

A Study on Emotional Drivers in Consumer Gift Purchasing in Sri Lankan Local Retail Industry

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Abstract

Despite the importance of gift-giving in Sri Lanka's cultural and retail context, little research has explored the emotional drivers that shape consumer gift-purchasing decisions, despite their relevance to established consumer behaviour theories on emotion-driven decision-making. The objective of this study is to explore how emotional, cultural, aesthetic and practical factors influence gift-purchasing decisions in the local retail industry. Using a qualitative approach and purposive sampling was employed to capture participants with relevant experiences and understandings of the store's offerings. Researchers conducted six in-depth interviews and four focus group discussions with customers at the Honey Bee (Gifts & Crafts) store in Northern Sri Lanka. This targeted selection ensured that participants had relevant experiences and understandings of the store's offerings, including how specific products, displays and contexts influenced their shopping behaviour. Thematic analysis highlighted four main influences on how people choose gifts. Emotional drivers include personal connections and meaningful milestones, while cultural drivers reflect the role of traditions in gift-giving. Aesthetic drivers capture the appeal of colourful, creative displays and attractive packaging, and practical drivers involve recommendations from others, helpful customer service, fair pricing, and good product quality. Together, these factors shape the way customers make thoughtful and meaningful choices in the local retail context. From a psychological perspective, personalised service, empathetic staff, warm lighting and engaging displays make shopping more enjoyable, foster loyalty and highlight the key role of emotions in consumer decision-making. Customers are naturally drawn to colourful, creative displays and gifts that reflect personal milestones and cultural traditions. By revealing the unique influence of cultural traditions and emotional connections on gift-purchasing decisions, this study fills a gap in the literature on consumer emotions in Sri Lanka and provides practical guidance for enhancing customer experiences in local retail.

Keywords: consumer psychology, emotional drivers, gift retailing, local retail industry, personalized service