

## The Impact of a Model's Skin Tone and Ethnic Identification on Consumer Decision Making

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**Abstract :** Sri Lanka housed the lingerie product development and manufacturing subsidiary to renowned brands such as La Senza, Marks & Spencer, H&M, Etam, Lane Bryant, and George. Over the last few years, they have produced local brands such as Amante to cater to the local and regional customers. Past research has identified factors such as quality, price, and design to be vital when marketing lingerie to consumers. However, there has been minimum research that looks into the ethnically targeted market and skin colour within the Asian population. Therefore, the main aim of the research was to identify whether consumer preference for lingerie is influenced by the skin tone of the model wearing it. Moreover, the secondary aim was to investigate if the consumer preference for lingerie is influenced by the consumer's ethnic identification with the skin tone of the model. An experimental design was used to explore the above aims. The participants constituted of 66 females residing in the western province of Sri Lanka and were gathered via convenience sampling. Six computerized images of a real model were used in the study, and her skin tone was digitally manipulated to express three different skin tones (light, tan and dark). Consumer preferences were measured through a ranking order scale that was constructed via a focus group discussion and ethnic identity was measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised. Wilcoxon signed-rank test, Friedman test, and chi square test of independence were carried out using SPSS version 20. The results indicated that majority of the consumers ethnically identified and preferred the tan skin over the light and dark skin tones. The findings support the existing literature that states there is a preference among consumers when models have a medium skin tone over a lighter skin tone. The preference for a tan skin tone in a model is consistent with the ethnic identification of the Sri Lankan sample. The study implies that lingerie brands should consider the model's skin tones when marketing the brand to different ethnic backgrounds.

**Keywords :** consumer preference, ethnic identification, lingerie, skin tone

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