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## Knowledge on lingerie selection and usage among adolescent girls

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### Abstract

Lingerie has been in usage since time immemorial. History traces the roots of this apparel back to 3000 BC where ancient statues are discovered seen wearing a crossed band over their shoulders. Once considered to be trivial, perception of this piece of clothing is fast becoming very appealing in recent times. During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, intimate wear has gained considerable boost with many big, small, domestic, and global brands entering into the segment. This segment is becoming a hot favorite of fashion designers as well; whose creativity gives the small garment a big reputation. Times have changed now and for the good. With factors like growing number of working women, changing fashion trends, rising information level and media exposure, and the foray of famous foreign brands in the Indian market, Indian women have become more conscious about the range of brands that should fill their wardrobes.

**Keywords:** Selection of lingerie, brand experience of lingerie, types of lingerie, choice of lingerie

### Introduction

The fact that women's dresses have always reflected the dynamic changes in society can not be negated easily. And as the Indian women are coming of age, the statement holds special significance when talking of their attire. Financial freedom is one of the top priorities of Indian women, especially in the urban cities and with financial freedom comes the choice of leading a lifestyle that suits one's tastes and preferences. Women like to wear expensive jewellery, carry high-end gadgets and buy apparel and footwear that make them look good, feel comfortable and also exude their style statement in a subtle way. When it comes to enquire about innerwear or lingerie, the faces that use to give a shy and 'do not cross your limit' looks have turned less aggressive and more argumentative.

Like all Indians who love to argue on any issue, as Amartya Sen says in his book "The Argumentative Indian," Indian women now prefer to talk about their innerwear to people who can help offer them the products they are looking for. However, the scene was extremely different few years back when women were in the sole discretion of salesmen who used to decide about the piece of lingerie – size, fit and brand that are suitable for them. "Indian women consumers are still very shy when it comes to the purchase of lingerie. But slowly and steadily, they are getting bolder in terms of selection of their lingerie and as a result they have started demanding lingerie of their choice, which is in effect helping the growth of branded lingerie in India," according to Mr. Rajnish Bansal who owns two exclusive lingerie shop in Ghaziabad and who has already found a place of honor in the Indian Limca Book of World Records for a whopping collection of 22,300 undergarment items.

Times have changed now and for the good. With factors like growing number of working women, changing fashion trends, rising information level and media exposure, and the foray of famous foreign brands in the Indian market, Indian women have become more conscious about the range of brands that should fill their wardrobes. The old practice of stacking lingerie in a corner of wardrobe no longer exists in the modern age. Rather, the taste of women related to their undergarments has reached new heights and it will not be a hyperbole to say that it has become a fashion statement

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- First, the outerwear for women have undergone a tremendous change in the recent past – from salwar-kameez and saris to denims and t-shirts and feminine tops, especially in the urban areas.
- An increasing number of female demography is entering professional lives where they need different outerwear for office, parties and recreation, as a result of which, they opt for innerwear that matches the outerwear.
- Third, women are getting more conscious of their health and physique – a phenomenon increasingly witnessed with the sprawling gymnasiums in the neighborhood basements. It is the fitness factor which has given rise to the sales of sports brassieres and briefs that suit the sporting activities of women.
- Last, but not the least, special occasions like a marriage ceremony or social gathering calls for a different outerwear and a matching innerwear.

Largely unorganized, the women’s innerwear market is at present dominated by many local Indian brands. Women tend to exhibit a strong comfort factor in buying lingerie from regular unorganized local stores, predominantly due to price, but departmental stores are also very popular as they provide range and product displays and also have trial rooms. Exclusive brand stores are explored when looking for depth in styles and variety in colours. Even though there is an increase in the purchase frequency and average spends on innerwear, this category is predominantly a ‘planned purchase’ or an ‘occasion-based purchase’ category, especially among women, who tend to purchase and even splurge around such occasions as weddings, anniversaries, holidays etc. However, promotions and offers tend to induce impulse purchases. Again, experimentation in terms of styles is most often done when buying for special occasions; for daily wear, known styles and brands are preferred.

**Methodology**

A pilot study was conducted on 90 adolescent girls aged between 16 to 18 years, studying pre degree courses in Tirupati and Chittoor towns. The knowledge of the sample on lingerie selection was assessed using a structured questionnaire developed for the purpose. The questionnaire developed to collect data on the decision making strategies for purchasing lingerie, the characteristics of adolescent girls lingerie purchasing behavior and marketing factors influencing underwear purchases.

first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect personal and family of the respondents including age, monthly income, education, occupation and size of the family etc. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions on knowledge on lingerie purchasing behavior including types of brasseries usually they purchase, brasserie cup size and shape, types of panty that they usually purchase, Types of materials, colours, patterns that affected their purchasing decision, frequency of purchasing, purchased quantity each time, amount of money they spent for lingerie and source of lingerie they purchase.

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to examine the marketing factors that affected their decisions to purchase lingerie.

**Results and discussion**

**Age**

The chronological age of the girls as mentioned in their SSC certificates were collected. Most of the respondents (69 %) were 17 year old, and remaining (31%) were 18 year old adolescent girls. This is the age at which girls shows more concern over their appearance.

**Monthly family income**

The money earned by the parents of the respondents in a month was considered as their monthly family income. Monthly family income of majority (40%) of the respondents was between Rupees 6001- 24,000 per month. A 27 percent had monthly family income less than 6,000 rupees and 11percent respondents had monthly family income between 24,000 -480001 rupees. The family monthly income of the adolescent girls shows that majority of them belonged middle income and low middle income families.

**Education status of the parents**

The formal education received by the parents was taken as their educational status. Education influences knowledge and attitudes hence it was included as variable. Nearly half of the respondent’s parents had college/ Technical/ Professional education. A 25 percent of the respondent’s parents completed High school education. Only 20 percent of the respondent’s parents attended primary school. Thus notable percentage of the parents were educated.

**Occupation of the parents**

The work done to make a living was considered as occupation. The occupation determines the amount of time available to spend with family and leisure time activities. Most of the respondent’s (33%) parents were earning money through daily wages and 29 percent of the respondent’s parents were employed. Only a small percentage (18%) were doing business. A 20 percent were living on the income received from their property and agriculture.

**Brasserie back band size**

Wearing the right sized bra not only ensures comfort but is also important from a wellness perspective.

**Table 1:** Brasserie back band size

Brasserie back band size	Frequency	Percentage
32	52	58
34	26	29
36	12	13
38	-	-
40	-	-
Above 40	-	-
Total	90	100

According to the figures shown in the table 1, most of the respondents (58%) using 32 size brasserie back band size, followed by 29 percent who were using 34 size brasserie back band size. Only 13 percent of the respondents were using 36 size brasserie back band size.

**Brasserie cup size**

The breasts should be enclosed within the bra cups, with no bulging or gaping at the top or sides. Perfect brasserie cup size gives the perfect shape and comfort to the body.

**Table 2:** Brasserie cup size

Brasserie cup size	Frequency	Percentage
Cup A	8	9
Cup B	4	4
Cup C	-	-
Cup D	-	-
Cup E	-	-
I don't know	78	87
	90	100

The table 2 shows that most of the respondents (87%) have no idea about their brasserie cup size and very few of them (9%) use Cup A brasserie size. Only 4 percent of the respondents use cup B size brasseries. Irrespective of their cup size, women choose brasseries of cup sizes which are not of their size. This is mainly due to lack of knowledge on determining their cup size.

**Panty size**

The size of the panty influenced the comfort of the person. If any difference found as too large or small certainly effect the easiness. In this regard the researcher collected the information related to the following to the exact size and the results were tabulated in table 3.

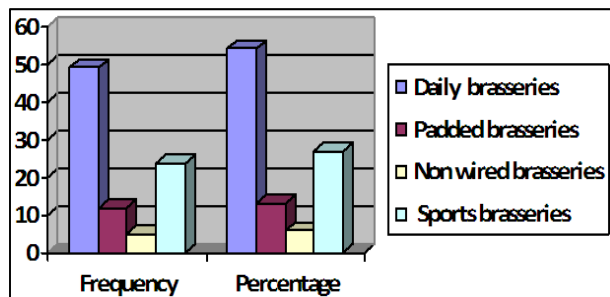
**Table 3:** Panty size

Panty size	Frequency	Percentage
SIZE S	5	6
SIZE M	64	71
SIZE L	13	14
SIZE XL	8	9
	90	100

The table 3 shows the panty size worn by the respondents. The majority of the respondents (71%) were a Size M panty, followed by SIZE L (14%) and 9 percent of the respondents use an XL SIZE panty while 6 percent wore size S panty. Panties of different size and types are available, depending on the working hours, type activity, health condition adolescent girls can select the panties.

**Brasserie types usually purchased**

Adolescent girls frequently interested in changing their brasseries to suit daily and special occasions. The body frame varied from one person to another person which might be one of the key factor in choosing the brasserie type such as padded, non-wired, sports brasserie and daily brasseries. The results obtained were presented in figure 1.



**Fig 1:** Brasserie types usually purchased

The figure 1 shows that the research results shows that 54 percent of the respondents usually purchased brasseries for daily wear while sports brasseries were usually purchased

by 27 percent of the respondents. Only 13 percent of the respondents purchased padded brasseries. Brasseries for different occasions, purposes are available. The adolescent girls use only one type of brasserie that is used for day time. Indian women are largely unaware of other categories of lingerie. They are still unaware of various kinds of innerwear, styled and made differently to suit different body types and to be worn under different attires. Different category of bras, like t-shirt bras, melded, strapless, push-ups or seamless or various segments of lingerie like loungewear, sleepwear, comfort wear, maternity wear, shape wear are relatively unknown to most consumers. According to Schultz (2004: 195) The sports bra is also "implicated in the creation and maintenance of dominant cultural ideas of the women's breast.

**Panty types usually purchased**

The regular dressing of the respondents might influence the type of panty for regular usage.

**Table 4:** Panty types usually purchased

Usually purchased panty types	Frequency	Percentage
Briefs	84	93
G-Strings	4	4
Shorts	2	3
Gridles	-	-
	90	100

As shown in the table 4, The majority of the respondents (93%) usually purchased briefs. Only 4 percent usually purchased G-strings and 3 percent were purchased shorts. Adolescent girls who frequently preferred to wear skirts or frocks might choose either G-strings or shorts specifically. Otherwise if they were accustomed to common wear like kurtha & pyjamas or pants & tops might be comfortable in wearing briefs.

**Role of fabric in selection of lingerie**

Lingerie is manufactured using different types of fabric; cotton, synthetic, satin, chiffon etc. The preference for fabric depends on climate, season, type of work, comfort, durability, fashion ability and trendiness.

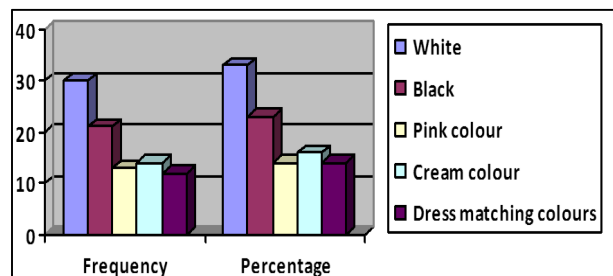
**Table 5:** Fabrics that affected decisions to select the lingerie

Fabric type	Frequency	Percentage
Synthetic fabric	42	47
Cotton	30	33
Satin	4	5
Mesh	2	2
Chiffon	3	3
Lace	9	10
	90	100

The table 5 revealed that most of the respondents (47%) ranked synthetic fabric as the first preference in select their lingerie, followed by cotton (33%). Very few of the respondents (10%) gave priority to lace material while selecting the lingerie. The material of lingerie had a directly relationship with how the respondents feel when they wore their lingerie. Jantzen *et al.* (2006) [4] suggested that wearing special underwear transforms women's self image.

**Choice of Colors for lingerie**

The personal interest, colour preference matching to the dress were few of the characteristics influencing the colour selection. As Grove-White (2001) [3] stresses, colours can establish a new trend in the complex fashion system, but can also denote or affect individuals mood.



**Fig 2:** Colors of lingerie usually purchased

According to the figures shown in the figure 2, White colour lingerie was preferred by a notable percentage (33%) of respondents preferred, followed by black 23percent of the respondents. 16 percent of the respondents regarded cream colour lingerie as the third preference that they usually purchased. In the case of underwear, this is even more interesting, since even though it is ostensibly hidden from view, the colours of underwear can still be important to the wearer in terms of the view, the colours of underwear can still be important to the wearer in terms of the meanings these colours might be transmit. In addition, for under wear dark colours are preferred by adolescent girls.

**Patterns of lingerie usually purchased**

Lingerie being the inner wear the preference to patterns might be less focused the exact interested to pattern preference was gathered and interpreted the results.

**Table 6:** Patterns of lingerie usually purchased

Usually purchased patterns	Frequency	Percentage
Plain	82	91
Dots	6	7
Vertical stripe	-	-
Horizontal stripe	-	-
Flowery	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

In the Table 6, 91 percent of the respondents ranked plain pattern as the first pattern that they usually purchased, followed by dots (7%). Only 2 percent of the respondents considered flowery patterns as the third pattern that they usually purchased. Plain pattern or non decorative design was popular among respondents rather than decorative styles. Various designs may not be the only key factor when respondents decide to buy lingerie.

**Frequency of purchase of lingerie per year**

The present data was also aimed at collecting the information on frequency of purchasing per year. The purchasing frequency was grouped into categorizes and results were denoted in the table 7.

**Table 7:** Frequency of purchase of lingerie per year

Usually purchased patterns	Frequency	Percentage
1-2 times	4	5
3-4 times	80	88
5-6 times	6	7
More than 6 times	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7 describes the frequency of lingerie purchased per year. Majority of the respondents (88%) purchased under wear 3-4 times per year and 7 percent of the respondents purchased underwear between 5-6 times per year. Only 5 percent of the respondents purchased 1-2 times per year. Respondents frequency of purchasing was depended mainly on their economic condition and unawareness of usage of lingerie.

**Pieces of lingerie purchased each time**

The purchasing pattern on lingerie was also evaluated in terms of number of pieces purchased at each time similar to frequency purchasing this particular parameter was divided into 4 groups and tabulated the results.

**Table 8:** Pieces of lingerie purchased each time

Pieces of lingerie purchased each time	Frequency	Percentage
1-2 pieces	84	93
3-4 pieces	3	4
5-6 pieces	2	3
More than 6 pieces	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

The table 8 showed that most of the respondents (84%) purchased 1-2 pieces of lingerie each time, followed by 3-4 pieces each time (4%). Only 3 percent purchased 5-6 pieces of lingerie each time.

**Price ranges of lingerie**

Income, awareness levels, quality preference, brand, shopping type etc. were few of the key factors influencing the respondents in allotting price while purchasing.

**Table 9:** Price ranges of lingerie

Price range of lingerie	Frequency	Percentage
200-300	62	68
400-500	24	26
600-700	6	6
800-900	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

The Table 9 reveals the price range of underwear. The 68 percent of the respondents purchased lingerie at the price range of 200-300 rupees. Only 26 percent purchased lingerie that price range of 400-500 rupees and remaining 6 percent purchased at the price range of 600-700 rupees. Many of the respondents purchased lingerie of 200-300 rupees even though this price is also high from their family monthly income. It may be because girls gave importance to lingerie as it is necessary to keep them comfortable.

### Tendency towards shopping

The personal relationship with the respondent played an important role for accompanying them while purchasing the lingerie. The tendency towards the shopping with accompanying person was gathered and depicted in the figure 3.

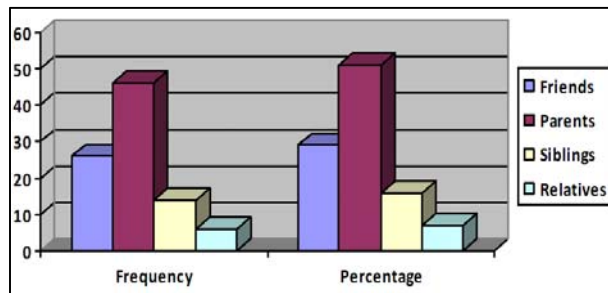


Fig 3: Tendency towards shopping

The table 12 shows that majority of the respondents are depended on their parents for selection of lingerie. Remaining 29 percent of the respondents preferred their friend's choice and 16 percent of the respondents depended on siblings for selection of lingerie. Many of the respondents feeling shy to express their problems regarding the fitness of lingerie, so mostly they followed their parents and friends while selecting the lingerie.

### Conclusion

The study results allows to conclude that

- Plain pattern or non-decorative design was popular among respondents rather than decorative styles. Various designs may not be the only key factor when respondents decide to buy lingerie.
- Most of the respondents chose department stores as their easiest way to shop or purchase lingerie
- Comfort was the most influential factor when most of the adolescent girls decide to select their lingerie.
- For an intimate product like lingerie, adolescent girls value quality most over color and style, as they feel that being an innerwear garment which undergoes numerous washes, it is important that the quality of product is much better, instead of style or color as the garment is not visible outside.
- The adolescent girls under study selected inner wear with the help of their mothers, hence it was selection of both mothers and daughters in majority of cases.

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