

## **Modeling Decision Process in Textile Buying: A Field Experiment with Data from the Buying of Bengal Handlooms in Calcutta**

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*In this study the non-price factors that influence consumers in making their choices are used to build a model for the purchase decisions of textiles. The cognitive variables are measured through structured judgmental responses and subjective attribute values. Hypotheses relating them with expenditure on quantities bought are validated with a sample of handloom buyers in an all textile market.*

### **Introduction**

To explain the actions of consumers, researchers employ a model or representations of the mental events and feelings of decision makers. In most of the models, one assumes that action is initiated with a processing, followed by an evaluation of the information and the development of an attitude, and ending with the emergence of a volition to make a choice. This forms the basis of the fundamental model. The purpose of this article is to develop a model for the purchase of textiles, in particular handloom textiles.

It is a well-known fact that consumers evaluate product alternatives beyond price<sup>1</sup> depending on the type of product. Textile for clothing differs from other usual products in the fact that it offers its users twofold benefits. First there is the basic function of clothing. Second is the function of serviceability. And it is this second function of clothing, which vitally influences the decision process of textile consumers. This factor becomes all the more salient when the textile involved is a specialized version like the handloom textile, a product which has certain appeal in terms of exclusivity with regard to colour and ethnic design, not to speak of the ethos of tradition that each handloom item invokes.

In this paper we present an approach for building a model of the purchase decision for textiles based on structured judgmental responses and subjective attribute ratings. Hypotheses are derived from the model positioning the effects of the cognitive variables on quantity actually bought. Then to validate the model, the hypotheses are tested by examining consumers' decisions to purchase handloom textiles.

### **Research Approach**

The few determinants, specific to a consumer, that aid the consumer's decision process, arise from her involvement with textile. When the consumer sets out to procure clothing, she is driven by needs of varied kinds which are reinforced by familiarity and

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<sup>1</sup> Zaithaml V.A., 1988, 'Consumers' Perception of Price, Quality and Value: A Mean-end Model and Synthesis of Evidence', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 52, p 2.