

The Role of Consumer Associative and Dissociative Mindsets in Determining Consumer Buying Behavior: Skin Whitening Face Care Products

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The role of associative and dissociative mindsets in buying behavior has been studied in the literature. But it has not been studied in the scope of face care products in Sri Lanka. Heintzelman & King (2014) stated that associative mindset, which is sensitive to connections in experience and the world, is involved in the cognitive process connected with feelings of meaning. According to Howell (2005), dissociation is a relationally structured survival strategy that arises out of the mind's need to permit interaction with frightening but still immediately needed others. This research explores the question: "how consumers' associative and dissociative mindsets operate in determining consumer buying behavior?" This study takes the qualitative research design and the grounded theory approach. Colombo, Panadura, Moratuwa, Nugegoda, Dehiwala, and Ratmalana were studied in the Western province. This study selected ten working and non-working females under the age group of 18-28 residing in the Western province. The researcher used the convenience sampling method for selecting the respondents. Appointments were made with respondents via the phone and in person. All in-depth interviews were conducted in convenient places for respondents and included semi-structured questionnaires with demographic questions and open-ended questions to assess associative and dissociative mindsets and consumer behavior in buying skin whitening face care products. When associative mindset is tested, the driver: Higher Self Esteem has the most influence on employed females who use fairness products and unemployed females are influenced by the driver: Youthful and Impressive Appearance when using a fairness product on their face. When dissociative mindset is tested, working females are affected by the driver: Missed Opportunities whereas non-working females are mainly influenced by the driver: Social Disconnect. However, the indicators of "Higher Social Status" and "Western Beauty Standards" of associative and dissociative mindsets have minimal prominence, respectively. The main intension of the users of fairness products is to have a blemish free, even toned healthy skin rather than becoming fair. Unemployed females also like to use a fairness cream due to the fear of social rejection. Respondents show a special attention to their skin tone irrespective of them being employed or not. Cosmetic companies should focus on product strategies that develop variants under the same brand as face wash, face cream and body lotion.

Keywords: *Associative Mindset, Consumer Buying Behavior, Dissociative Mindset, Skin Whitening Face Care Products*