

A STUDY ON THE FASHION PREFERENCE OF EXECUTIVE GRADE STAFF: AGE OF 20 TO 30, LADIES FROM THE WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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INTRODUCTION

Fashion is a distinctive and often habitual trend with current styles in human clothing. It is considered as a prevailing style in human behavior and newest creations in designs. Fashion exists in the society to project human personalities prevailing as non-verbal communication. Fashion comes out as directly made comfort in clothing while setting with the society and the environment. Fashion comes out as business which spread all around the world and earns huge profits with its flexibility to make changes and the process of getting influences on new technology and upcoming sources. Fashion change based on recent fashion trends which were being set by the fashion capitals mainly in Paris, Milan, New York, and London.

After the industrial revolution and world war influences in the 19th and 20th century, fashion and apparel industry gradually began to open up a new chapter in the western society especially with the mass productions. It was made available for buying different stylistic and fashionable clothing. It shows comparatively a low price. Mass productions made different fashionable garments available at lower prices. Fashion came out to be a widely spreading business to cater different life styles of people in all around the world.

As a result of the globalization and the open economic concepts, Sri Lanka opened up doors to go along with the world fashion movements. Sri Lanka is not only followed the fashion trends in the western world but also it contributes to the garment production sector and also began to contribute to the fashion designing aspects of the industry in the 21st century.

The ladies' office wear category was developed mainly to fulfill western social requirements which came out with the Industrial Revolution in 19th and 20th century. As a result of the World war, lack of resources, the Industrial revolution and women's liberation concepts, women's participation in the workforce was substantially increased. Subsequently, a demand for suitable dress codes for ladies was gradually emerged. Thus, ladies office wear category began to develop as mass productions and showed a rapid development and presently it is available with three main sub categories as office formal wears, office executive wears and office casual wears.

Generally, the office wears are designed with limited colour combinations related to the neutral colour schemes, limited and less detail decorations, clear and bold cuts lines (Tate, 2004), less aesthetically decorative accessories and body adornments. Hair normally set in tight or short hair styles and studs or small ear ornaments without hanging decorations are practiced. Foot wears are used to fully cover or half cover the toe areas. Well groomed, sophisticated, elegance and professional look are the main concepts of creating the overall appearance of the dress code. Office formal wear clothing category highly followed the rules and office casual wear clothing category showed more flexibility to add personal preferences on clothing through setting more space to select colours, garment accessories and jewelries.

Features of the fashion trends in office wear clothing category in Spring & Summer 2015 show more tendency to add textural fabric effects and long covered silhouette types. Hourglass looking silhouette type is commonly used in designs to enhance body rhythm and shape. Neck shapes with less deep cuts, long sleeves, high waist tight skirts with long slits, long trouser pants, pleating and patchworks techniques are commonly used to make details (Bichu,2014). Thick heavy looking materials, neutral and dark color ranges are in common practice.

Ladies office wear collections are one of the leading garment categories that show a tendency to follow western fashion trends in Sri Lankan fashion market. Women workforce in Sri Lanka

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contributes with high demand to uplift the economic level in the country. Market research was done using gathered information in retail shops specially related to the Mondy fashion brand available in Sri Lanka. According to the analysis of data, it shows that there is comparatively higher demand for office wear garments in Colombo, Gamphaha and Kaluthra districts.

METHODOLOGY

The study on office wear garment category related to the dress code, colour, and designs were done through the secondary data gatherings through the books, journals and online study materials. Office wear fashion trends in 2015 were identified referring to the available websites and online resources.

The study on present fashion preferences related to ladies executive staff belonging to the age group between 20 to 30 years was done through the survey by administering a questionnaire. Twenty five questions were developed in the questionnaire in order to identify preferences on office wear designs and to understand their awareness on new fashion trends of 2015. The questionnaire was focused on identifying fashion concerns of lady executives of Sri Lanka specially related to the Gamphaha, Colombo and Kaluthara districts. Information regarding office wears, dress codes or designs related to organizations was excluded in this study.

Pilot run was conducted among twenty ladies who were in the executive grades in the Western Province of Sri Lanka taking nine from Colombo, six from Gampha and five from Kaluthara districts. Final distribution of the questionnaire was conducted among fifty of Lady Executives that comprised twenty-one from Colombo District, fifteen from Gampha District and fourteen from Kaluthara district. Questionnaires were analyzed in terms of their preferences on designs of office wear category and their likeness to be with new fashion trends.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaires were analyzed for five main areas as to know preferred silhouette type for office wear designs, style of the design details related to the sleeve type, front look of the bodies and collar types, colour selection, material preferences and their relevant features to select a clothing for office wears.

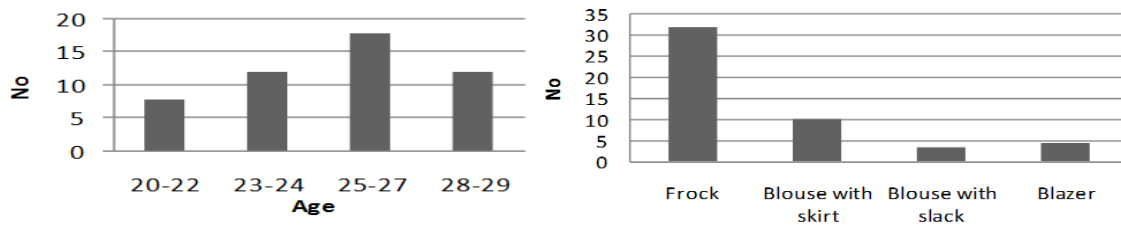


Figure 1: Number of participants related to age **Figure 2:** Preferences on silhouette type for office wears

Figure 1. Shows the breakdown of their preferences according to the survey. Frock and blouse with skirt are the most preferred garment category for office wear designs as the results shown in figure 02. It expresses that their likenesses to present themselves in rectangular, invert triangular or hourglass silhouette types. Round shaped or balloon shaped silhouette types are commonly not used for the office wear garment designs (Gehlhar, 2008).

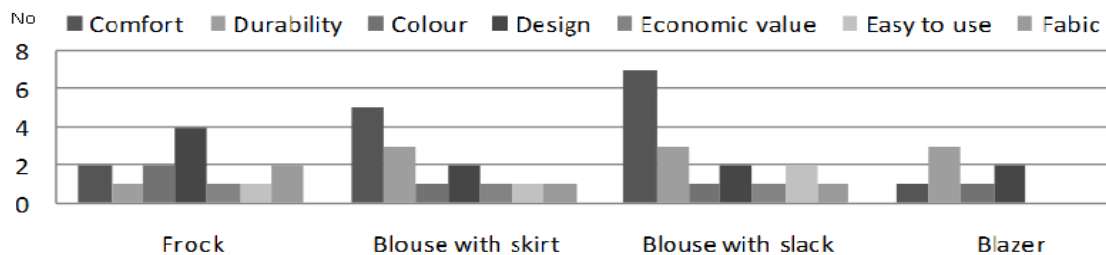


Figure 3: Preferences on considering areas to select the silhouette type

Figure 03 shows the preferences of selecting the office wear garments related to comfort, durability, colour, designs, economic values, easy to wear and fabric type. According to the analysis, preference is given to design of the frock as their first choice and comfort, colour and fabric type as their second preference in selecting a frock for office wear.

When selecting a blouse and skirt for office wears, comfort ability is considered as first preference. Durability and design are considered as second and third. Colour, economic value of the garment, practicality and the fabric type are lower level concerns when selecting a blouse and skirt.

Comfort is the main concern for selecting blouse with slack for office wears. Durability, design and practicality are their second concerns. Colour, economic value and fabric type are lower level concerns. Blazer designs are selected considering durability and the design of the item.

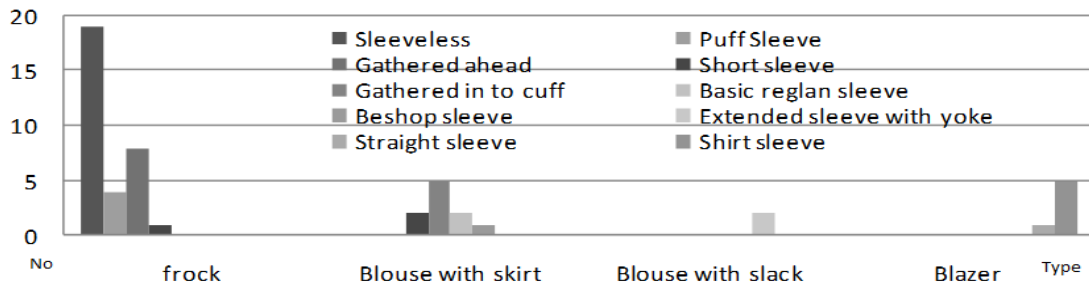


Figure 4: Preferences on sleeve types related to the silhouette type

Figure 04 present the preferences on sleeve types related to the silhouette type. Sleeveless designs are highly preferred for frocks and sleeves with gathered ahead are the second choice. Puff sleeves and short sleeves are only preferred as next. Gathered sleeves are main preference on blouse with skirt and shirt sleeve is mainly selected for blazer designs. The selection shows the tendency to take more ease for hand movements.

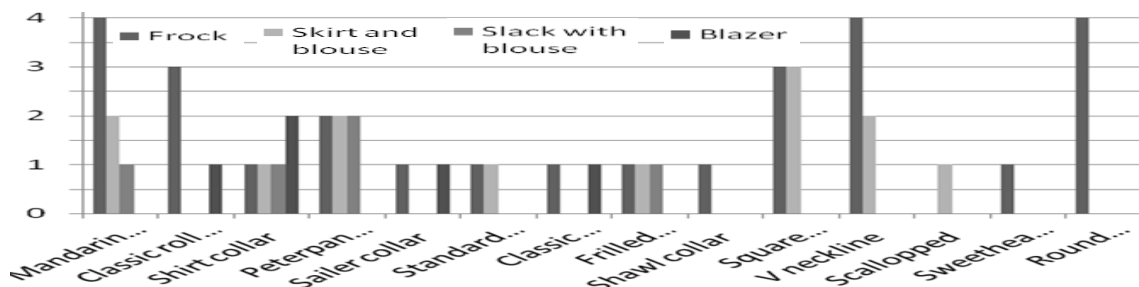


Figure 5: Preferences on collar types and neck lines

Figure 05 shows the preferred collar type and neck lines according to the silhouette category. Mandarin collar, Classic roll collar and Shirt collar shows high demand for frock styles. Mandarin collars and Peterpan collars are more preferred on blouses with skirt or pants. When it comes to the neck lines, V neck and round neck styles got more demand for frock styles and square and V neck line lines are more preferred on blouse styles. According to the survey selected collar styles and neck lines show simple design details and add more attraction and professional look to the appearance.

Figure 06 shows the front detail appearance of the bodice pattern related the silhouette type. Double breasted front and plain front are most preferred style features for frock styles and standard button lines and asymmetrical front lines and shows high demand for top and blouse styles. Figure 07 shows the colour preferences of selective group on office wear collections. Colours for office wear categories are selected mainly related to neutral colour range like black, white and grey and dark colour range related to navy blue, dark green and dark red and light and soft colour range like pink and yellow are selectively used in questionnaires. Black and white got comparatively high demand. Figure 08 shows the preferred fabric material type related to the silhouette category. Cotton is the most preferable fabric type for all garment categories and the

linen shows the second preference.

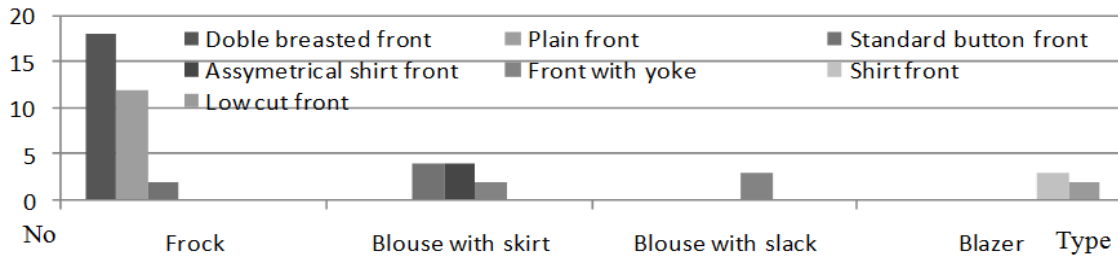


Figure 06: Favorite front styles in bodice

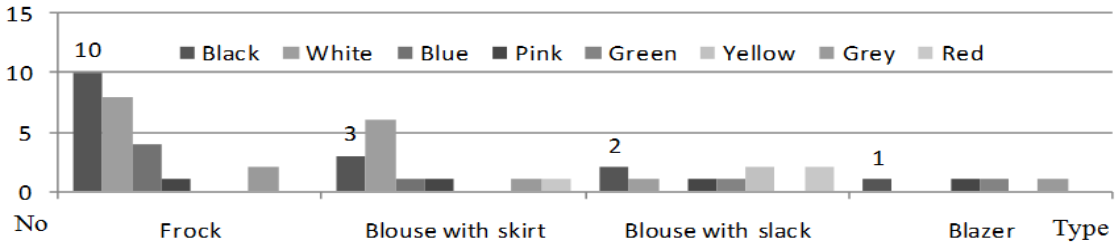


Figure 07: Colour preferences

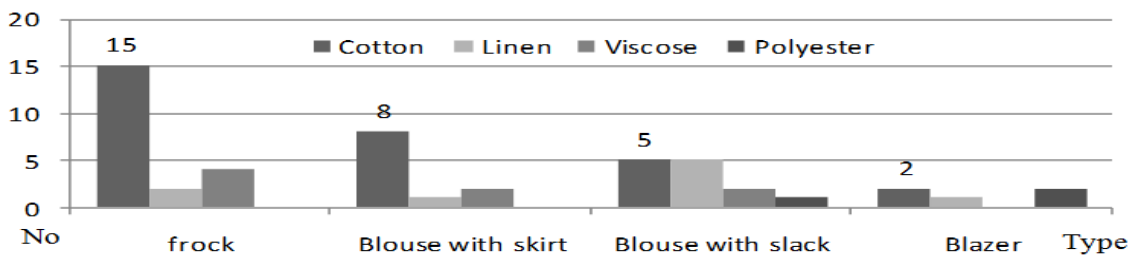


Figure 08: Material preferences

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the analysis of the survey results, ladies who work in the executives' grade in Sri Lanka are concerned about comfortable designs and fabric types related to the environmental conditions and practicability. Frock is most preferred with sleek, elegant and sophisticated look. It is required more freedom for hand movements. Collar Selection, neck line selection and front style feature selection not directly goes with western fashion trends come out in 2015spring and summer collections in office wear designs. Black and white colour range is the most preferable for office wear deigns and the colour selection goes with the colour trends for 2015 office wear collections.

Ladies who work in executive grades, Western province in Sri Lanka show good sense in fashion selection considering their practicality of the work place and new fashion trends come out in global fashion world. They show more tendencies to be with new designs considering the suitability of the garment. With that office wear garment category has adequate market in the Western Province in Sri Lanka.

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