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CONSUMER PREFERENCES AND CLOTHING BRAND CHOICES: FOREIGN AND LOCAL BRANDS

Dominique Nicole Aguirre *

College of Management, Capiz State University, Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines.

* Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

The fashion industry continues to evolve as consumer preferences shift between foreign and local clothing brands. Understanding students' preferences reveals how brand perception influences purchasing in a competitive market. This research aims to determine students' preferences for foreign and local clothing brands. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted using a stratified proportional random sampling approach and the Cochran formula to calculate the total number of students from public higher education institutions and private higher education institutions, resulting in two hundred and eighty-seven (287) respondents. A researcher-developed survey questionnaire was used to gather the needed data, which were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings revealed that foreign brands are only moderately preferred for their symbolic appeal, as they gain attention by projecting prestige, modernity, and visibility through advertising and social media, while local brands are preferred for being economical, authentic, and a symbol of culture. Furthermore, these findings highlight that both foreign and local clothing brands must adapt to meet evolving population expectations by focusing on authenticity, cultural relevance, influencer collaboration, and online engagement to strengthen loyalty and thrive in a competitive fashion market.

Keywords: Brand Image, Clothing Brands, Consumer Preference, Foreign, Local

1 INTRODUCTION

This study examined consumer preferences for foreign and local clothing brands, focusing on upper garments such as T-shirts, polo shirts, blouses, dress shirts, sweaters, jackets, and hoodies. Despite local brands gaining popularity in the Philippines, many consumers still prefer foreign brands. According to Kantar Worldpanel's Brand Footprint (2018), only 28% of Top 50 brands purchased by Filipinos were local, while 72% were global, showing a stronger preference for foreign brands, especially in fashion, due to quality, reputation, and status [1]. Meanwhile, modernization is reshaping preferences: local brands are seen as culturally superior, affordable, and prideful, whereas foreign brands are viewed as prestigious and aspirational [2]. Digital media intensifies this comparison, boosting local brand preference through convenience, safety, and interactivity [3]. Influencer and live campaigns help local brands address doubts about smaller companies, while fast online responses build trust and loyalty. Colonial mentality still influences preference for foreign brands, with many linking imported clothing to higher status, style, and quality [2]. Western and European brands are symbols of social standing, even though Philippine-made products offer similar quality yet remain

undervalued. This study addresses gaps in understanding consumer perceptions, especially among university students, regarding local versus foreign clothing brands.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Guided by Joseph Sirgy's Self-Congruity Theory (1986), it examined how ideal self-image, social self-image, and brand image influenced buying decisions. Foreign brands, originating outside the Philippines, were associated with prestige, quality, and global recognition, whereas local brands were linked to affordability, cultural identity, and accessibility. Consumer preference refers to individuals' tendencies when choosing between these categories. Ideal self-image is the aspirational identity, social self-image is how others perceive them, and brand image is their evaluation of a brand's style and reputation.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative cross-sectional survey gathered data on consumer preferences for foreign and local clothing brands, focusing on ideal, social, and brand images.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The 287 participants included 189 students from a Public Higher Education Institution and 99 from a Private Institution, all enrolled in business programs and experienced in buying local or foreign clothing brands during the first semester of 2025–2026.

Selection considered profile factors like gender, university, course, family income, allowance, and purchase frequency of local and foreign brands to ensure validity. They were primary participants, directly involved in purchasing and wearing both brand types.

3.3 Research Instruments

The study used a survey with three parts. Data were collected at a single point in time to capture consumer preferences without tracking changes over time. The first part was the profile of the participants, including gender, university, course, academic status, family income, daily allowance, and purchase frequency of foreign and local clothing brands. The second and third parts consist of Likert-scale questions on ideal self-image, social self-image, and brand image for both foreign and local brands.

The questionnaire was validated by experts to ensure it matched the study's objectives. A pilot test with 30 third-year Business Administration students from public and private institutions assessed reliability through Cronbach's alpha.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedures and Analysis

The researchers gathered information to understand potential outcomes and ensure credible, reliable data collection. They prepared a formal letter to seek approval and access to the student population at a Public and a private higher education institution. A survey was distributed via Google Forms, completed by students, and then collected for statistical analysis using descriptive statistics. Data was coded in Excel and analyzed with SPSS to profile participants and assess consumer preferences for foreign and local brands.

This study adhered to the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (2022) and Capiz State University standards. An Informed Consent Form explained the research purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and possible risks and benefits. Participants could refuse or withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning unique IDs and securing data—hard copies in locked cabinets and digital files password-protected. The study also complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, limiting the use of personal information to academic purposes.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Level of Consumer Preference on Foreign Clothing Brands as a Whole.

The 287 participants' preference for foreign clothing brands was "moderately preferred" with a mean of 3.22, as shown in Table 1. This stems from symbolic appeal—foreign brands attract attention through prestige, modernity, and visibility via advertising and social media, shaping consumer perception of image and status. However, the preference isn't dominant, as practical considerations limit influence. Foreign brands mainly rely on advertising, endorsements, and

online presence, but risk losing appeal if they ignore affordability and cultural relevance. May et al. (2023) and Cheah et al. (2020) observe that status needs, influencer persuasion, and social media exposure attract consumers, but these influences are superficial, so admiration doesn't necessarily lead to strong preferences [4,5]. Brand Image received the highest mean score of 3.50, interpreted as "preferred". This indicates a favorable attitude, in which participants recognize foreign clothing brands for their reputation and symbolic qualities. Brand image is the most influential factor in shaping preference, durability, and responsiveness to global fashion trends, reinforced by promotion, celebrity endorsement, and digital platforms that enhance visibility and appeal.

Table 1: Level of Consumer Preference on Foreign Clothing Brands as a Whole

Statement	Standard Deviation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Ideal Self-image	0.777	3.09	Moderately Preferred
Social Self-image	0.777	3.07	Moderately Preferred
Brand Image	0.799	3.50	Preferred
Overall	0.694	3.22	Moderately Preferred

Legend: Mean: 4.21 – 5.00 = Highly Preferred; 3.41 – 4.20 = Preferred; 2.61 – 3.40 = Moderately Preferred; 1.81 – 2.60 = Less Preferred; 1.00–1.80 = Least Preferred; SD: 0.00 – 0.49 = Very Consistent; 0.50 – 0.99 = Consistent; 1.00 – 1.49 = Moderately Consistent; 1.50 – 1.99 = Less Consistent; 2.00 and above = Least Consistent; *Source:* Data from Researchers

4.2 Level of Consumer Preference on Local Clothing Brands as a Whole

Consumers favor local clothing brands, rating 3.59 as 'preferred', as shown in Table 2, valuing affordability, authenticity, and cultural importance. These brands symbolize identity, loyalty, and pride, driven by cultural affinity and ethnocentrism. Studies show ethnocentric consumers prioritize pride and identity over price. Brand image scored highest (3.66), reflecting positive views tied to longevity, fashion, and cultural fit, reinforcing identity. To boost acceptance, brands should showcase authenticity, cultural pride, and trend awareness. Research confirms that cultural relevance and authenticity enhance brand image, increasing preference. Ideal Self-image (3.58) and Social Self-image (3.54) are preferred, signaling that local brands positively influence personal and social identity—helping consumers express individuality, cultural ties, confidence, and belonging. Brands should emphasize relatability and inclusiveness. While most favor local brands, some focus on affordability, authenticity, and cultural pride, others on global fashion. Brands should use adaptable strategies to reach both ethnocentric and global consumers. Origin influences preferences, but bonds may be weaker than expected.

Table 2: Level of Consumer Preference on Local Clothing Brands as a Whole

Statement	SD	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Ideal Self-image	0.660	3.58	Preferred
Social Self-image	0.678	3.54	Preferred
Brand Image	0.698	3.66	Preferred
Overall	0.599	3.59	Preferred

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = Highly Preferred; 3.41 – 4.20 = Preferred; 2.61 – 3.40 = Moderately Preferred; 1.81 – 2.60 = Less Preferred; 1.00–1.80 = Least Preferred; SD: 0.00 – 0.49 = Very Consistent; 0.50 – 0.99 = Consistent; 1.00 – 1.49 = Moderately Consistent; 1.50 – 1.99 = Less Consistent; 2.00 and above = Least Consistent; *Source:* Data from Researchers.

4.3 Insights into Consumer Preference for Foreign and Local Clothing Brands

Consumers approach fashion by balancing aspiration, identity, and value, using it to express themselves through choices that consider affordability, durability, and symbolism. Brands help shape ideal self-images, influencing purchase decisions with signals of confidence, sophistication, and modernity. Positioning products as tools for aspirational roles fosters emotional loyalty and aligns with lifestyle goals. Social self-image, shaped by peer validation and community, influences choices, with brands serving as identity markers. Recommendations, peer experiences, and community ties shape buying behavior; thus, brands should promote inclusivity and social proof. Consistent, credible brand personality influences trust and preference, connecting aspiration with social approval. Businesses must align narrative, design, and customer experience to build trust.

5 CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, researchers concluded that consumer preferences for foreign and local clothing brands are influenced by factors like credibility, fashionability, cultural relevance, and brand image. Consumers generally agree that these factors impact their choices, with preferences being consistent across demographics. The study suggests that retailers must adapt to student demands by incorporating authenticity, personalization, and digital engagement. Overall, foreign and local brands significantly influence consumer buying decisions, offering marketers guidance on responding to this influential consumer subgroup.

Recommendation

The researchers recommend that clothing brands focus on consumer preferences for foreign and local products. They suggest encouraging appreciation for local brands while recognizing the role of foreign brands in shaping identity, fashion, and lifestyle. Educating consumers on the impact of repeated purchasing highlights loyalty, cultural identity, and sustainability. Effective branding can cultivate the ideal, social, and brand images, fostering deeper engagement. Foreign brands should align their identities through innovative designs that create cultural and personal connections, supported by loyalty programs and digital campaigns that emphasize social desirability.

Local brands should enhance their visibility through promotions, pop-up stores, and inclusive branding that emphasizes diversity, quality, and authenticity to build consumer confidence. Strategies should appeal broadly by appealing to shared values like pride, price, and sustainability. Future research could explore factors such as fashion involvement, perceived quality, and psychological motives behind loyalty, and possibly include demographic and geographic comparisons to provide broader insights.

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