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FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER'S CHOICE OF A LOCAL  
FASHION BRAND IN VIETNAM. CASE COMPANY: NOSBYN

Degree Programme in International Business

2020

FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER'S CHOICE OF DOMESTIC FASHION BRANDS IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM. CASE COMPANY: NOSBYN

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Degree Programme in International Business

May 2020

Number of pages: 52

Appendices: 1

Keywords: fashion, consumer behavior, Vietnam.

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This bachelor thesis was conducted as a consumer behavior research in fashion industry in Vietnam. The necessity of the thesis resulted from case company Nosbyn's desire in collecting information on the current buying pattern of consumers in order to establish appropriate marketing strategies in the future. The main objective of the thesis was to provide the company with the necessary knowledge on Vietnamese consumer behavior as well as the factors influencing their fashion purchases of local brands.

The utilized theoretical framework consists of consumer behavior analysis and research methodology. Consumer behavior analysis explains the concept of consumer behavior, characteristics affecting consumer behavior, and the buyer decision process established by Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong. The research methodology part discusses the research approach, research method, data collection technique, data analysis method, and how the questionnaire was designed in this thesis.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this report. Secondary data was collected through academic textbooks, articles and journals from recognized research institutions, and reputable news websites; while primary data was gathered through an online survey. The analysis was conducted by explaining the data collected from the survey through pie charts and bar charts mostly.

The research resulted in a comprehensive overview on Vietnamese consumer buying behavior. In this report, participants' age and personal income, their general perceptions towards fashion products of local brands, buying criteria they use when making purchase decisions, their experience with the local fashion brands, what they were satisfied and not satisfied with the purchased products and service, what draws them to return for the next apparel purchases, what could likely increase their intention to buy clothes from local brands, will be presented. The outcome of this research can be found in chapter 7 where the main factors impact on Vietnamese consumers' choice of local fashion brands were given out.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry in Vietnam is getting more fiercely competitive as the number of local fashion brands is growing drastically. The product design ranges from basic to sophisticated styles but in general, it serves the same customer segments, that are students, office workers, and people who seek for clothes with reasonable prices. The rising number of domestic fashion brands has provided local customer with more options; however, it has also created an intensive competition among brands.

Due to different backgrounds, there will be factors that impact on the choice of clothing brands among customers. Since the competition among brands in the industry is keen, the client company of this thesis, Nosbyn, would like to find out what the factors are and how the consumer buying behavior in Vietnam is when it comes to clothes shopping, especially at local fashion brands. This thesis therefore serves as a consumer behavior research which provides Nosbyn in-depth information of the buying criteria consumers use in their decision-making process, their experience and opinions towards apparel products made by local brands, and what would increase their intention to visit the shops in the future.

The thesis consists of 4 main parts, structured chronologically as followed: the introduction (chapter 1 and 2); the overview of the industry (chapter 3); the theoretical background (chapter 4); the research (chapter 5 and 6); and the summary and conclusions (chapter 7). The introduction part of the thesis contains reasons for conducting the research, research problem and research objectives, as well as conceptual frame of reference. The overview of the industry comprises information of the current fashion industry in Vietnam and the competition between foreign and local fashion brands in the country. The theoretical part includes the necessary information covered in the literature that was used for the research, which are concept of consumer behavior, characteristics affecting consumer behavior, and the buyer decision process. Next, the research part contains the research methodology, research findings and analysis of the

collected data. Lastly are the conclusions drawn from the research findings and analysis.

## 2 PROBLEM SETTING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

This chapter contains the research problem and research objectives, the conceptual framework, and the boundaries of the thesis

### 2.1 Research problem and research objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to discover the main factors impacting on consumer purchase of a domestic fashion brands in Vietnam. It would seek to provide Nosbyn useful evidence of current consumer buying behavior in Vietnam based on which they will create appropriate marketing strategies to increase the current market share and attain more customers. Therefore, the research problem of the report is defined as follow:

***What are the key factors that impact on consumers' choice of local apparel brands in Ho Chi Minh City?***

To facilitate the research process and better achieve the goal of thesis, the research problem is broken down into research objectives below:

- What is the general shopping behavior of consumers shopping for clothes in Ho Chi Minh City?
- What are the most important criteria consumers pay attention to when shopping for clothes?
- Which local brands had they shopped at? What makes the brands attractive to them? Are they satisfied with the products? Do they come back after the first purchase? What were the reasons for coming back?
- What do they think about clothes of local brands?
- What would increase their intention to buy clothes from local brands in the future?

## 2.2 Conceptual frame of reference

In accordance with research problem, this thesis concentrates only on analyzing consumer buying behavior within the Vietnamese fashion background. The author created the following conceptual framework to illustrate how all the concepts handled in this thesis are linked together.

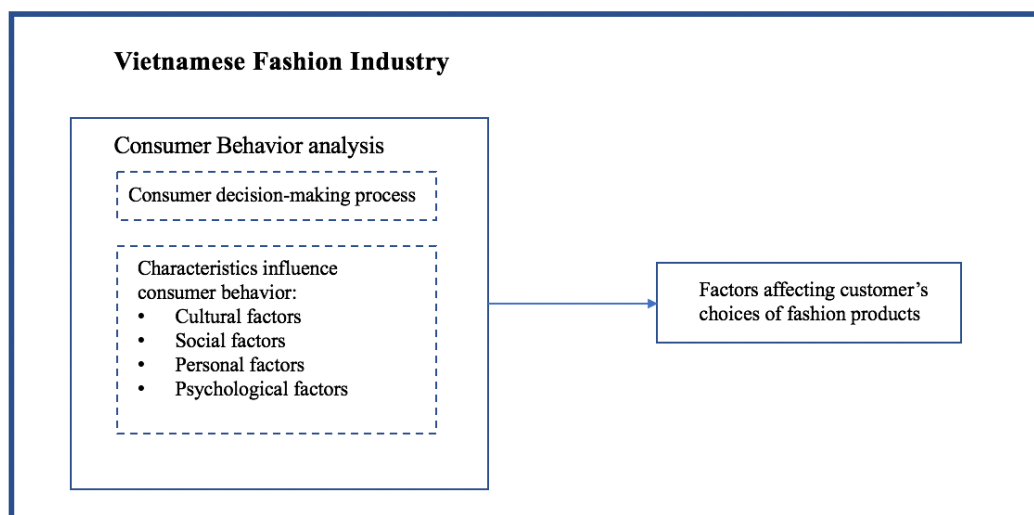


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the research (Author of the thesis 2020)

As this research is conducted within the fashion industry in Vietnam, the overview of Vietnamese fashion industry will be presented with the aim of providing the background information for this thesis. The Consumer Behavior analysis will be discussed as the main concept of the whole conceptual framework, which consists of Consumer decision-making process and Characteristics influencing consumer behavior. The research methodology (chapter 6) will explain further the process of collecting and analyzing data collected from the survey.

## 2.3 Boundaries of the thesis

The first boundary would be that the thesis concentrates solely on discussing and analyzing Vietnamese consumer behavior, in this case, Vietnamese women in age category from 18 to 35, living in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. Second, due to the wide

scope of fashion industry, the term fashion in this thesis would refer to apparel products only. Lastly, this research will not focus on marketing aspect of the business, as well as there will be no recommendations to the client company in terms of marketing strategies.

### 3 OVERVIEW OF VIETNAMESE FASHION MARKET

Vietnam is a densely populated country residing in South East Asia with total population approximately 97 million (Website of Worldometers 2019). After introducing market-oriented policies under its Doi Moi program in 1986, Vietnam's economic growth has been among the fastest in the world. Since then, along with increasing average incomes, higher living standards, and young population, Vietnam has become increasingly attractive for international investors, especially in fashion retail sector (Website of Vietnam Investment Review 2019). A research of Savills in 2019 stated that Vietnam has appeared as one of the most potential markets for international fashion brands and it is showing no sign of slowing down (Website of Savills 2019). Furthermore, a research of Nielsen about Vietnamese consumers in 2018 showed that the country ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the world for having the most positive consumers in which the willingness to spend for clothes is noticeably increasing (Website of Nielsen 2019).

#### 3.1 Foreign brands versus domestic brands

Over the past few years, Vietnam has witnessed the busiest era of national fashion market with the continuous penetration of the world's fashion giants. These major international brands are setting up shop in Vietnam and expanding quickly to capture the fast-growing fashion market. According to the Vietnam Retailers Association, there are more than 200 foreign fashion brands currently present in Vietnam, offering expansive product collections varying from affordable to luxury products, which account for 60 percent of the market share. These companies are reportedly enjoying a rapid growth in both performance and revenue just after a short time of entry to the country. For example, Zara, the biggest international fast fashion brand in the world entered to Vietnam in 2016, announced that revenue in the first half of 2019 reached to VND 950

billion which roughly equals to US \$40.8 million, up 133 percent year on year (Website of FDI Vietnam 2019). Furthermore, international fashion brands also set footprint in Vietnam by acquiring local clothing companies which enables them to enter this potential market immediately. Most of these foreign investors are reportedly advanced in technology, experience, efficient governance, and strong finance which serve as competitive advantages to rival domestic firms (Website of Vietnamnet 2019).

On the other hand, despite the dominance of foreign players, local brands still hold the trust of a large number of Vietnamese consumers. A survey of market research firm Asia Plus in 2018 revealed top 10 most favored fashion brands in Vietnam, in which mostly domestic brands take over the list (Website of Vietnam Investment Review 2019). This result is supposed to come from pricing strategy of these local brands as “affordable” price of international brands in developed countries may not be really affordable in developing country like Vietnam, even though researches have shown the enhancing in income and demand for clothing in this country. Therefore, by offering products at more reasonable prices, plus the profound understanding of Vietnamese taste, Vietnamese brands remain favorable in the currently fierce competition (Website of Doanh Nhan Sai Gon 2019).

In fact, according to representative of Vietnam National Textile and Garment Group (VINATEX), the domestic garment market increases 10 to 15 percent annually proving by the growing number of stores opened over years. Some of them have expanded their outlets number to 200 nationwide (Nhi 2017). By the same token, a certain number of boutiques have been thriving in niche market on which fashion products are designed and customized for a specific customer group. The major advantage of these small brands is that they capture new customers by offering trendy items with cheaper price sets and reasonable quality. Using social media as the main marketing channel and utilizing the impact of social media influencers, these boutiques have been able to boost brand image and increase their customer pool nationally (Nhi 2017).



### 3.2 Future prospect

The rapid expansion of global fashion firms in Vietnam is expected to empower local brands. The advantage in finance and human resources, and modern management methods of these giants are said to be the biggest strengths in the intense competition with domestic fashion companies. While foreign fast fashion brands are rapidly prospering and heating up the local sector, which alluring more newcomers, the current local textile and apparel industry are said to be overly concentrated on outsourcing and competing for exports that they ignore the importance of fashion design (Website of Vnexpress 2019). Additionally, the promotion strategy of international brands seems to be effective in Vietnam. While Vietnamese companies arrange only two or three large promotion events a year, mainly on International and Vietnamese Women's Days, foreign brands are seen to roll out nine sales promotions annually through which they lure more new customers (Website of Vietnam Investment Review 2019)

Besides, in contrast to the swift development of foreign firms in the market is the gradual decrease of local firms. Despite the growth of strong brands, a number of domestic fashion names, who were once well-known in the market, is seen to taper their outlet numbers across the country. The main reason for this withdrawal is supposed to be the inappropriate marketing strategy since it is also a crucial factor determining the success of a brand beside pricing (Website of Vietnam Investment Review 2019). It is suggested that Vietnamese retailers should utilize technology to comprehend consumer behavior, focus on digital marketing and develop online shopping channels to provide a greater shopping experience to customers (Website of Vnexpress 2019).

### 3.3 NOSBYN brief introduction

NOSBYN is the abbreviation for Not On Shelf By Nancy. The brand was founded and based in Vietnam since 2013. The brand pursuits minimalism in style, creating items that can be easily mix-and-match and are everyday wearable. Started out as an online clothing shop, the brand has been reaching further out from their territory to open 3 retail stores (2 in Ho Chi Minh City and 1 in Hanoi). It has become one of the most

favorite local clothing brands in Vietnam at the moment thanks to their easy-to-wear, high quality and durable products with affordable prices (Website of Nosbyn 2019)

Currently, NOSBYN has announced new clothing line namely NOSBYN Studio to mark the five-year anniversary of the brand. This new line is targeting mature women who are described as “modern, confident, and feminine” by the founder, Ms. Nancy Le. Product range of NOSBYN Studio is designed to be more contemporary than NOSBYN in terms of styles, colors, and materials (Website of Nosbyn-Studio 2019)

#### 4 CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

This chapter will explain the concept of consumer behavior, characteristics affecting consumer behavior; and the consumer decision-making process.

##### 4.1 Definition of consumer behavior

American Marketing Association (AMA) defines consumer behavior as “the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their life” (Peter & Olson 2010, 5). It is simply the thoughts and feelings people experience and the actions they take during consumption process (Peter & Olson 2010, 5). In other words, Solomon (2018, 28) described consumer behavior as the study of individuals, groups, and organizations that select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences.

There is a huge variety of consumers ranging from a child begging her mother for a doll to an international corporation executive making huge investment. Generally, consumers seek items to satisfy their needs and desires (Solomon 2018, 28), however, the term consumer behavior is vaguer and more complicated than it seems. Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 158) stated that figuring out why consumers buy a specific product is not an easy work because “the answers are locked deep within the consumer’s mind”. Study of consumer behavior is practically an ongoing process in which marketers at-

tempt to understand the meaning of products and brands to consumers, how the decision-making process goes, and what factors affect the shopping, purchase, and consumption (Peter & Olson 2010, 5).

Among numerous studies about consumer behavior, Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 159) introduce The Model of Buyer Behavior which illustrates the process of how marketing and other stimuli penetrate to consumer's head and produce certain responses. In this model, the buyers get input from the marketing effort of the firms and other stimuli. This input is processed in the mind of the buyer (black box), which comprises the buyer's characteristics and the process of decision-making. Once the decision is made, the buyer responds in term of the choice of product, brand, dealer, timing and amount (Jisana 2014, 42). The mission of marketers is to understand the buyer's black box, in other words, what happens in the consumer's consciousness. That might be difficult because in fact, not even the consumers themselves know the reasons for their purchases, and different personalities result to different buying responses (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 158).

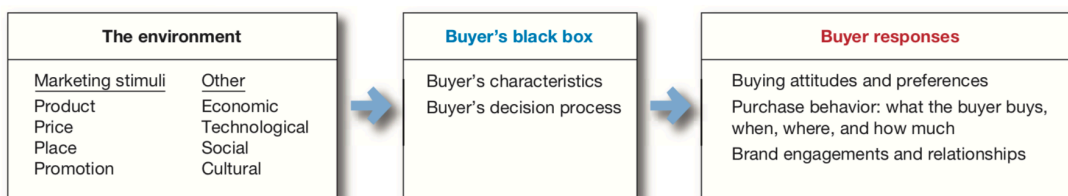


Figure 2. The Model of Buyer Behavior (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 159)

#### 4.2 Characteristics affecting consumer behavior

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 159), consumer behavior is generally affected by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Each of these factors contains various elements that differently impacts on how consumer make decision. By understanding these factors and its elements; and actively acting on them, companies will meet customer's desires and improve their marketing programs (Website of The Consumer Factor 2014).

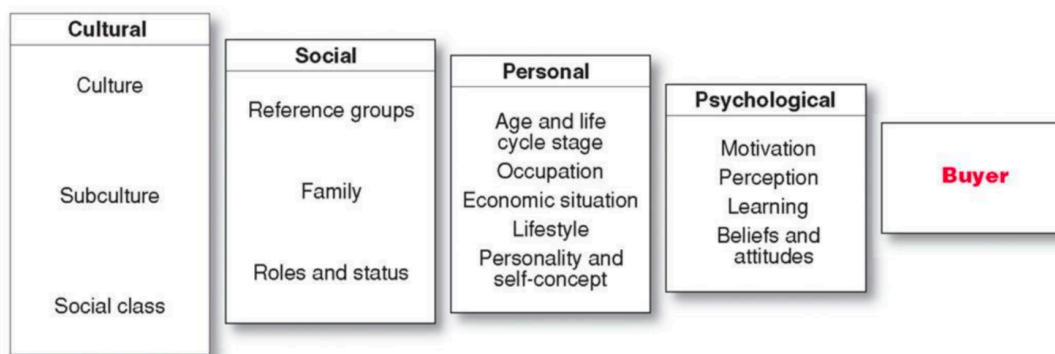


Figure 3. Characteristics affecting consumer behavior (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 159)

#### 4.2.1 Cultural factors

##### *Culture*

Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 159) refer to culture as the main driver of consumer's needs and behaviors. It is comprised of common beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, values, and traditions among members of a society (Mooji 2011, 33) which, according to Blythe (2013, 190), have been established long enough in people's mind that they become natural laws. Consequently, cultural effects almost everything of a person including consumption behavior. Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 43) described the relationship of consumer behavior and culture as "a two-way street", explaining that products and services that harmonize with current culture's priorities are more likely to be adopted by consumers while successful innovation ideas may also demonstrate the dominant cultural priorities in a specific timeframe. For instance, nowadays, fashion items made of recycled materials are being adopted by more consumers as it resonates with the current priority of protecting the planet (Website of Forbes 2019), at the same time, minimalist fashion represents today's lifestyle is to keep everything simple (Website of Utopiast 2019).

##### *Subculture*

Culture also consists of subcultures, which Blythe (2013, 197) defined as different groups of individuals in a society with shared cultural meanings, behaviors, and environment factors. Basically, subcultures can be categorized by nationalities, religions, racial groups, gender, or geographic regions (Blythe 2013, 198) and much of marketers

often segment the market based on these dimensions of a subculture (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 160).

#### *Social class*

Social class is usually considered as the stimulator behind consumption behavior (Hoyer & MacInnis 2008, 334). Often, social class is thought to be measured by a person's income, education and occupation, yet, Peter & Olson (2010, 326) believed it is the combination of numerous personal and social attributes such as social skills, physical appearance, status aspiration, family history and so on. Despite the complex sets of variables, people who belong to specific social class are expected to hold common interests, values and buying behaviors (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 162). As a result, in the field of clothing and fashion, marketers based on these similarities to segment the market by social class (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 256).

Moreover, just as the meaning of fashion, people of different social classes choose to purchase clothes as a way to address their status. Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 262) asserted that clothes or fashion represent the status symbol through which individuals can impress their values, career achievements, and wealth to others. For example, wealthy people tend to buy luxury clothes and accessories made from world-famous designers to flaunt their success and material well-being. The choice of fashion of different social classes also varies significantly. Working-class people tend to opt for clothes that are comfortable to wear rather than trendy and fashionable, whereas affluent people seek for clothes that can build up their appearance and body image (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 256)

#### 4.2.2 Social factors

The next consumer characteristic depicts the social effects of buying and how these outside pressures affect to consumer's buying decisions. Blythe (2013, 189) categorized social influences into macro and micro-environments in which social groups are considered a part of macro-environment, while micro-environment includes more personal interactions between individuals. Each of these components portrays remarkable

power on buying behavior as they directly effect on attitudes, beliefs and values of consumers.

#### *Groups and social networks*

According to Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, & Gill (2015, 185-189), there are two types of social influences through which social groups and individuals bring pressure to bear on purchasers. These types of pressure are namely normative social influences and informational social influences. The former type refers to the pressures from the society that lead people to change their behaviors, thoughts, or values in order to be accepted and to avoid rejection from others in a group. The later type refers to when people seek opinions from others because they are in need of information to support their decision making. In the field of fashion, Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 434) clarified the consequences of both normative and informational social influences resulted in the changes in shopping habit of consumers when shopping in groups. Researches showed that people who go shopping with more than one other individual are likely to buy more and browse more areas of the stores than those who shop alone. As a member of one or more social groups, a person purchases a fashion item in order to acquire acceptance of others or just simply because they are displayed to new products through exchanging information with the group.

On macro level, social groups pose significant impact on buyer behavior through social norms (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 431). These norms lead to the judgements of people over the behavior of others in the society (Blythe 2013, 216) where conformity is honored and aberration is penalized (Easey 2008, 84). In the field of fashion, there appear to be unwritten rules known as clothing norms which represent the types of clothes that are regarded acceptable in particular occasions by specific groups (Easey 2008, 84). For instance, guests attending a wedding are advised to not wear white unless they are specifically asked to as a way to respect the bride (Website of The Spruce), or men and women attending a business conference should wear suits to demonstrate their professional work attitudes.

On micro level, individuals interestingly generate influence on each other through the word of mouth communication (WOM). Despite the increasing efforts of modern marketing such as newspaper, social media, magazines, WOM remains powerful in

spreading product and brand information (Solomon et al 2016, 422). According to Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 438), WOM is usually in form of recommendations through which consumers are seeking information and feedback about certain products or brands from other people. For example, a woman asking her fellow worker where she bought her dress; or tourists asking a local a good local restaurant. Although this verbal communication is informal, information exchanged through it is considered the most reliable and accurate because it is based on truth and consumers usually acquire it from their acquaintances (Blythe 2013, 230; Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 438). In fact, nearly two-thirds of all products purchased are influenced by WOM (Hawkin & Mothersbaugh 2009, 240).

In addition, consumer behavior is also affected by opinion leaders who are described as “knowledgeable about products and whose advice is taken seriously by others” (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 444). These advisers can be famous as celebrities or just ordinary individuals like friends and relatives as long as they have expertise in specific area (Rath et al 2015, 193). In the field of fashion, fashion opinion leaders are the ones that wear new clothing items prior to everybody else (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 445) and are usually taken as a role model for fashion consumption (Easey 2008, 86).

#### *Roles and status*

Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 166) believed people play different roles within different groups to which they belong. Roles and status represent the behaviors a person should demonstrate in accordance to the people around them. As a result, they often tend to consume products appropriate to the roles and status they are holding. For example, consider the roles of a working father. In his company, he plays the role of a manager; at home, he plays the role of husband and father; at a football match, he plays the role of an enthusiastic football fan. As a manager, he will buy clothes that express his profession. As a football fan, he may wear clothes that support his favorite team.

#### *Family*

Family is considered the most pivotal factor that significantly spreads impact on a person’s buying behavior (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 164). According to Blythe (2013, 241), family exposes influences on a person at a very early age and they tend to have reciprocal impact on one another’s buying decision making. For instance, ordinary

parents prefer dressing their kids with basic style of clothes, whereas more fashionable ones tend to prettify their children with accessories besides garments.

Over the years, much researches describe the buying pattern of a family as collective consumption which Easey (2008, 87) explained that because families tend to share a common financial resource, thus, they shop jointly or accordingly to other member's opinions. Solomon (2018, 493-494), however, expresses the reality of making buying decision in a family that each member possesses different interests and priorities, if all are involved in one's buying decision, conflict may arise and that person is unlikely to reach the highest satisfaction level over a product purchased. Different fashion senses between parents and their teenage children exemplifies for Solomon's point of view. In general, despite different buying patterns, the opinions of family members remain powerfully important in decision making process of an individual (Blythe 2013, 261).

#### 4.2.3 Personal factors

##### *Age and life cycle stage*

A person's age and life stage are considered the fundamental demographic factors that have big impact on consumers' needs, as people change their personal preferences over time as they age (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 167). Solomon (2018, 495) used the term "age cohorts" to refer to individuals who are in similar age group because he believed people with same age are likely to have mutual interests. In fact, companies often segment their customers on the basis of age as they acknowledge that the same product or service may not appeal to people of different ages (Solomon 2018, 495). For example, fashion retailers often divide their target customers into kids, teenagers, and middle-age people. It is apparently that teenage girls are not likely to be interested in middle-age women clothing section unless they buy it for their families.

##### *Occupation*

Another variable of personal factor effecting buying pattern of consumer is profession. Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 256) state that the difference in dress between blue-collar (people who work manual jobs) and white-collar (those who work in office, usually considered as higher class than blue-collar people) occupations is significant as the



criteria used in clothing choices of these people varies. Studies have found that criteria such as comfort, appropriateness, quality, and attractiveness seemingly weight more in choosing career apparels than casual apparels. Marketers usually focus on making products for a specific occupational group who they believe to have an above-average interest in their products and services (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 167)

#### *Economic situation and income*

There is an intimate relationship between a person's economic situation and their consumption as Rath et al (2015, 209) believe that consumers presumably spend more money if they feel confident about the general economic situation in which their life is moving fairly well with secure jobs and stable income. The level of consumer confidence, the feeling of consumer about current state of economic, therefore serves as an indicator for marketers to predict consumer behavior. The higher consumer confidence level leads to the greater proportion of money a person is willing to spend.

Furthermore, income, as main driver of a consumer's level of confidence, is believed to be one of the crucial factors that determines spending pattern of a consumer. Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 241) introduced the term "discretionary income", which basically is the amount of income remaining after reduction of necessities, to indicate that expenditures other than necessities relies strongly upon the ability and willingness to buy of consumers. If they are comfortable with the current situation, for instance, stable income source, they are more likely to pay for luxury goods after basic needs are met. Fashion is categorized as discretionary spending because today's consumers purchase clothes to keep up with trends rather than to satisfy basic needs (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 241)

#### *Lifestyle*

Kotlet & Armstorng (2018, 168) defined lifestyle is "a person's pattern of living as expressed in his or her activities, interests, and opinions". According to them, a person's lifestyle represents more than just social identity and personality because it is the reflection of how that person interacts and reacts with the surroundings. Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 293), on the other hand, refers lifestyle to the notion of how people spend their time and money. They solidly believed lifestyle has a connection with personal identity because the goods and services a consumer opts for affirms who they

are and how they desire others to see them. This perspective is interestingly similar to the meaning of fashion as people express themselves through the clothes they put on. Moreover, it is lifestyle that specializes individuals who are in common social and economic situations (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 294). For example, two people may own similar sweater items but each of them possesses different lifestyle, thus, will mix the item in different style of fashion.

### *Personality*

Personality, as known as the self, is one of psychological factors that has significant impact on consumer behavior. Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 168) described personality is a set of unique psychological characteristics that differentiate an individual or a community. Solomon et al (2018, 159) referred personality in a more psychological perspective which is “an information-processing system, an organizing force that serves as a nucleus around which new information is processed”.

To dig more deeply into the core aspects of consumer behavior, numerous studies have been conducted to examine personality of which the self-concept appears to provide the most consistent and applicable results to the research of consumer behavior. The self-concept is defined as set of beliefs people possess in term of their characteristics, and the way they evaluate themselves. It is a complicated term because it comprises of multiple attributes, of which certain surpassing components dominate the evaluation of general self. These attributes can be listed as personal content, self-esteem, self-assessment, so on, which vary in accordance with time and are strongly affected by external stimuli (Solomon 2018, 201-205). In fact, human personality varies in accordance to the situation they are in. An individual can hold different number of personalities as they respond variously, prefer different products or services, and even have different identities when they play different social roles (Solomon 2018, 201-205). Thus, to capture the right need of consumer, marketers firstly need to evoke the appropriate self-identity of them.

In fashion industry, Easey (2008, 83) believed self-concept is a potential area to investigate as clothing is an obvious object through which consumers demonstrate themselves and how they desire others to perceive them. He argued that consumers purchase clothes to equally sustain and improve the self. Besides, researchers also found out that

high public self-conscious people who concern more about their image in others are more likely to interest in clothing and cosmetics, things that make up their appearance than those who have lower public self-conscious (Solomon 2018, 205).

Moreover, Kotler & Armstrong (2018) believed that brands also have personality and consumers have the tendency to favor brands that have matching personality with them. Support Kotler et al, Solomon et al (2016, 164) also think that the products people buy reflect their personality. People can base on a person's interest in clothes, habits, choice of food, leisure activities, etc., to determine that person's social role and characteristics. In turn, the same choice of products or services also help consumers to determine their self-concepts and social identities. The concept "we are what we consume" means that consumer's personality represents their identities and type of products and brands they choose (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 169).

#### 4.2.4 Psychological factors

##### *Perception*

Individuals are usually surrounded by many impressions in form of different sounds, smells, visions, touches, and tastes. They receive and decode these stimuli through five senses that are sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, Rath et al 2015). Despite a large number of stimuli exposed every day, people are only able to passively notice and process the ones that caught their attention and needs (Rath et al 2015, 76). The information that consumer receives from sensory systems defines the responses towards a product (Solomon 2018, 98). The process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting data to produce the significant image of the environment is called perception (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 172). Each individual, however, accepts, organizes, and interprets these sensory flows of information differently as Rath et al (2015) stated "perception is subjective; that is, about personal interpretations".

In addition, Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 172) believe people form distinctive perceptions of the same stimulus through three perceptual processes namely selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention. These concepts entangle marketers

to get their message across and create good product perceptions. Through selective attention process, people are likely to filter out the unimportant details to which they are exposed; and focus solely on particular objects that matter (Kotler & Armstrong 2018,172; Website of Very Well Mind 2019). Selective distortion demonstrates the bias of consumers to interpret the data in a way that support their existing beliefs. Selective retention means that consumers are more likely to remember good points about a brand they prefer rather than good points about competing brands (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 172).

### *Motivation*

Behind every buying decision hidden the driving forces. These driving forces are known as motivation, which is established by the desire of fulfilling consumption needs. These needs can be biogenic such as food or shelter, and psychogenic such as the need for status or power (Solomon 2018, 173). Much researches have been done on examining the motivations and needs of consumer, among which the theory of Abraham Maslow is the most well-known.

Abraham Maslow built up the assumption that needs having the unequal important levels to human and that people tend to satisfy most important needs before moving to fulfil others. He developed the hierarchy of needs in which consumer needs are categorized in a hierarchy bottom up with physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and top with self-actualization which is displayed in the figure 4 below (Solomon 2018, 178)

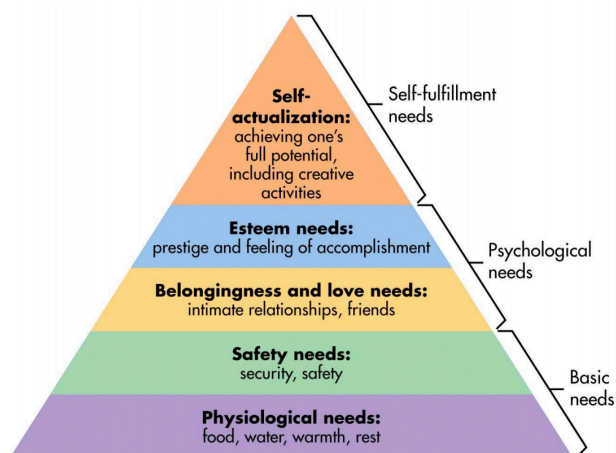


Figure 4. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Adapted from website of simplypsychology.org

The meaning of Maslow's hierarchy is that people must satisfy the basic needs before proceeding up the ladder. In other word, a person will try to gratify the most basic needs which is the physiological needs (food, shelter, water, etc.) first. When that need is satisfied, it stops being a drive, and the person will move to fulfill the next important needs which is the need of safety, then esteem, then self-actualization. For example, a homeless people who is in need of shelter and food (physical needs) would not be interested in friendship or self-fulfillment (esteem needs, self-actualization) unless he fills up his stomach and has a place to sleep. This brings out the hypothesis that consumer considers different product values based on the circumstance they are in (Solomon 2018, 178).

However, despite the wide application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in many marketing activities, the theory still faces controversies over its practical value. Solomon (2018, 178) argued that one of the problems of this model is that it is "too literally culture-bound". He debated such theory has been limited in Western culture where is known as highly rational, materialistic and individualistic. Taken example of Asian culture in which people more highly value the welfare of the group (belongingness needs) rather than the needs of individuals (esteem needs), Solomon (2018, 179) indicated the outlook on which psychological and biological needs should not be universally identified.

### *Learning*

Just as perception, learning is an ongoing process which Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 175) and Solomon (2018, 130) shared the same definition that it is the changes in behavior resulted from past experience. Kotler & Armstrong (2018) believed learning is a natural instinct of human that is constituted from the interaction of drives, stimuli, cues, response, and reinforcement, whereas Solomon (2018, 131) supported with the clarification that the experience people go through can have direct or indirect impact on them. In detail, Dubois (2000, 90) explained that learning can take many forms ranging from direct learning such as learning by heart at school, to indirect learning as observations, premeditated as registering to a driving school, or fortuitous as unexpected situations (accident, illness). In reality, consumers are exposed to great number of new stimuli every day and that cause them constantly learning.

### *Beliefs and attitudes*

People gain beliefs and attitudes through the process of learning and doing (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 173). Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 173) described belief is an explanatory concept that a person has towards something based on personal awareness, opinion, faith and probably include emotion as well. Marketers are considerably driven by the belief consumers have about specific products because these beliefs build up to the product and brand images which subsequently affects consumer buying behavior.

Attitude is defined as the persistent evaluations, thoughts, and behaviors that an individual carry regarding an object or an idea (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 173). At the same time, Easey (2008, 78) explained attitude as a “learned orientation” in relation to a certain circumstance, person, idea, or object that results in a tendency to react positively or negatively. In other words, attitude is linked to the liking or disliking towards specific products. Since it has a strong connection with other psychological factors, attitude is considerably steadfast, making it difficult to be changed or affected by external factors. Thus, companies are suggested to develop products or service in accordance to existing attitude instead of attempting to change it (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 173-174).

A considerable amount of early research agree that an attitude comprises of three components namely affect, behavior (or conative), and cognition, which are known as ABC model of attitude (Solomon 2018, 286; Easey 2008, 78). This model addresses the intimate correlation of knowing, feeling and doing of consumer behavior. The first component, affect, ascribes to the feeling consumers have towards products and is described as like and dislike or good and bad. The second component, behavior, relates to the intention of consumers to buy or to do something concerning the products. Lastly, cognition aspect refers to the knowledge, or beliefs consumers hold about product, service, image, store, or prices (Solomon 2018, 285-286; Easy 2008, 78).

Although the relationship of these aspects is firm, it will be problematic if consumer’s attitude and behavior are simply predicted and measured by these components. Consumer behavior is not only the action driven simply by beliefs or feelings, but it also relies on the levels of motivation the consumer has regarding the objects (Solomon

2018, 286). Easey (2008, 79) also underlined that positive attitude towards fashion products does not always guarantee the rise in sales. Rath et al (2015, 103) agreed with Solomon that besides the three mentioned components, attitude is affected by other factors which can be family and friends, individual personality, past experience, media, and especially, marketing efforts.

### 4.3 The buyer decision process

After getting into the factors influencing consumer behavior, it is important to know how consumer make purchasing decisions. The classical theory of consumer behavior suggests that a person's decision-making passes through five stages of the buying process which are need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behavior (Kotler & Armstrong 2018,175-176). This theory suggests that consumer constantly encounters problems in their daily lives that may or may not lead to the purchase of a product. It depends on the buying situation and how consumer process these stages as well. In fact, this theory is not the only truth, as many studies showed that buying decision is made in both rational and emotional manners (Blythe 2013, 273). For example, in fashion decision making, Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 381) believe that the buying pattern of fashion buyer is often made impulsively that consumer may skip some of the steps in a buying process, depending on the level of excitement at the point of purchase.

In this study, the buying decision process will be discussed based on the suggestion of Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 176) because “it shows all the considerations that arise when a consumer faces new and complex purchase situation”. The following figure illustrates briefly the decision process:

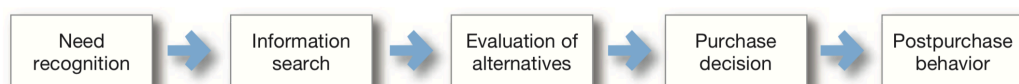


Figure 5. The buyer decision process (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 175)

#### *Need recognition*

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 176), the buying process sets off when consumer recognizes a need, or a problem is arising. As mentioned in the perception part

of this study, this need/problem occurs due to two major causes that are internal and external stimuli. Internal stimuli activate the needs to fulfil basic demand stemmed from the consumer, for example hunger or thirst; whereas external stimuli create a totally new demand. For instance, the display of new fashion collection at the store may encourage the desire to buy of a consumer although she is not in need of new clothes. Solomon et al (2016, 332) explains the same concept in a different way in which a problem derives in two ways: need recognition and opportunity recognition. The former way refers to when consumer is in the need of a new product, while the later refers to when consumer wants to update or change the current product to another one.

Although this first stage of the buying process happens naturally, it is usually encouraged by marketing efforts. Marketers attempt to create primary demand which consumer is encouraged to try a product or services regardless of which brand they choose; or secondary demand which consumer is encouraged to choose a specific brand over others and this demand can only happen if the primary demand already exist. Marketers at this point are suggested to provide consumer the products that can solve consumer's problem better than their competitor in the same category (Solomon et al 2016, 332).

### *Information search*

Once consumers have identified a need or a problem, they move to the second stage of the process where they seek information to resolve it. It is suggested that consumer acquire information through a variety of sources including personal sources (family, friends, acquaintances), commercial sources (advertising, salespeople, websites, packaging, displays), public sources (mass media, social media, online reviews), and experiential sources (trying the product). Normally, consumers receive information of a product from commercials or marketers. However, the most effective source of information comes from the people around the consumer (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 176). As mentioned earlier in this study, individuals exchange information through the word of mouth communication where they give comments and recommendations. In today's digital era, that type of information exchange is conducted under shared product opinions, images, and experiences across social media.



As more information is acquired, the consumer's knowledge of available products enhanced. However, Solomon (2018, 341) suggest that consumer is not obligatory going through this stage of the process if they already have some degree of information about the products in their memory as a result of prior experience. Or, if the level of excitement is high enough the point of purchase, consumer may buy the product immediately without conducting any further information search (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 176). Moreover, in the field of fashion, due to the nature of fashion that it changes rapidly over time, product knowledge may become quickly outdated. Therefore, fashion consumer simply seeks information for the purpose of keeping up with the current trends (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 387).

#### *Evaluation of alternatives*

The third stage of buying process is when consumers use information obtained to evaluate different brands in the same category. At this stage, Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 177) and Solomon & Rabolt (2009, 392) share the same opinion that the sets of criteria consumer use to evaluate products are different in all buying situations. In some cases, consumers may carefully appraise alternative brands, while in other cases, they may skip this step and buy impulsively. Also, at this stage, other external factors such as family, friends, society may have impact on the evaluating process as consumer may turn to them for buying advice (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 177). In fashion sense, much studies have examined the criteria consumers use to make apparel and fashion decisions to conclude the following attribute (Solomon & Rabolt 2009, 395):

1. Appropriateness/personal style: suitability to individual, good fit, appropriate for occasion, comfort, fabric type and quality, wardrobe coordination, suits personality
2. Economy/usefulness: price, good buy, ease of care, durability, versatility, matching, utility
3. Attractiveness/aesthetics: beautiful, fashionable, color/pattern, styling, good fit, pleasing to others
4. Quality: quality of construction, fabric type, fiber, durability
5. Other-people-directed/image: prestige, sexy, brand and store name, label, fashionable
6. Country of origin

## 7. Fiber/fabric: natural or synthetic; knits or woven

### *Purchase decision*

Once consumers finish evaluating different options in a category, they classify the brands and make purchase decision. Normally, consumer choose to buy their most favored brand, yet, Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 177) believe this decision can be influenced by the attitudes of other people and the surprising situations. For example, if a consumer intends to buy a dress but her friends think that the other one is more suitable to her body type, she may consider again. Additionally, Solomon (2018, 343) think that other factors such as consumer's belief about the brand and information available at the time of purchase also pose significant impact on the decision-making.

### *Post-purchase behavior*

After buying the products comes the stage where consumer experience the values of it. At this point, the relationship between customer's expectation and product's perceived performance acts as a key determinant for the attitude and behavior of a consumer towards the purchased goods. If the product fails to meet the expectations, customer is disappointed; if it successfully delivers values that match with expectations, customer is satisfied; if the expectation is exceeded, the customer is happy (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 178). The satisfaction or dissatisfaction of a consumer at this stage plays a crucial role in consumer's future purchasing behavior as they will choose the brand again if they are satisfied, otherwise they will not.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Research approach and research method

Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2019, 153) suggested that there are three main ways of approaching a research problem: deduction, induction and abduction. In the first approach, researchers establish initial set of hypothesizes before going through a data collection process to test them right or wrong. In contrast, induction approach deduces

theory after data collection process as a result of data analysis. Abduction approach, in addition, moves between the two former approaches, which explains an existing fact or develops a new theory during a continuous data collection process.

In this study, deductive approach is argued appropriate due to the nature of the research. The author first builds theories for understanding fashion industry and consumer behaviorism and the link between them. Then she associates the theories with empirical findings from further data collection to conclude the factors impact on consumer buying behavior towards clothes shopping in Vietnam.

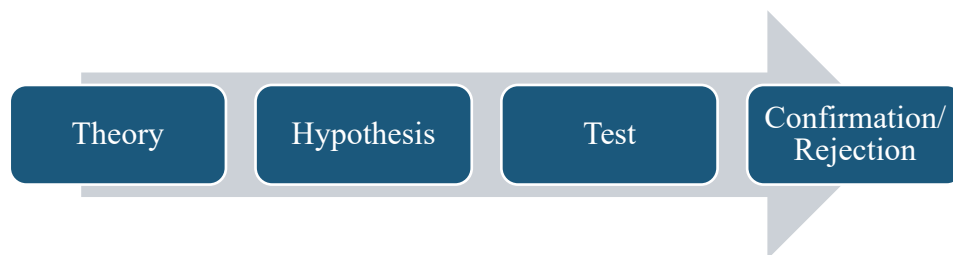


Figure 5. Deductive approach model (Author's model based on Saunders et al theory)

When it comes to research methods, quantitative and qualitative methods are commonly found in literature (Adams, Khan, & Raeside, 2014, 6). Saunders et al (2019, 175) addressed the distinction between these methods are data collection techniques and data analysis procedures.

Typically, quantitative research deals with numerical data and involves statistical analysis. The main rule of this method is that the set of questions asked from participants needs to be the same and data is usually collected through surveys. The main advantages of quantitative approach are that it can reach to a large amount of sample, more efficient in gathering data regarding research time, energy and costs while being less subject to biases. However, it is limited in providing in-depth data and reliable answers due to the inflexibility of the majority of quantitative data collection methods (ESOMAR 2007, 66-71).

Qualitative research, in contrast, employs non-numerical data collection and analysis procedure, which aims to explore social relations and describe reality proved by the respondents (Adams et al 2014, 6). Comparing to that of quantitative research, quali-

tative research's sample size is much smaller. Yet, such limited sample size can generate more detailed and reliable data due to the adequate knowledge and expertise possessed by the answerers. Furthermore, the absence of a predetermined set of question allows research's results to expand beyond researchers' expectation. However, the result of qualitative research can be mixed interpretation and subjected to biases (ESOMAR 2007, 72)

In reality, not many researchers actually use a single research method. Saunders et al (2019, 175) found it "problematic and narrow" to discriminate between the mentioned methods as researchers tend to employ a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analytical procedures in a same project. In this mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be implemented at the same time or subsequently but separately, while either quantitative or qualitative data collection and analysis is dominant in the research depending on research purpose.

For this report, the mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research was utilized. The research was designed with a relatively large sample and fixed structure with an open-ended question meaning that quantitative research is weighted as the main research method while qualitative research would act as a supporting approach. Moreover, the analysis of consumer behavior is carried out based on the number of answers collected, thus quantitative method was used to illustrate the representative ratio of the leading answers.

## 5.2 Population and sample

Saunders et al (2019, 294) defined population as the statistical pool from which a sample is drawn. A population refers not only to people but also to a group of objectives, events, or measurements. Due to the large scale a population might be, researchers may find it impracticable to access, collect and analyze all the available database. This means they would need to select a sample that represents statistically characteristics of the entire population. The technique of drawing a suitable sample from a population is called sampling method (Adams et al 2014, 72).

According to Adams et al (2014, 73), there are two types of sampling methods: probability and non-probability. Probability sampling means that each element of the population has a chance to be selected for sampling whereas in non-probability sampling, the samples are picked by the purposive personal judgment of the researcher.

Regarding probability sampling technique, it includes 5 different methods which are simple random sampling (drawing a random sample from a specific population), stratified random sampling (dividing the population into smaller groups namely strata, then elements of each stratum will be selected evenly or relatively), systematic sampling (selecting randomly the sample from the sampling frame at a regular intervals), cluster sampling (dividing the population into separate groups called clusters, then a random cluster sample is drawn using a probability sampling technique), sequential sampling (researcher is able to select samples more than once with the aim of further study) (Adams et al 2014, 73-74).

Concerning non-probability sampling technique, there are 4 methods that are commonly applied in research: convenience sampling (samples are selected by the interviewer in convenience), judgement sampling (sampling units are selected based on the judgement of the interviewer), quota sampling (categorizing dimensions of the population into homogeneous groups wherein sample is collected from), snowball sampling (a number of samples is initially drawn by the researcher, then use recommendations from these participants to select the next relevant following participants, and so forth) (Adams et al 2014, 75-77)

In this research, sample is used as a way to obtain population parameter. Convenience sampling is applied to select respondents from the target population. The author firstly determined the frame of target respondents who are women from 18 to 35, living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Then, the online questionnaire will be carried out and sent to Nosbyn's customers' emails and to Facebook group of locals attached with notification of the target participants for the survey.

### 5.3 Designing the questionnaire

According to Saunders et al (2019, 504), questionnaire is one of the most common data collection techniques conducted in quantitative research due to its efficiency in gathering data from a large number of samples. Questionnaire refers to the set of pre-determined questions completed either electronically or physically by the respondents for the purpose of collecting information to answer research problem and achieve research objectives. For this research, the questionnaire was designed to discover the major factors influencing consumers in choosing a local apparel brand in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The questionnaire was conducted through an online survey platform called Google Form and it consists of fifteen questions which in turn cover the research objectives. The form used in the survey can be found in Appendix 1: The Questionnaire.

In order to prevent respondents from misreading the questions as well as being biased towards a particular alternative, it is important to pay attention to question wording (Saunders et al 2019, 529). The author carefully used unambiguous words and clear instruction for each question to ensure the respondent fully understand the questions. Moreover, the wording of each question was also consulted by the thesis supervisor beforehand which helped to avoid problems with wording that may threaten the validity of responses.

Regarding the types of question, the author used mainly structured questions with ready to answer alternatives to help participants save time when answering the survey. There was only one unstructured question in the survey which would support the author to collect more detail information from the participants. The survey started with warm-up questions about background information, followed by more in-depth questions about participants' buying patterns and their opinion towards local apparel brands and why they choose to shop these brands.

#### 5.4 Data collecting method

In order to obtain adequate information as well as to understand thoroughly the research phenomenon, planning of using different data collection methods is normally required. It is a crucial part of research design in order to achieve research purpose and answer research questions (Adams et al, 2014, 92).

For this research, both primary data and secondary data have been utilized. Primary data refers to data that is obtained by the researcher, for the specific purpose of that research (ESOMAR 2007, 65). Secondary data is defined as “data that were collected initially for some other purposes” by someone else (Saunders et al 2019, 338). Secondary data can be found widely from books, libraries and on websites and it is argued that information gathered from secondary sources is more comprehensive, reliable and valid than data that was collected through primary sources. However, secondary data still has its own drawbacks concerning the difficulty in controlling over data quality (Adams et al 2014, 92, 104).

In this thesis, data in chapter 3 and 4 were document secondary data. Regarding the overview of Vietnamese fashion market, secondary data was collected from reliable sources such as Worldometer’s statistic, Nielsen’s publication, Savill’s publication, and articles from reliable online newspaper such as Vietnamnet, Vnexpress and FDI Vietnam. Information about Nosbyn was collected from the brand’s websites. Regarding consumer behavior analysis, the secondary source for data would be academic books approved by the thesis supervisor. Primary data in this thesis was collected through online questionnaire which was carried out in one week starting from 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020 until 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

#### 5.5 Data analysis

According to Saunders et al (2019, 583-603), there are three main quantitative data analysis methods namely frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, and hypothesis testing. Frequency distribution refers to the mathematical system that counts response number and percentage for each level of a given variable. In contrast, cross-tabulation

examines of the relationship between two or more variables, offering the associations of multiple variables. Hypothesis testing, in the other hand, is used to examine the plausibility of the assumption stated in the early stage of the research (Website of Investopedia 2020).

To analyze the input data from the questionnaire, frequency distribution method was applied in order to discover the factors impact on customer's choice of a local brand. Column and pie charts would be used mostly in the research.

### 5.6 Validity and reliability

Validity is the extent to which a research is accurately measured. In other words, it indicates how well researchers measure what they are supposed to measure. If a research has high validity, that means it generates the results that coincide with the established theories and other measures in the same concept (Adams et al 2014, 247). In this research, regarding validity of the questionnaire, the survey questions were designed in cooperation with the representative of the client company to ensure that the survey measures what they hope it to measure. Before distributing the survey, the author's supervisor was consulted to confirm again the validity of the questionnaire. Moreover, the research objectives were established precisely in accordance to the requirements from Nosbyn which significantly supports to the validity of the research's outcome.

Reliability is the concept used to evaluate the consistency of a research. More simply, if the outcome of the research can be consistently reproduced by using the same methods under the same circumstances, the research is considered reliable (Adams et al 2014, 245). Concerning reliability of the survey, when making the questionnaire, wording for each question was carefully premeditated to avoid misunderstandings. The questionnaire consists of fifteen questions of which fourteen have ready to answer alternatives to ensure there will be no misinterpretation from the author when analyzing the survey results.



## 6 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the research findings and the research analysis based on the results collected from the survey. The questionnaire has 15 questions in total and were displayed in many forms, including single choice, multiple choices, rating scale, short answer, and open-ended questions.

The survey was sent to Nosbyn's clients' emails and local Facebook groups. After one week of accepting responses, the survey received 115 answers in total, out of which only 86 were in research scale which was answered by women from 18 to 35 years old, living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

### 6.1 Background information of the respondents

After the brief introduction, the survey began with three warm-up questions with the aim to gather respondents' age, residential area, and personal income. The question about residential area was used to filter out who are not living in the target location of the research which is Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. The results of the other two questions are demonstrated in figure 6 and 7 below.

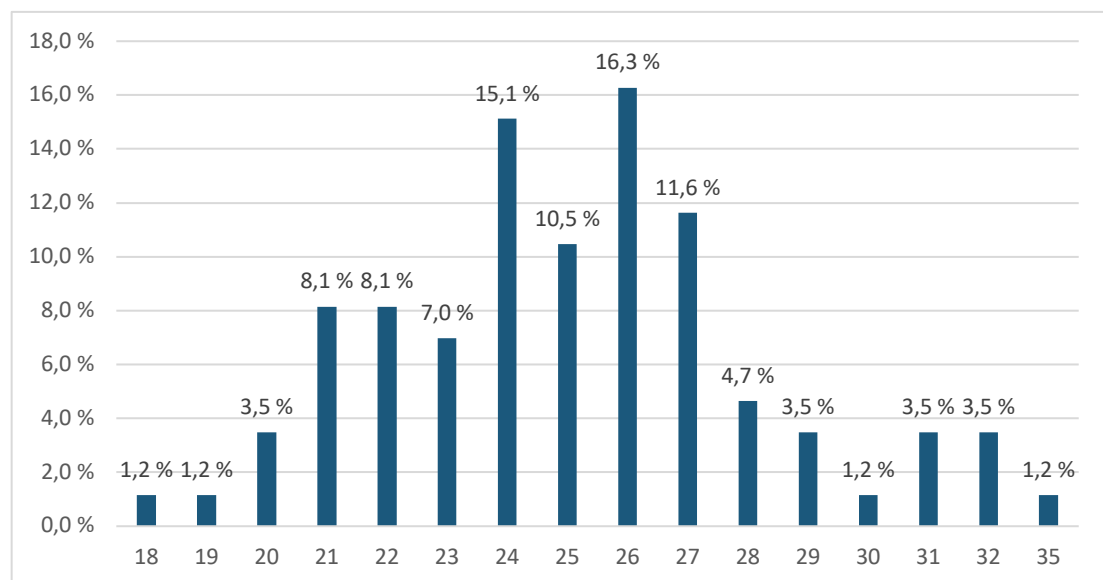


Figure 6. Respondents' age (N=86)

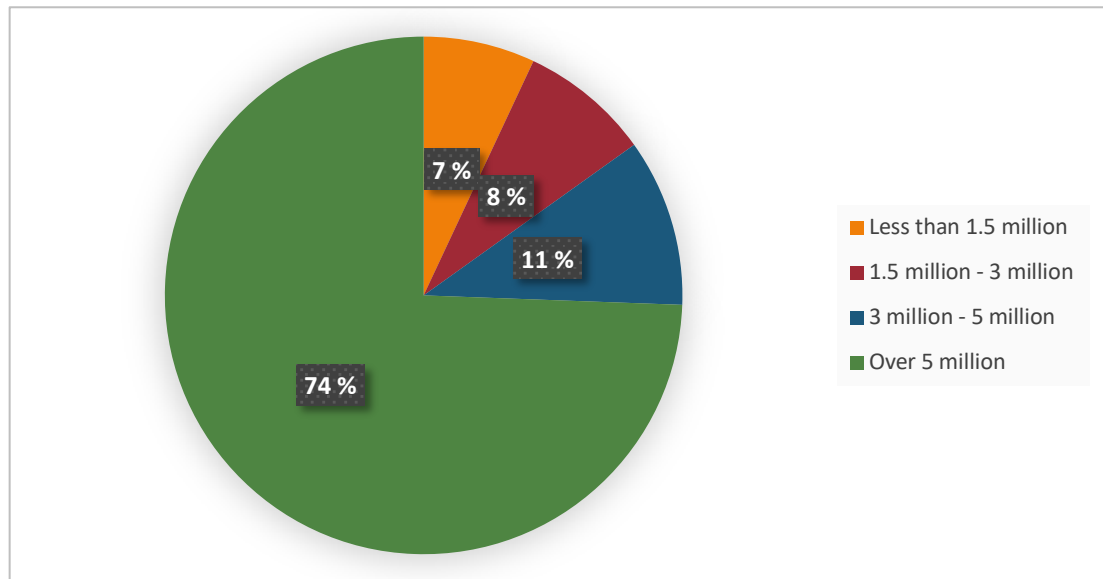


Figure 7. Respondents' income (N=86)

As can be seen from the figure 6 and figure 7, the majority of respondents were in age category from 21 to 27 years old, which took up to 77% of the total answers. Regarding respondent's financial background, 74% of participants have monthly income over 5 million VND, which is considered above the average salary in Vietnam according to recorded statistic from website of Statista (2019). Additionally, 9 people from the survey earned 3 to 5 million per month which account for 11% of total respondents. Only a small number of respondents earn under 3 million VND a month.

## 6.2 General shopping behavior

This section of the survey is to explore the common habits and behavior of Vietnamese consumers regarding apparel products. There are three questions discussing the amount of money people often spend during each shopping time, places that they usually visit for clothes shopping, and reasons why they buy clothes. The results were illustrated in the following figures.

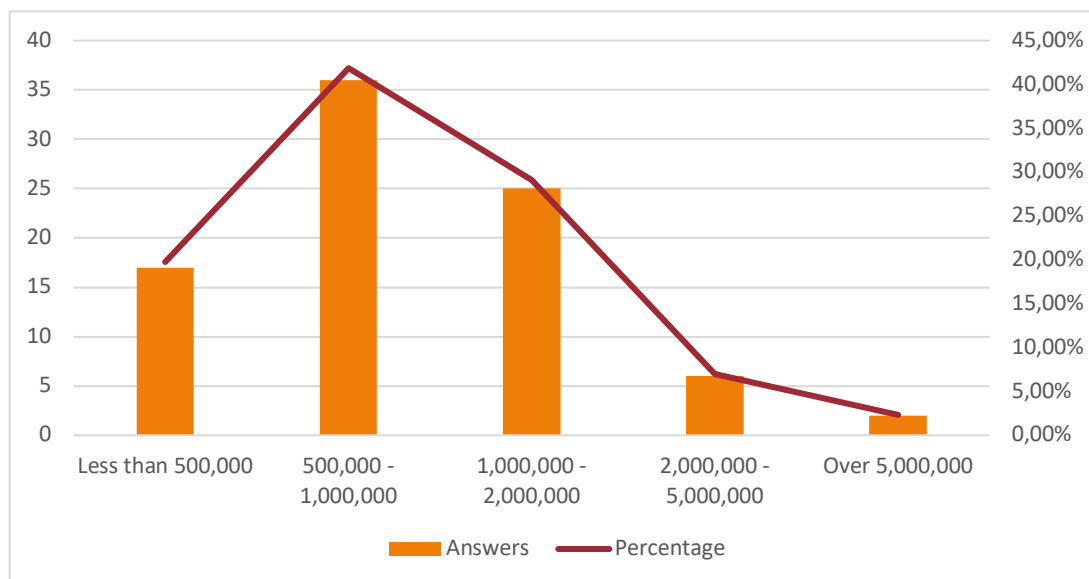


Figure 8. Average amount of money spent on clothes each purchase time (N=86)

Figure 8 shows that 36 participants often spend around 500,000 to 1 million VND on clothes every time they go shopping, which took nearly 42% of the total responses. People who can spend 1 to 2 million VND for clothes account for approximately 29% of the total respondents, while 19% of total participants spend less than 500,000 VND for clothes in each shopping time. Only a small number of participants are willing to spend more than 2 million on clothes, which accounts for nearly 10% remaining of the total responses.

In terms of favorable shopping places, the result is shown in the figure 9 below. There were an equal number of participants answered they like to buy clothes from Internet and from shops on commercial pedestrian street, which hold 31% evenly the total answers. Another 30% participants chose “malls or larger shopping centers” as a place for clothes shopping. Supermarket, in the other hand, seems to lose its popularity with only 8% people come for buying clothes.

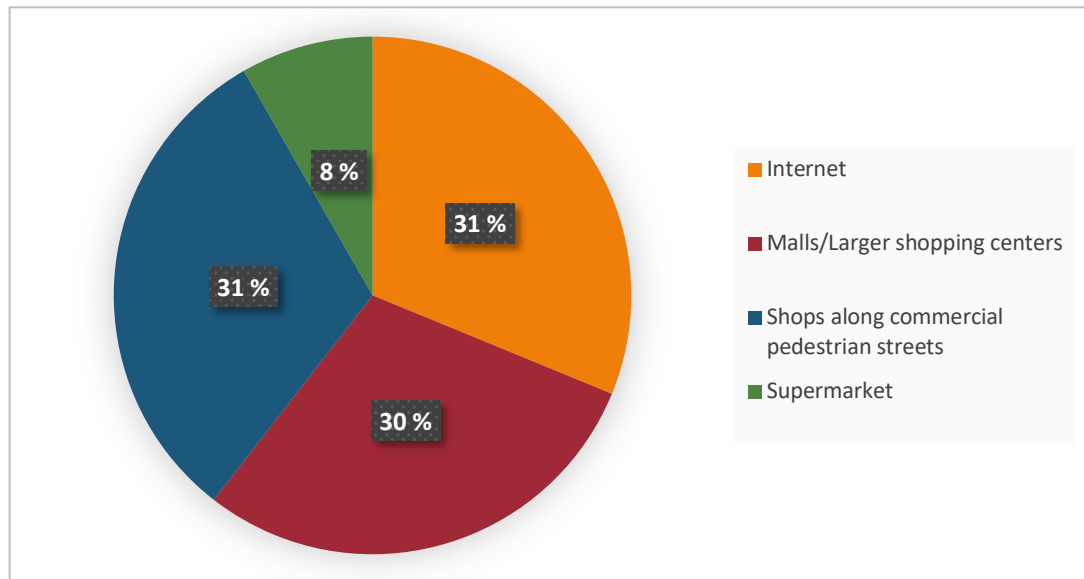


Figure 9. Respondents' favorite shopping places (N=86)

The next question was to find out the main reasons Vietnamese consumers purchase apparel products. There were 55 out of 86 participants said they buy clothes because they are pleased by having new apparel pieces, which accounts for nearly 64% of total responses. 52 people buy clothes to replace old items in their wardrobes; 47 people purchase clothes for special occasions; and 28 people to follow trends. Social pressure seems not to be significantly weighted as a main reason since only a humble number of people, 7% of respondents buy clothes to get accepted from the community.

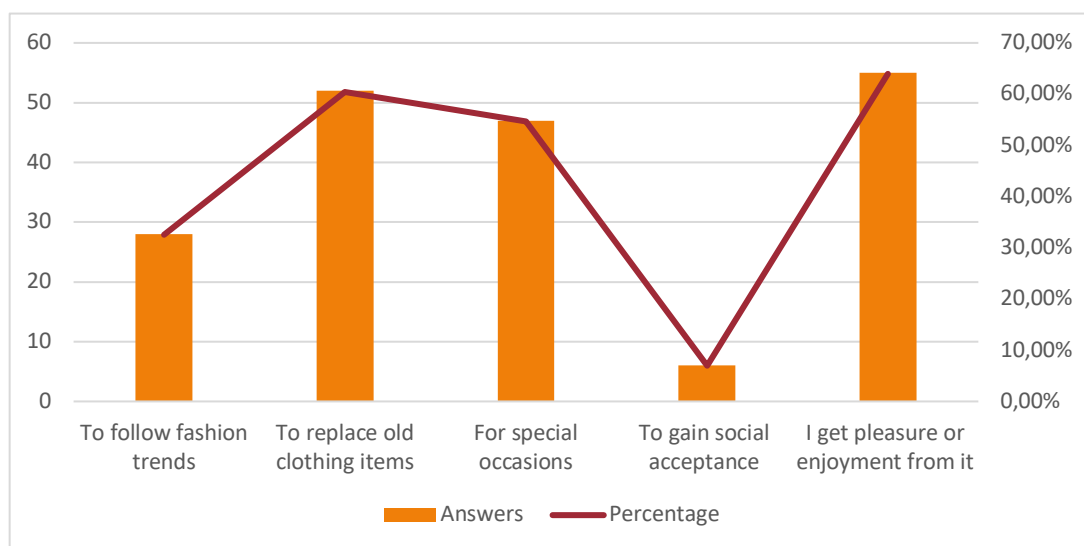


Figure 10. Reasons for clothes shopping (N=86)

### 6.3 Important criteria when purchase clothes

To clarify which criteria Vietnamese consumers use to evaluate and select different apparel products and brands, the following question offered many common elements that fashion consumers usually consider before making purchase decisions. These elements were based on the criteria recommended by Solomon & Rabolt (2009) mentioned in subchapter 4.3. The result is exposed in the chart below.

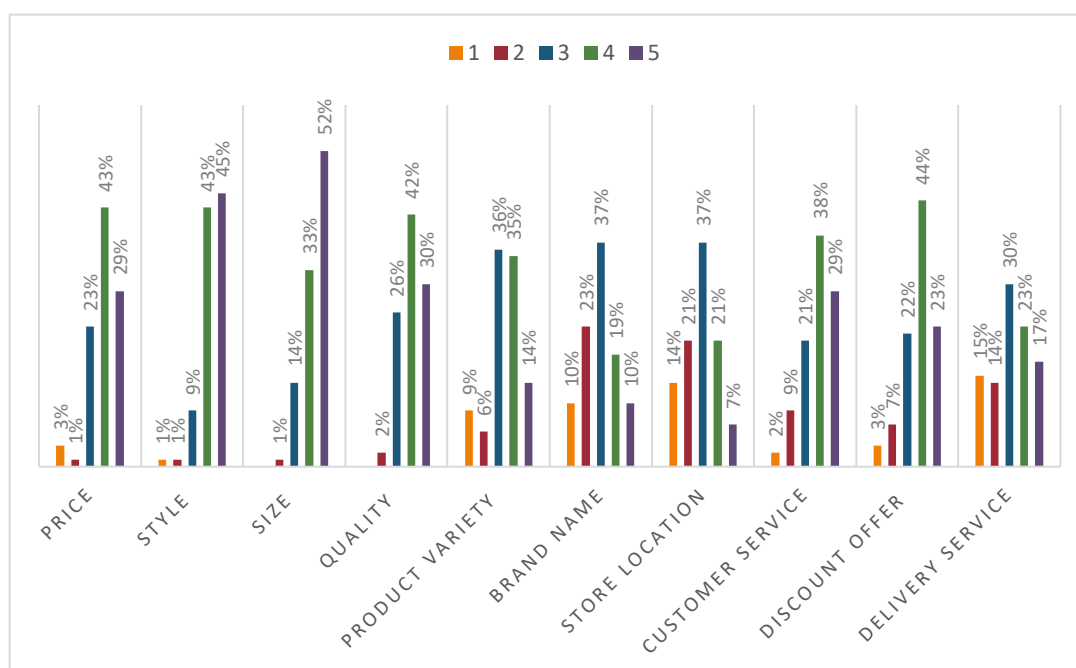


Figure 11. Important buying criteria (1=Not important at all; 5=Extremely important) (N=86)

It can be seen that the first four criteria are the weightiest factors participants pay attention to when choosing for clothes with 72% to 88% number of respondents rated 4 or 5 for each factor. Among these factors, “size” is chosen as extremely important by over half number of total participants, followed by “style” with 45% total participants voted similarly. This leads to an assumption that product size and product style are amid the main factors that impact on Vietnamese consumers’ choice of local apparel brands. Results from further questions will give answer to this hypothesis.

Additionally, factors such as “consumer service” and “discount offer” were also important for a significant number of participants. There were 67% total responses gave

these elements 4 or 5 score. This means that if the first four criteria mentioned are satisfied, consumers would have the likelihood to look at special discount offers, and customer service provided by the brand in order to evaluate and select what and where to buy clothes. Figure 11 below of average score for each element can testify this assumption.

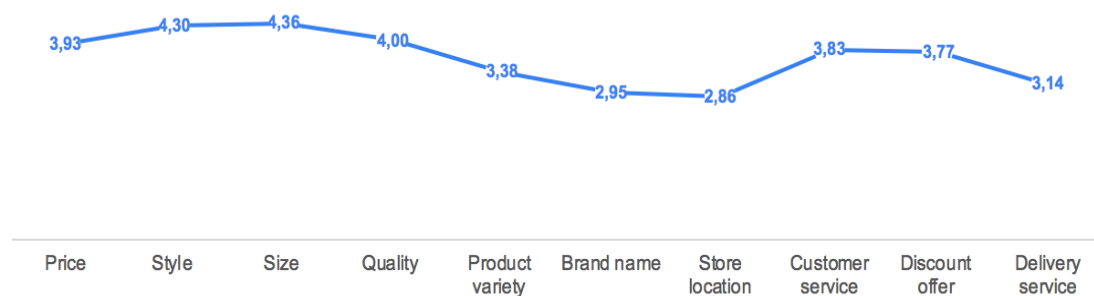


Figure 12. Important buying criteria average scores (N=86)

Moreover, data from figure 11 also shows that “brand name” and “store location” are the least crucial factors respondents consider before making purchase decision, since the total percentage of score 4 and 5 for each factor held 33% and 35% total answers respectively. By the same token, another 37% total participants rated these factors as neutral, meaning that the effect it has on consumer’s decision-making process is somewhat not influential.

Lastly, “product variety” and “delivery service” factors were voted by a similar number of participants for either neutral or important criteria. There were 35% total responses rated product diversity is important, while 23% people have the same thought with delivery service. 36% of respondents had neutral thought on the impact of product variety on their clothes purchase, whilst 30% of total answers share the same thought with “delivery service” element.

#### 6.4 Respondents' opinions towards local apparel brand product in general

Before discovering which factors influence to Vietnamese consumers' choice, it is essential to gain knowledge of how they generally perceive products from local apparel brands. The purpose of this question is to explore whether clothes from local brands match with the consumer's buying criteria found out in the previous question or not. The result is reported in the figure below.

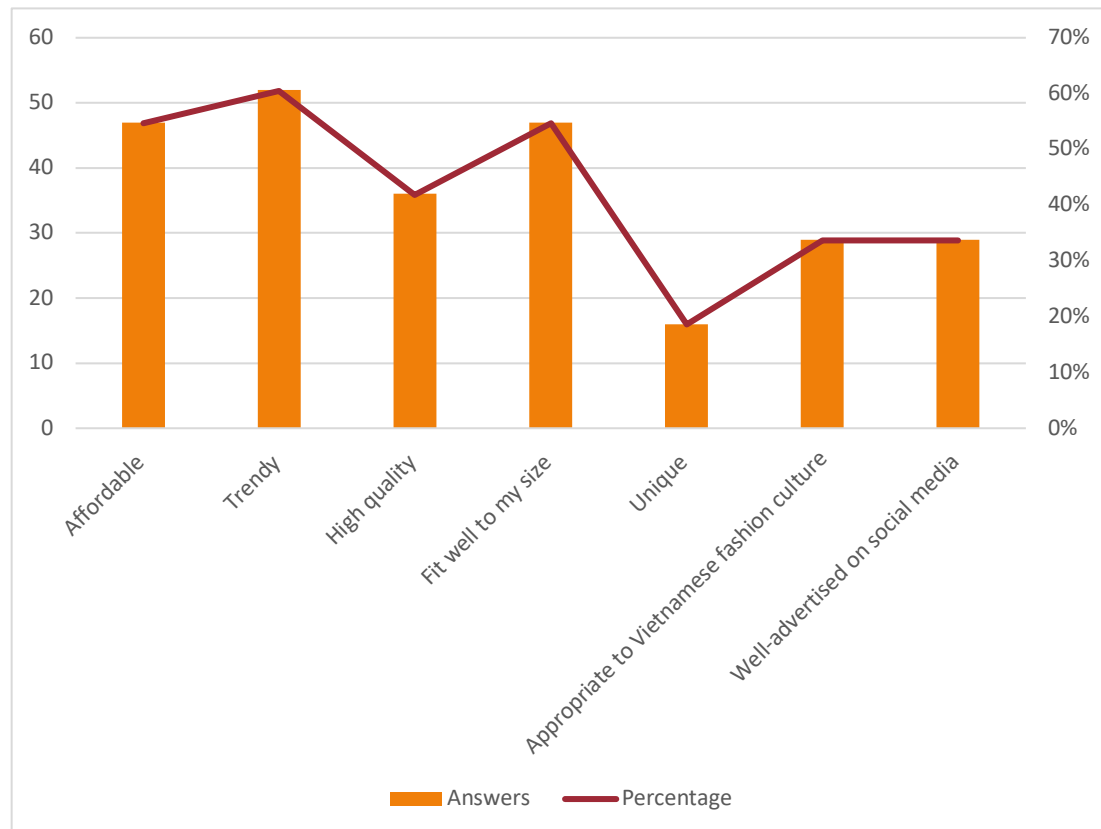


Figure 13. Respondents' opinions towards fashion products of local brands (N=86)

Out of 86 participants, 47 people shared the same thought that apparel products made by local brands are set in reasonable price and have the accurate measurement to their body size; 36 claimed that clothes from domestic brands are high quality. However, these features are not the most prominent ones. Most respondents rated "trendy" as the most outstanding advantage of local fashion products, which took up to 60% of total votes. This means that apparel products designed by domestic brands significantly correspond to the current taste of fashion consumers. Furthermore, as the factors relate to product style, product size, product price, and product quality received most answers in this question, it implies that local fashion brands are showcasing their advantages in

gaining consumer's favor by offering clothing products that meet their criteria. Despite not comprehensively reflecting all Vietnamese consumers' opinions, this question is believed to be able to contribute in presenting the general thoughts about local apparel brands.

Other than that, features such as “unique”, “appropriate to Vietnamese fashion culture”, and “well-advertised on social media” were also rated by a modest number of participants which account for 34% and 19% of total answers respectively.

### 6.5 Respondents' experience with local brands

This section consists of 7 questions concerning participants' experience with local brands. The aim of these questions is to study the performance of listed local brands as well as to discover which prominent factors from these brands that encourage the respondents to return after the first purchase. The section started with a question asking which brands the respondents had visited. The result is illustrated in the figure below.

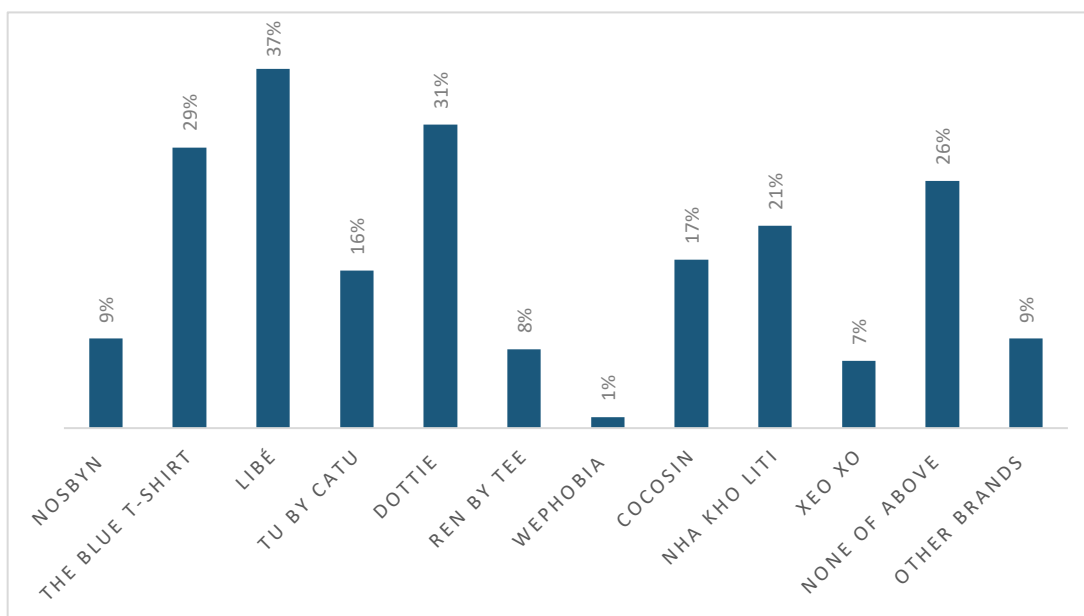


Figure 14. Local fashion brands that respondents had visited (N=86)

From the chart, it is easy to spot that LIBÉ is the most well-known among the listed names with 37% of total participants claimed they had shopped at this brand. Second is Dottie with 31% of total respondents visited for clothes shopping, followed by The



Blue T-shirt with 29% participants. In contrast to the expectation, the client company of this research, Nosbyn, received a rather low percentage of responses for the number of participants that had bought clothes at this brand, which took solely 9% of total answers. By the same token, Ren by Tee, Xeo Xo, and Wephobia were also the least voted names among the listed brands as under 10% respondents in this survey had purchased their products.

On the other hand, there were a number of participants who answered they had not bought apparel products from the given brands, which accounts for 29% of total responses. Besides, apart from the listed names, the question included an open alternative where respondent can write the brands that they often buy clothes from. The brands that were added include Rubies, Yanx, SSSTUSTER, Degree, Somehow, Kanton, High Club, and tailor shops.

Before acquiring and consuming any kinds of products, the consumers usually search for information about the brands and products offered by these brands to make sure their choice is worth the purchase. By understanding this action, the questionnaire included the question regarding how participants knew about the listed brands. The result is shown in the figure 15.

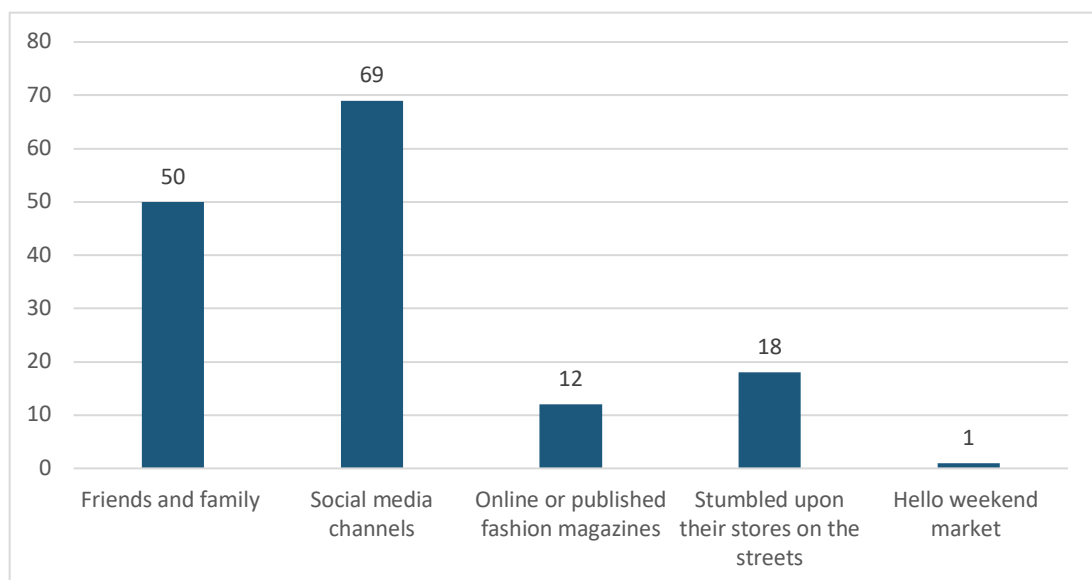


Figure 15. How respondents know about the brands (N=86)

Out of 86 valid responses, 69 people gain information about the brands via social media channels, which took up to 80% of total responses. Credibility to their inner cycles came second as 50 participants answered that they knew the brands through friends and family; 18 people, or 21% respondents from the survey, discovered the shops accidentally on the streets, while another 12 participants knew from online and published fashion magazines. Additionally, from the open alternative, there was 1 person claiming that she knew the given brands from a flea market called Hello Weekend Market.

In addition to questions concerning consumer's experience with local fashion brands, the next question is to find out factors from listed brands that initially attract respondents' attention before they made the first purchase. The following figure illustrates the collected results.



Figure 16. Attractive features of the listed brands (N=86)

Figure 16 demonstrates that a majority of respondents was appealed to the product styles and designs of the listed fashion brands, which made up to nearly 78% of total votes. The second factor from the given brands that caught participants' attention at first is the price set, as more than half (55%) of the respondents shared the same opinion. Additionally, stunning social media profile is also a wonderful marketing tool that can help fashion brand attract more new customers, as 51,2% participants of the survey voted that the beautiful social media pages of the listed brands encouraged them to

visit the shops. Furthermore, 40% of total participants rated product quality as an attractive element from the given fashion shops, whereas only a small number of respondents mentioned culture and store decorations.

Concerning the return to the given fashion brands after the first purchase, 93% of total respondents claim they did come back the next time for clothes shopping. The pie chart below shows the result.

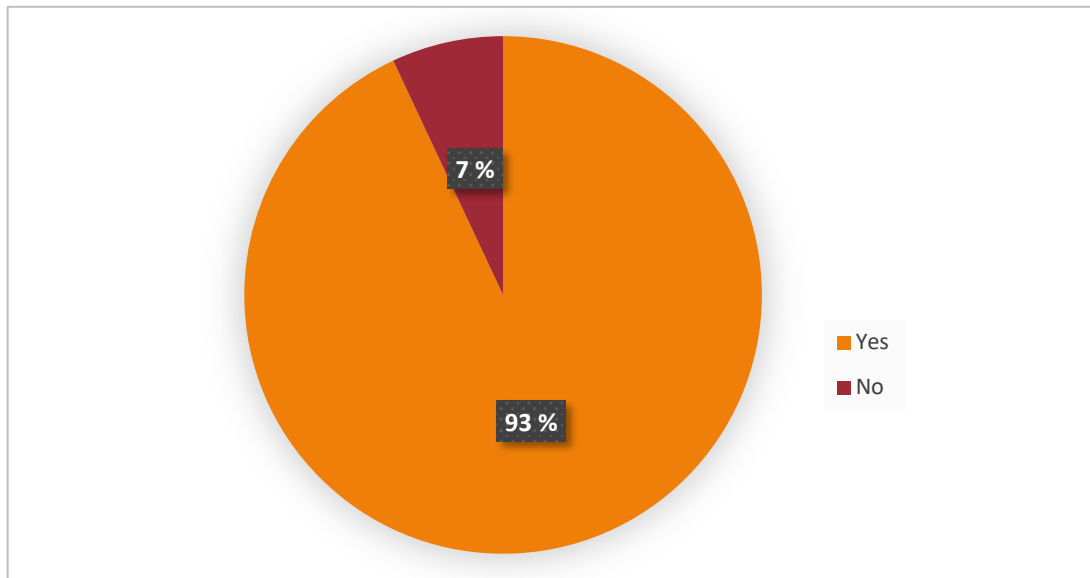


Figure 17. The return of respondents to the listed brands after their first purchase (N=86)

To the respondents that claimed they return to buy clothes at the shops after the first purchase, a question was given with the purpose to identify the reasons which encourage them to come back. The result is presented in the figure below.

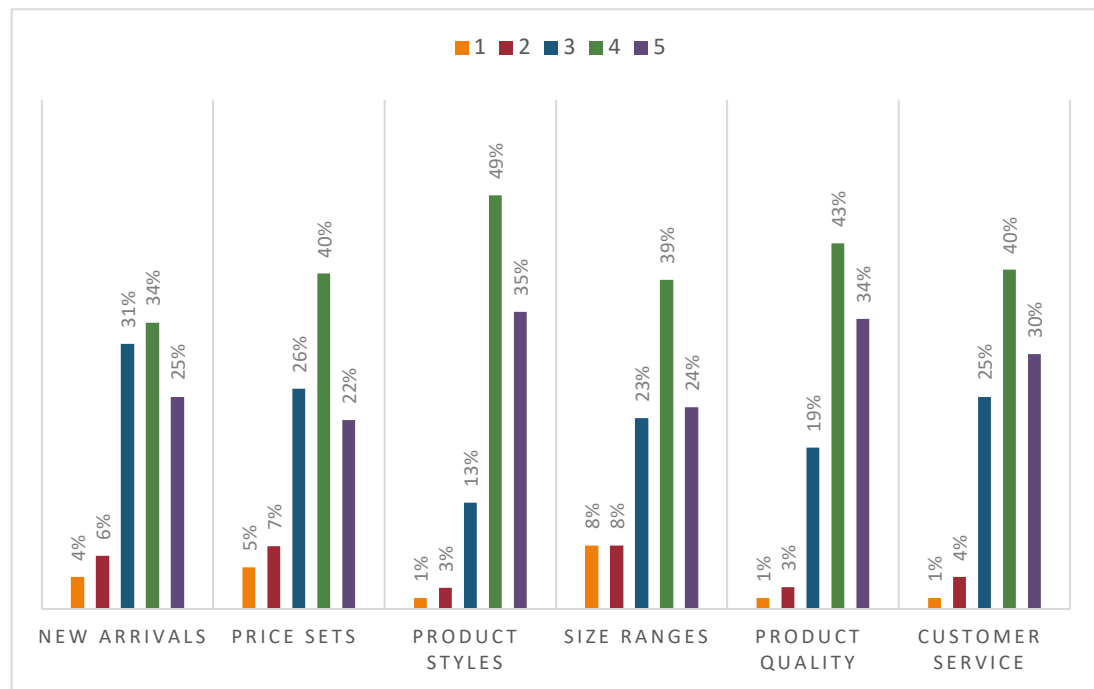


Figure 18. Factors that draw respondents to come back after the first purchase (1=Extremely weak; 5=Extremely strong) (N=86)

From the chart above, it can be easily spotted that all the factors were voted mostly neutral to slightly and extremely strong. The three noticeable positive factors are: product style, product quality, and consumer service with 84%, 77%, and 70% participants respectively rated slightly and extremely important. This indicates that the local brands mentioned in this survey are performing sufficiently to meet the respondents' criteria and expectations for apparel products. Additionally, factors related to product price and product size also play a notable role in stimulating the return of respondents to the shops, as 63% and 62% participants mentioned "size ranges" and "price sets" among the reasons they came back. This point helps to confirm the assumption that price and size are among the factors that drive respondents to buy clothes at the local brands.

To the respondents who answered they did not come back to the shops after the first purchase, an open-ended question was offered in order to gather their suggestions towards the future improvement from the brands. There were 6 participants who claimed they did not return to the mentioned brands. The following chart illustrates the opinions gathered from them.

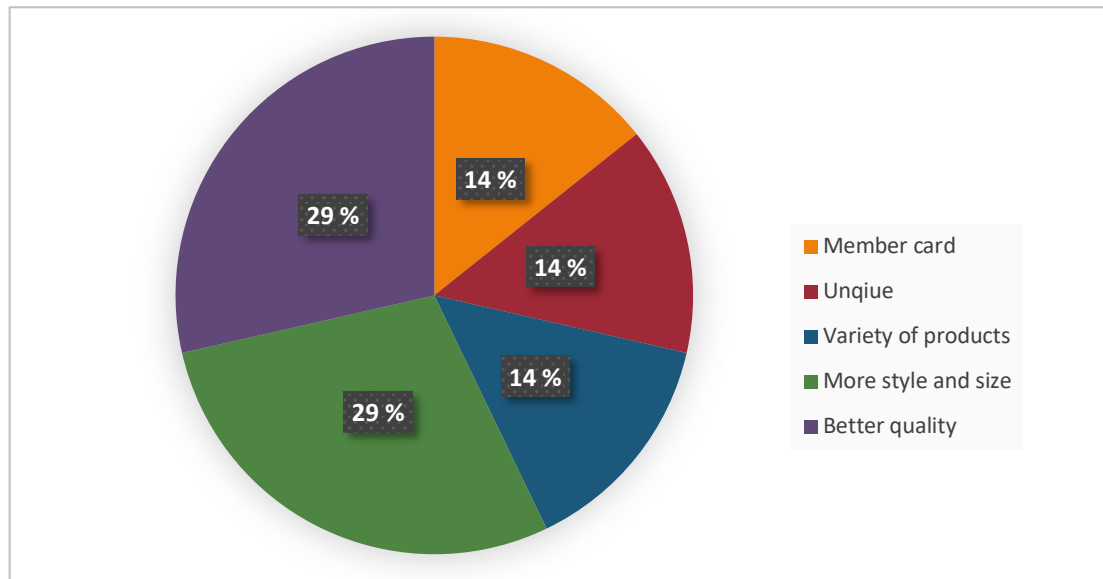


Figure 19. Suggestions for the local brands (N=86)

#### 6.6 Factors that would increase respondents' intention to shop at local brands

After discovering the factors encouraging respondents to purchase fashion products from the listed local brands, the last question of this survey was given in order to gather their general opinions towards the elements that could likely increase their desire to buy clothes from domestic brands in the future. The results are demonstrated in the following figure.

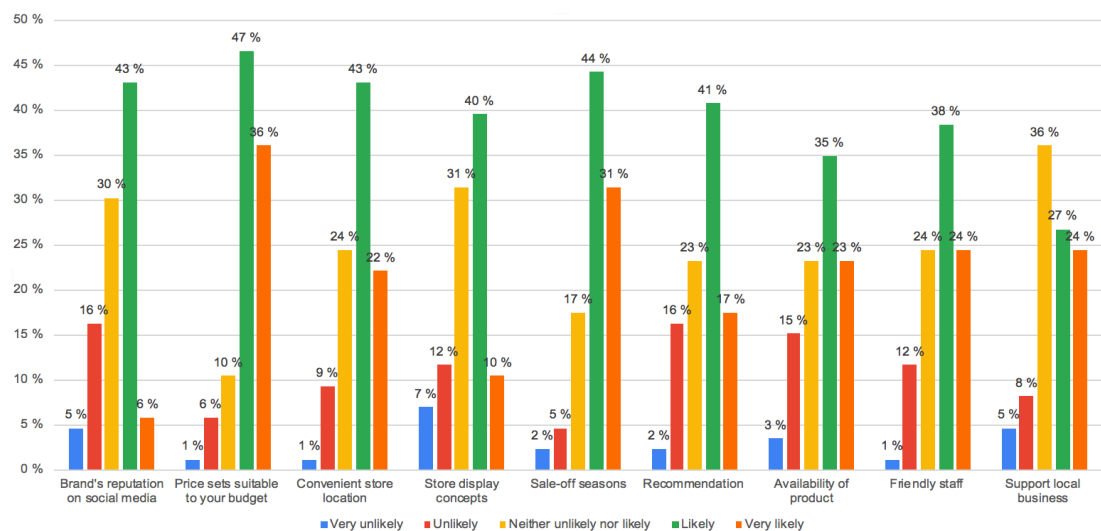


Figure 20. Factors that would increase respondents' intention to visit local shops (N=86)

The figure has shown that all the given factors were considered more or less important for the likelihood of increasing respondents' intention to shop at local brands in the future. The most prominent elements are "price set suitable to your financial situation" with 83% participants claimed it likely and very likely contributes to their future purchase at local shops; "sale-off seasons" ranked second as 75% respondents agree it could likely and very likely impact on their future fashion buying; "convenient store location" was also among the most likely factors with 65% total answers went to it. From this point of view, it can be understood that respondents' purchase is significantly driven by product price, promotion, and store location of the brands. An appropriate pricing and promotion strategy as well as a good store location can attract more consumers to visit the shops in the future. Moreover, other factors mentioned in the question also play a crucial role in inspiring respondents to visit local shops as more than half of the total participants voted these elements could likely increase their future intentions.

## 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The research question is about discovering factors influence Vietnamese consumers' purchase of local fashion brands. The client company, Nosbyn, wishes to update the current consumer buying behavior and strengthen its position in the fiercely booming fashion market. As such the main research question is formulated as:

*“What are the key factors that impact on consumers' choice of local apparel brands in Ho Chi Minh City?”*

The research objectives will be answered first to provide support for the main question.

- *What is the general shopping behavior of consumers in Ho Chi Minh City?*

In terms of expending pattern for fashion products, 500,000 to 1 million VND is the most common amount that respondents of the survey often spend on clothes during each shopping time, followed by 1 million to 2 million VND, and less than 500,000 VND amounts. Moreover, regarding favorite shopping location, Internet and shops located on commercial pedestrian streets were voted mostly by an equal number of participants, which hold 62% total answers. Shopping centers came second with 30%

respondents chose as places to buy clothes, while supermarket received less attention as a place to go for clothes shopping.

For the motives behind clothes purchases, the majority of respondents claimed they buy clothes because they enjoyed the feeling of buying new apparel items and to replace old items in their wardrobe, which hold 64% and 60% total answers respectively. The third chosen reason is to wear for special events, which is followed by the reason to follow fashion trends.

- *What are the most important criteria consumers pay attention to when shopping for clothes?*

From the research findings, ranking of important criteria that respondents usually consider when evaluating and selecting what and where to buy clothes are as follow:

Table1. Ranking of important buying criteria of the participants (N=86)

Rank	Criteria	Average score (scale 1 to 5)
1	Product size	4.35
2	Product style	4.30
3	Product quality	4.00
4	Product price	3.93
5	Customer service	3.83
6	Discount offers	3.77
7	Product variety	3.38
8	Delivery service	3.14
9	Brand name	2.95
10	Store location	2.86

- *What do they think about clothes of local brands?*

Generally, most of the respondents perceive positive opinions about fashion products of local brands. To be specific, there was 60% of participants who agreed that apparel products of local brands are trendy; 55% respondents think that the products are set in

an affordable price range and fit perfectly to their size; while another 42% of respondents went for high quality factor. Besides, respondents also think clothes from local brands are “unique”, “appropriate to Vietnamese fashion culture”, and “well-advised on social media”. Yet, the number of respondents shared the same thought was not significant.

- *Which local brands had they shopped at? What makes the brands attractive to them? Do they come back after the first purchase? What were the reasons for coming back?*

Results from the survey show that LIBÉ is the most popular local brand in the list with 37% respondents claimed they had bought clothes from this brand. The second well-known brand is Dottie with 31% participants visited for clothes shopping, which is followed by The Blue T-shirt with 29% of respondents. Brands such as Nha Kho Liti, Cocosin, Tu by Catu were also chosen by a modest number of participants. By contrast, it is somewhat unexpected that Nosbyn, the client company of this research, had a rather low number of people buying clothes from this brand, altogether just 8 % of total respondents. Additionally, 29 % of the respondents claimed that they did not visit any of the brands in the list. Instead, they provided some brands that they often buy clothes from, which are Rubies, Yanx, SSSTUSTER, Degree, Somehow, Kanton, High Club, and tailor shops.

Regarding the attractive features from the brands, a big number of respondents admitted that they were appealed to the product styles and designs, which hold 78% total answers. Rated second is product price as 55% participants shared the same thoughts. Pretty social media profile is another attractive factor from the brands that 51,2% respondent agreed that it inspired them to visit the shops. In addition, product quality was also chosen by a good number of participants as an interesting factor from the given brands that influence them to buy clothes.

Furthermore, out of 86 participants, 80 said that they did come back to the shops for the next shopping time. The main reasons for their return were that they were greatly satisfied with the product style, product quality, and customer service. Moreover, appropriate product size and price were also the reasons that drew respondents back to shop again in the next shopping time.



Participants who did not come back after the first purchase at the listed brands, suggested that the brands should provide more diverse products quantity with better styling and quality in order to attract more customers to return. Membership card should be considered as well if the brands would like to enhance customer loyalty.

- *What would increase their intentions to buy clothes from local brands in the future?*

According to the collected data, features related to product price once again appeared as the major factor that would increase respondents' desire to shop at local brands in the future. Elements like "price set suitable to your financial situation" and "sale-off season" received 83% and 75% votes respectively as the most likely contributors that encourage participants to visit local fashion brands. Moreover, factor concerning store location can also increase respondents motive to visit local shops as 65% participants claimed they would stopover if it is a convenient location. Other factors such as brands' reputation, pretty store decorations, availability of product, friendly customer service, recommendations, and the desire to support local business can also significantly stimulate more consumer come to shop at the local brands in the future, as more than 50% total participants rated as "likely" or "extremely likely".

In conclusion, from the research findings, the main factors that impact on consumers' purchase of apparel products of local brands are product style, product size, product price, product quality, discount seasons, and social media. It is noticeable that these factors were chosen by a major number of respondents in all given questions. Regarding style, size, price, and quality, these four factors received mostly high ratings from the participants for the most important factors in buying criteria for clothes. It is in fact so that the mentioned local brands are performing remarkably well to meet these standards, as the majority of respondents shared the same opinions that they are certainly satisfied with product style, size, price, and quality of the brands. Consequently, they return for the next clothes purchases.

Additionally, the respondents' purchase of local fashion products was inspired greatly also by discount offers. In the ranking scale of important criteria respondents use to evaluate and select fashion products, discount offers ranked 6<sup>th</sup> with 67% votes went

to it. In the last question where participants were asked which factors would likely increase their intention to buy clothes from local shops in the future, 65% of them answered sale-off season. This point is understandable since discount offers relate closely to product price, which is one of the most influential factors impacting on respondents' purchase of fashion products. Lastly, concerning social media, most of the respondents in this survey acknowledged the brands via social media channels. In the question about attractive features of the listed brands, a significant number of participants claimed they found social media feeds of these brands to be appealing, which as a result, drives them to visit the shops more regularly. This brings out a suggestion to the local brands to utilize the advantage of social media in order to sufficiently obtain more new customers in the future.

## 8 FINAL WORDS

To achieve the goal of this thesis, which is providing Nosbyn the overview of current consumer behavior in Ho Chi Minh City and the factors affecting to their choice of local fashion brands, the consumer behavior analysis was carried out and covered in the theoretical part. The research findings were given out based on the analysis of collected data from the questionnaire.

The aim of this study is to identify the major factors that influence to Vietnamese consumers' choice of local fashion brands for Nosbyn, so that the company can create appropriate marketing strategies to improve its market share and attain more customer. The outcome of this research has been well presented in this thesis. However, after conducting the study, the author had identified two limitations.

Firstly, the sample size of the survey is quite small, with only 86 valid responses, which causes concerns regarding the in-depth information of the research. Therefore, a bigger number sample size should be collected in the future in order to conduct deeper analysis of Vietnamese consumer behavior. Secondly, as this thesis only covers consumer behavior, other aspects of a business such as marketing strategies, studies of competitors, studies of in-dept market, operations, KPIs, are not mentioned. For this reason,

Nosbyn should conduct deeper researches into the listed aspects in order to establish more feasible marketing strategies.

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QUESTIONNAIR

Dear survey takers,

I am Hue Chang, a final year student at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in Finland. At the moment, I am working on my thesis research with Nosbyn – a local fashion brand for women based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

The objective of this survey is to find out the main factors affect to consumers' choice of local fashion brands in Ho Chi Minh City. The respondents are expected to be women and are in age range between 18-35 years old who are living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. If you are living in other cities of Vietnam and are not in the expected age range, please ignore this survey.

I highly appreciate all the constructive comments and responses. All information and answers provided will be kept confidentially and solely used for research purpose.

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years old
2. Where do you live?
  - Ha Noi
  - Ho Chi Minh City
  - Other. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your monthly income? (VND)
  - Less than 1.5 million
  - 1.5 million - 3 million
  - 3 million – 5 million
  - Over 5 million
4. How much, on average, do you spend on clothes each purchasing time?  
(VND)
  - Less than 500,000
  - 500,000 – 1,000,000
  - 1,000,000 – 2,000,000

- 2,000,000 – 5,000,000
  - More than 5,000,000
5. Where do you often go clothes shopping (choose more than 1 option)?
- Malls/Larger shopping centers
  - Supermarket
  - Shops along commercial pedestrian streets
  - Internet
  - Other. Please specify:
6. What is the reason for your clothes purchase (choose more than 1 option)?
- To follow fashion trends
  - For special occasions
  - To replace old clothing items
  - To gain social acceptance
  - I get pleasure or enjoyment from it
7. How important are the following criteria when you purchase clothes? (rating 1= not important at all; 5= extremely important)
- Price
  - Style
  - Size
  - Product quality
  - Variety of products at stores or on websites
  - Brand name
  - Store location
  - Customer service
  - Discount offers
  - Others. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
8. What do you think about apparel products from local brands in general?  
(choose more than 1 option)
- More trendy
  - More affordable
  - Higher quality
  - Fit better to my size
  - More unique
  - More appropriate to Vietnamese fashion culture



- Well-advertised/promoted on social media channels (Instagram and Facebook)
9. Which of local apparel brands below have you shopped at? (choose more than 1 option)
- Nosbyn
  - The Blue T-shirt
  - LIBÉ
  - Tu by Catu
  - Dottie
  - Ren by Tee
  - Wephobia
  - Cocosin
  - Nha Kho Liti
  - Xeo Xo
  - Others. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - None of above.
10. How did you get to know these brands (choose more than 1 option)?
- From social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube...)
  - From online or published fashion magazines
  - From friends and family
  - I stumbled upon their stores on the streets
  - Other. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
11. What makes these brands attractive to you (choose more than 1 option)?
- Brand culture
  - Price
  - Product style and design
  - Product quality
  - Eye-catching social media feeds (Instagram and Facebook)
  - Pretty store interior and displays
  - Other. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Did you come back to shop again at these brands after the first purchase?
13. If you answer YES to the previous question, how strongly do the following elements of these local apparel brands contribute to your decision to come back? (rating 1=extremely weak; 5=extremely strong)

- New arrivals
- Price sets
- Product styles
- Size ranges
- Product quality
- Customer service
- Popularity of the brands in your community
- Others. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

14. If you answer NO to question 11, what do you expect from the brands to satisfy your demand?

15. How likely would the followings increase your intention to buy clothes from local shops in the future? (rating from very unlikely to very likely)

- Reputation of the brand on social media
- Product prices suitable to your financial situation/willingness to spend on clothes
- Convenient locations (ex: shops that are nearby where you live, easily accessible...)
- Pretty store display concepts
- Sale-off seasons
- Recommendations from friends or family
- The item you are looking for is only available at local shops
- Friendly staff
- You would like to support local businesses