young apparel customers in Sri Lanka to use an interpretative method that is thought to be most appropriate for data collection within an interpretive paradigm. Furthermore, accurate, consistent, and detailed data may be useful in comprehending the phenomena under investigation and explaining and resolving the research issues. In this study, the researcher collected customer responses through the help of semi-structured interviews among young men and women selected randomly from higher education institutions and offices about their experiences and preferences of apparel products based on their cultural dimensions as described by the Hofstede model.

To collect data, potential customers were contacted in the university (since the respondents were young customers), and they were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. The confidentiality of the data and findings were repeatedly assured to the survey participants. The participants in the research were contacted and chosen through personal connections and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook (Khan, 2014). The researcher conducted in-depth face-to-face, open-ended and semi-structured interviews with twenty (20) customers to identify and investigate how cultural factors influence impulsive purchasing behavior among young customers living in Sri Lanka when it comes to apparel shopping. With the participant's permission, the interviews were transcribed so that an accurate conversation record could be maintained for future analysis. During the recording process, the customers were shown every step to ensure confidentiality of the participants is ensured. Furthermore, a schedule for conducting semi-structured interviews was established for the qualitative research to examine inclinations of the customers to purchase impulsively based on their cultural dimensions. The respondents were all young shoppers chosen from various higher education institutes as the sample for this study who purchase their clothing themselves and engage in impulsive purchasing behavior, both in-store and/ or online.

#### **4.0 Data Analysis and Findings**

##### *4.1 Thematic Analysis*

This study used thematic data analysis to investigate the role of cultural factors in impulse purchasing behavior, particularly among young Sri Lankans in their apparel shopping. Therefore, the interview questions were prepared so the participants could provide a comprehensive response related to their cultural preferences and experiences shaping their impulse purchasing behavior, specifically related to apparel shopping. The researchers were able to get a thorough and complete understanding of the opinion of the customers related to their apparel shopping experience and preferences based on cultural dimensions that lead to impulse buying behavior through a semi-structured interview. Regarding impulsive purchase behavior, Hofstede's cultural aspects appear to have a considerable impact and applicability in the buying decision.

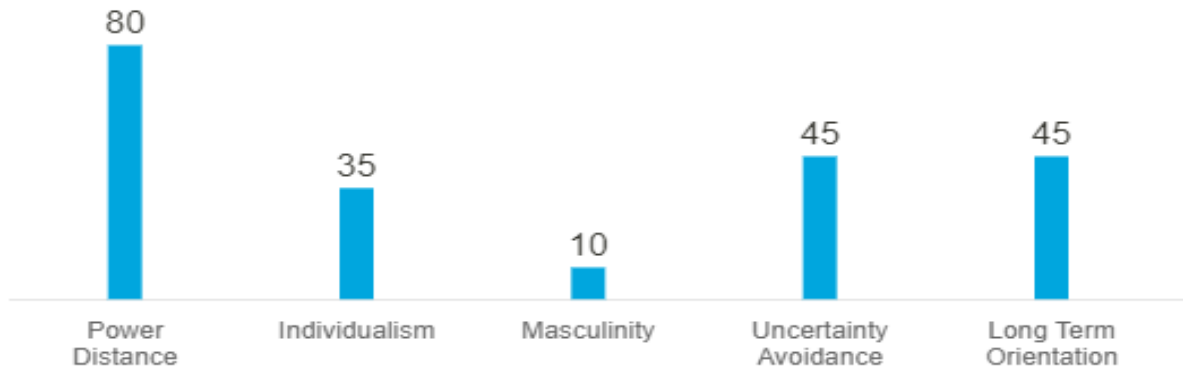


Fig. 1: Hofstede cultural dimensions of Sri Lanka (Hofstede, 2022)

#### 4.1.1 Impulse Buying Behavior

When asked if they would buy anything on the spur of the moment, most participants stated that they would buy apparel products impulsively, however they mentioned that it depends on the season and the time of year they are shopping for a particular product.

One participant who is a young female stated, *“I regularly buy impulsively without prior planning, and my purchases typically include apparel, accessories, personal care items, and food products. I buy dresses if they are at a discount, but it still depends on which stage and time of the month. I usually buy things based on a cost and benefit analysis, but I prefer to buy impulsively when I see promotional offers from known apparel brands for instance there was a value offer on a t-shirt on the Internet last month, I made an impulsive decision to purchase it”*.

Another young male participant responded by saying, *“Sometimes when there are good options available or when good brands are on offer I tend to buy on-line. Sometimes friends and family also tell me and recommend me where to buy clothes, food, personal care, electronics and accuracies, gadgets such as phones, etc. sometime when I need something for an occasion or while shopping for something else if I come across a good offer or a new style I buy impulsively. When I buy immediately, I consider my cash position and credit card balance as well.”*

However, a female participant reported as, *“Usually, I do my planning on purchases. Since, I have limited funds I always plan my purchases. But if I buy something without planning, that could be for an everyday need like food, or essential items like medicine. So, I rarely buy without planning. Sometimes I buy food items when I am hungry and no time to cook for myself. But that’s not often. Sometimes, but not for expensive clothing items I always think about money I have. Though I like shopping, I do not spend on items that are not within my range. I asses the quality of the product, durability, and most importantly the price. I look value for the money I spend, even if I purchase in a hurry. Quality is also an equally important factor to me”*.

#### 4.2.2 Power Distance

Sri Lanka is classified as a highly stratified society, with an overall score of 80. This has resulted in a hierarchical structure in which everyone has a position and does not require further justification (Hofstede, 2022). Individuals in Sri Lanka are expected to have high self-control and indulge in less impulse shopping due to the emphasis of the cultural dimension on high power



distance. However, in their responses when participants were questioned about their ability to maintain self-control when making impulse purchases, they had serious reservations. Their responses revealed that they seem to have little control when they make spontaneous purchases in what they buy and often can go overboard.

One female participant stated, *“Though I usually have good control in making purchasing decisions, sometimes I spontaneously buy things based on the situation, showing an impulse buying attitude to satisfy my desires at that time. I am sometimes a little shopaholic with having a desire to possess something immediately, especially clothes and beauty products. I think among young people this may happen in offices while among older individuals especially ladies this may happen when it comes to buying things like sarees.”*

However, the study by Alberts-Miller and Gelb (1996) has shown an alternative viewpoint on this kind of a relationship. Customers in higher power distance cultures, are more motivated to engage in conspicuous consumption to demonstrate their social position, power, and money due to their clear understanding of social class distance and hierarchical order. In other words, individuals display their strength and satisfaction often by buying products or service that display their status. Another female participant reported, *“I sometimes make quick judgments and purchase many useless items on the spur of the moment. As far as I am concerned I exhibit impulse buying on items that show my social status, financial status, extra money that I have to spend impulsively with relatively low self-control. However, I often don’t shop apparel to show my social status and power but I mostly buy them when I see discounts and promotional offers”.*

Therefore, it is clear that other factors may contribute to impulse buying behavior of apparel products other than power distance and hence it doesn’t seem to be connected to impulse buying behavior in Sri Lanka.

#### 4.1.2 Individualism / Collectivism

As a result of receiving a low score of 35 on this criteria, Sri Lanka can be categorized as a collectivist society. One method to illustrate this specific quality is through the demonstration of a long-term commitment to the members of the "group," whether that "group" consists of family, extended family, or extended connections (*Hofstede- Insights, 2022*). Regarding individualism vs collectivism, four out of five participants believed that the opinions of others would influence their purchasing decisions, even when they buy at the spur of the moment.

One female participant reported, *“It depends on the people I love and the view of the people who surround me. Usually, I consider my interest first and then take others' opinions regarding my decision. After considering the opinions/ advice of others, I usually go ahead. On most occasions I think about my interest more than the interest of the others. It is always better when there is consensus with others, However, when it comes to some items like food, beverages etc. I opt solely for my interests. But for clothes I wear, yes, I think about others interests too, especially my loved ones.”*

Similarly, another female participant stated, *“I feel that my friends know the new trends in the market. Whenever I'm out shopping with my friends and if I feel something is looking great, but my friend says it doesn't, or that it looks horrible, then I'm more likely to be swayed by their opinion. Likewise, if they say something looks amazing, I'm more inclined to buy it.”.*

These responses revealed that their purchase decisions are generally based on the opinion of the others. Therefore, as per Hofstede (2022), Sri Lanka is a collectivist society where people value family, extended family, or extended partnerships.

#### 4.1.3 Masculinity / Femininity

Sri Lanka is classified as a feminine civilization due to its low score of 10. Individuals in such feminine countries place a high value on "working to live" and most often strive for consensus in their places of work. They also strongly value workplace equality, unity, and excellence by all. Negotiation and compromise are the most effective methods when it comes to resolving disagreements. Free time and flexibility at work are the most sought-after rewards by many. As opposed to emphasizing or showcasing one's social position, one's total well-being is the focal point of attention in such cultures (*Hofstede- Insights, 2022*).

When participants were asked about their emotional or cognitive conduct while making an impulsive purchase, they expressed a wide range of responses. Although some participants did not believe that their emotions could limit them when purchasing impulsively, they did agree that economic constraints often force them to reconsider their buying decision even though they loved it on the first impression.

One young female participant reported, *"My friends and family would affect my choice of clothes while buying. Sometimes I find that I buy more impulsively than my family. Most times it is me who does shopping for clothes and personal care items for me and when it comes to household items it would always be my parents. My parents are very selective and go through extensive evaluation and they have a lot of experience to do so than me. In Sri Lanka there is competition and people tend to show-off when it comes to clothes and jewelry and mostly happens in upper class among ladies with jewelry and men with cars"*.

However, another male participant stated, *"I believe so, as we belong to a family, our choice of clothes need to match the family interests and status. Sometimes my family members tend to behave more impulsively than me, but sometimes I also cannot resist buying impulsively. There is competition buy not among many people generally, but I don't think competition comes into the scenario when it comes to impulse buying. Of course, I get ideas from friends who have used certain brands before. Sometimes I get ideas from them about the suitability and durability of certain brands of clothing. Sometimes, among some people in the society there is competition. But technically in buying impulsively I don't think they worry about competition."*

The individuals who live in societies that place a high value on masculinity are more likely to value knowledge and information than those who live in societies that place a higher value on femininity (Cakanlar & Nguyen, 2019). Thus, based on the opinion of the respondents it has been found that younger Sri Lankan customers value society and family interest more and follow a feminist attitude.

#### 4.1.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

*The uncertainty avoidance score of a particular culture is a reflection of the extent to which individuals within that culture believe that they should not be embroiled in ambiguous or unclear occurrences and have formed ways and institutions in an attempt to avoid these circumstances. It*

*measures how successfully a culture avoids ambiguity in its interactions with others. Sri Lanka has a slightly intermediate score of 45, showing that the country does not indicate a strong preference for uncertainty avoidance or acceptance (Hofstede- Insights, 2022).*

*When asked about their responses, one of the participants who is a male responded as, "It's easy to make decisions based on emotions as you do not have to think much. I believe making emotional decisions will be quick. However, I think some emotional decisions end up as failures but it is only sometimes and not always. I generally evaluate alternatives and may be not as much as my parents do. Yes sometimes when it comes to clothes I buy impulsively based on emotions. Sometimes I have felt that I could have got a better deal".*

Demooij and Hofstede (2010) discovered that individuals living in countries with low uncertainty-avoidance tend to be more curious, more open to change, and more willing to experiment with new things.

Interesting another male participant said, *"It's easy to make decisions emotionally. I believe making right decisions is not easy. I weigh different options, such as durability, value for money, newness, trendiness etc. I look at everything. I try my best to make the correct decision. However, if I realize later that I have made a purchase mistake by buying spontaneously, I don't regret ..... but a lesson for the future"*.

#### 4.1.5 Long-term / Short-term Orientation

With a score of 45, Sri Lanka has achieved an intermediate position related to this dimension, suggesting that Sri Lankans have no significant preference for long-term direction (*Hofstede-Insights, 2022*). In this study responses were collected from participants by asking them about their views on the Sri Lankan culture both from a long-term and a short-term perspective.

One of the participants who is male reported that, *"in most cases when buying on an impulse it is for the present day requirement, thus I think mostly about the design, style, and the price. Sometimes I give up shopping awaiting better designs in the future. It usually happens when I am not satisfied with the clothing choices available. Though I don't consider much of a long term use of clothes in general if I see durable options I tend to go for them if the price is right. However for everyday use items I don't believe long-term use"*.

Another participant who is a female stated, *"I buy my clothes spontaneously and often do not consider their long-term utility. No I do not give up shopping expecting more designs and better designs of clothing in the future. I like to buy trendy, branded cloths based on current trends and styles for my current needs"*.

In the case of Sri Lankan customers it has been found that they do not value long-term orientation rather they sometimes prefer short-term orientation and somewhat indifferent also. This in contrast to the study of Hsu et al., (2011), who found that customers who are focused on the short term have a lower degree of acceptance towards innovative products, while customers who are focused on the long term have a greater level of acceptance for innovation.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Customer purchasing behavior has evolved considerably over the last several decades for various reasons, including technological advancements, economic growth as well as social and cultural

changes. Customers on a day to day basis must make choices regarding their purchases of goods and services as part of the normal buying process which include determining the need for an offering, gathering information, evaluating options and alternatives, making purchase decisions, and post purchase responses. In this process most shoppers nowadays are spending less time making pre-planned purchasing choices due to changing lifestyles and expectations and a larger percentage of shoppers are making impulsive purchases. It is observed that shoppers who engage in impulse buying usually do so for categories such as clothing, home and personal care products.

The responses of the participants revealed that their purchase decision is generally influenced by the opinion of others and hence based on *Hofstede-Insights*, (2022) Sri Lanka can be identified as a collectivist society where people value family, extended family, or wide relationships/partnerships. The participants focused on a more collectivist attitude when they have the urge and the option to buy impulsively. Though it was found that Sri Lankans somehow prefer a long-term orientation, in most cases they do not purchase the products based on its long-term utility. The study found that most Sri Lankan customers preferred short term utility and desirability of their clothing based on the recent trends and styles rather than buying them for the future. Additionally, it was found that Sri Lanka is a feminine society where participants did not believe their emotions could limit them when purchasing impulsively. Also, they did agree that economic constraints forced them to reconsider buying a product or a service on impulse even if they loved it on the first impression.

Marketers will benefit from this study since it will help them target their customers more effectively based on these insights. Impulse buying is growing in Sri Lanka (Ranasinghe and Chok, 2022) and findings of studies of this nature will provide opportunities for Marketers for great shopper marketing.

This research will serve as a model for future marketing research in this important subject area. The findings of the study will be beneficial for marketers and retailers in designing their product portfolios based on the cultural preferences of their target customers. In future the study can be conducted by comparatively analyzing the impulse buying behavior of customers based cross cultural dimensions between two countries.

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