Abstract
The aim of this paper is to understand the qualities preferred by Bangladeshi female consumers while buying Shalwar-Kameez. A total 750 female consumers of various ages from diverse economic and social backgrounds were studied using convenient sampling method. Primary and secondary data were collected and analyzed to identify buying behavior of Bangladeshi female consumers using a well structured questionnaire, interviews, personal observations and review of previous research works. After critical analysis of the collected data, a lot of observations about female consumers buying activities during buying Shalwar-Kameez have been found out including demand from consumers of different ages, factors influencing the consumers to switch one brand to other and so on.

Key Words: Quality preference, Shalwar-Kameez, Female consumers, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction
Consumers behavior is the process where individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, service, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon 2009). Knowledge of consumers behavior directly affects marketing strategy (Anderson et al, 2005). This is because of the marketing concept, i.e. the idea that firms exist to satisfy consumer needs. (Winter2000). Firm can satisfy those needs only to the extent that they understand their customers. For this reason, marketing strategies must incorporate knowledge of consumers behavior into every facet of a strategic marketing plan (Solomon 2002).

Fashion can be found in almost any human activity. Fashion can now more than ever become an important and meaningful activity in a clothing interested person’s life (Pentecost & Andrews, 2009). Women are socialized to pay more attention to appearance than men. Therefore, women are more aware of the manipulative potential of appearance than are men. They may come across the product a few times, think about it, research it, ask their friends and then start the process all over again. The process also involves getting validation from different reference resources or word-of-mouth sources (Johnson & Learned, 2004). Clothing can be used to create a favorable public image and influence the perceptions of others.

Bangladeshi womenswere has gone through a transformational phase during last decade. Increasing number of working women, independence in deciding economic matters, media exposure and awareness of current trends give a new dimension to this segment. Most of the women consumers are supposed to be comfortable in Shalwar-Kameez instead of Sahree in modern times.

Understanding the consumer perception in a cross-cultural environment is an important of marketing activities in an era that is becoming more consumer-centric. The main objective of this study is to critically examine and identify the most preferred qualities that are considered by the Bangladeshi female consumers while purchasing Shalwar-Kameez. Furthermore, the research targeted to i) identify the choices of female consumers of different ages ii) know the essential points to be followed by Shalwar-Kameez producers or manufacturers iii) find out the facts of switching one brand to another.

2. Methodology of the Study
A survey was undertaken with objective to identify the factors (Brand, Fibre type, Hand feel, Outer appearance, Color fastness, Shrinkage, Durability, Elasticity and Service after sale) preferred by the female consumers while buying Shalwar-Kameez. Among the female consumers 120 persons were in the age of 12 to 18, 350 persons were in the age of 19 to 30, 230 persons were in the age of 31 to 50 and 50 persons were in the age of 50+. The study was conducted in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, as this is one of the fastest growing education and IT hub in Bangladesh and provides an ideal environment for study with richness of female population from different cities of Bangladesh. The survey questionnaire was pilot-tested in few shopping mall in Dhaka city in order to refine before distribution. Personal as well as group visits were used to increase response rate. The survey questionnaire contains 16 questions requiring four types of answer-i)the first type uses a nominal scale, yes or no (It gives a clear realization whether the respondents understand the quality of products that are mentioned in the third category of the questions or not. ) ii) the second type includes short questions ( It indicates whether the respondents truly buy Shalwar-Kameez or not) iii) The third category is multiple choice question (Here each consumer selects the best five out of nine qualities for Shalwar-Kameez according to priority during purchasing that item). iv) The forth type is briefly descriptive (The respondent writes if she had any other preferable quality).

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed out of which 750 were completed by the respondents perfectly. The most common reasons of non-response were low education level and unwillingness. The result of the statistical analysis of the questionnaire is presented with suitable bar chart.

From the chart-I, it can be summarized that brand is getting the highest priority from female consumers during purchasing Shalwar-Kameez, followed by outer appearance, fibre type, hand feel, durability, color fastness and service after sale. While investigating the consumers response, it has been observed that the preferable factors vary from age to age.
The above mentioned chart (chart-II) indicates that outer appearance is the most important attribute for the teenaged respondents followed by outer appearance, hand feel and service after sale. But most of the teenaged consumers concentrate on outer appearance and brand. A product having good outlook from a reliable brand is always preferable for this type of consumers.

Chart-III represents that 19-30 aged consumers give more precedence on brand than outer appearance. This category of customers considers more factors compared to consumers of other aged. They critically examine a product while buying it.
According to the chart-IV, it can be said that the consumers of 31-50 ages show their interest mostly on fibre type then to outer appearance and hand feel. It is mentionable that this type of consumers also examines a product critically before buying it. After fibre type all the factors are considered almost equally by this aged customer.

Chart-IV: Factors considered by female consumers (Age: 31-50) during buying Shalwar-Kameez

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand feel</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color fastness</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer appearance</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durability</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibre type</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart-5 reveals that the consumers emphasis on five factors (brand, fibre type, hand feel, outer appearance and durability) of which brand and fibre types get the highest priority. This study can be summarized that young generation of Bangladesh are intending to brand and outer appearance in buying Shalwar-Kameez. Specially, the school and college going consumers are very much interested in brand and outer appearance. Among the consumers of 12-18 ages, about 48.4% consumers deem outer appearance and 47.31% consumers consider brand as their first priority. Most of the 19-30 aged consumers also choose brand (35.75%) as their first precedence and the second height is outer appearance (22.59%). This category of consumers also give their concentration on fibre type (12.87%), durability (8.86%), hand feel (7.15) and color fastness(6.01%). The 31 to 50 aged respondents emphasis on fibre type (25.23%), outer appearance (18.27%) and hand feel (15.225%).
Brand (13.05%), color fastness (12.18%) and durability (10.875%) is also considerable for the consumers of this range. Maximum consumers of 50+ ages favor brand (32%). After brand, the 50+ aged consumers give their priority on fibre type (26%), hand feel (18%), outer appearance (14%) and durability (10%) respectively.

4. Conclusion
This study demonstrates that the youthful consumers have much inclination on brand where as the consumers of 31 to 50 aged shows their interest on fibre type, outer appearance and hand feel rather than brand. Again, the respondents of over 50 years have fascination to branded product. So the Shalwar-Kameez producers or manufacturers should think about the consumer’s age before producing a particular product. It has been also seen that some consumers of various ages are showing their interest on service after sale. The demand of this quality may be increased in future. It has been also observed that most of the consumers are switching from one brand to another to get better service and quality. It is because of either not establishing available reliable brand in the country or the consumers don’t get desired output from existing brand. Some of the local brands are producing good quality where as some of them are tacky. A brand never exists for longer time without serving good quality. For longer time business, there is no alternative of achieving consumer’s satisfaction. So, our local brands should change their business strategy highlighting consumer’s demand. Top management should also strongly encourage employees’ involvement in quality improvement activities, attach great importance to employees’ suggestions, take responsibility for employees’ actions and be open and willing to listen to the voices of consumers.

References


