

# A SCENT- SATIONAL STUDY

## An Empirical study on the purchase behavior of Employed and Unemployed women of Dubai and Sharjah regions, U.A.E, towards perfumes

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### *Abstract*

*A survey was carried out between November, 2004 and January, 2005 by the authors to gain an insight into the purchase behavior of both employed and unemployed women of the Dubai and Sharjah regions, U.A.E towards perfumes. The findings of the survey revealed both similarities and differences in their purchase behavior. Majority of the surveyed women exhibit a similar buying behavior with regards to period of usage, frequency of use, reason for using perfumes, preference for branded perfumes, frequency of purchase; and show differences when it comes to place of purchase, persons accompanying the respondents during the purchase, time taken for purchase, money spent on perfume, motivators and influencing factors. The researchers have also suggested to the perfumes marketers to concentrate more on promoting their branded products to the segments of women who use unbranded perfumes and to make their special promotions and advertising campaigns more effective. This can be done by using the number of ladies saloons and beauty parlors that are located in and around Dubai and Sharjah regions.*

**Keywords :** Perfumes, Fragrance, Scents, Consumer Behaviour, Women

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nothing in the world has the ability to stir our senses and moods better than the power of fragrance. From ancient times till date, fragrances have always been part of man's history. For a long time, they were only intended for deities and monarchs. People have used perfume, oils and unguents on their bodies for thousands of years in lesser or greater amounts dependant on fashion whims ([www.fashionera.com](http://www.fashionera.com)).

During the middle ages, plants were used to protect against epidemics whereas perfumes from the Orient whispered of carnal pleasures. During the Renaissance period (1490-1600 A.D) queens and courtesans fought over the secret formulae created by the first Italian chemists. They later discovered fragrance ingredients imported from Asia and America. Then emerged the Classic era where the fragrance makers developed their trade. The perfume trade developed well during the Napoleonic period (1789-1860) until the concept of Modern perfumery came by ([www.osmoz.com](http://www.osmoz.com)).

Towards the end of the 19th century, the fragrance industry increasingly targeted women belonging to the middle class. Perfumes were turned into a product of luxury with a prestigious name and a beautiful bottle. Character fragrances began to emerge between 1930 and 1950 to suit each individual's style and personality. One wore a designer fragrance to stand out. The seventies woman claimed her individuality and proudly wore a "lifestyle" scent. Perfumes were manufactured to suit number of different lifestyles - feminism, back to nature, punk, and neo-romanticism. Clothes reflected their owner's attitude in life and his or her ideas. Both in the US and in France new fragrance concepts wooed a woman that was sophisticated and provocative or, at other times, softly natural and romantic. The eighties were marked by strong sensations. Men and women were engaged in a grueling marathon to achieve professional success. New fruity notes, which originated in the US, added a novel twist to mens' and womens' fragrances. The last decade

saw materialism fading into the past. Men and women were yearning for a purer world. They were sharing fragrances that reflected the search for a new freshness. Perfumes were manufactured to quench their desire for purity. Fragrances evoked the sea, water, plants and flowers, creating a natural feel, eventually refocusing on the basics – Air, Earth, Fire, Water and Wind ([www.osmoz.com](http://www.osmoz.com)).

Today, perfume is being viewed and understood as a fashion accessory, an enticement tool and much more. The general belief is that perfumery is not an artistic way of expression, but an extension of fashion and advertising.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Fragrance is one of the most valuable intangible matters in this vast beautiful universe. It elicits different emotions, memories and yearnings for every woman (Jeniffer Tung, 2004). When one thinks of the terms/expressions associated with 'Perfumes' it is obvious that 'Women' top the list. Women and perfumes have always gone hand in hand since ages. A woman's first experience with perfumes was probably at her mother's dressing table. She grows up watching her mother try different fragrances for various occasions to create different effects. For a woman, perfume is just not only about fragrance, it is believed to have deeper associations with her identity, personality, style and emotions.

A woman's choice of a specific perfume evolves with her lifestyle and identity. Some changes are universal and very predictable, as in the case of age range and brand preference. Other changes reflect where they are in life—whether they are married or single, settled in a career, or still climbing, says Virginia Bonofiglio, Professor of fragrance knowledge at New York City's Fashion Institute of Technology. She is of the opinion that a woman may change careers when she's 40, which may cause her to use fragrance more in the way younger women do. You may be single again at 50, and suddenly everything you do is based on that change. The changing role of women in society and trends towards later marriage with women remaining sin-

gle for a longer time, significantly change the consumer purchase behavior towards perfumes to a great extent. It is a known fact that a large number of women are becoming active participants in the workforce and now-a-days have greater purchasing power. (www.thesishelp.us)

Whatever be the reason, perfumes are always priced possessions that women are willing to spend a fortune on for something as intangible as smell. A market survey conducted in US revealed that American women, in particular, spend over \$ 2.5 billion a year on fragrances (Drug Store News, 1991). Thanks to them there are some 800 fragrances available in the market today. Smell is the most important attribute when women are selecting a brand of fragrance, followed by price and brand favorite, disclosed a survey conducted by Vertis in 2003 (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2003)

Results of the survey conducted by Vertis in the year 2003, revealed that about 65 percent of the women made additions to the existing stock of perfumes compared with 60 percent in 2001 (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2003).

A survey conducted by Conde Nast Beauty Lab and published in Drug Store News in 1999 pointed out that 91 percent of the observed women choose a perfume primarily for its scent/ fragrance. The author, Lebharr Friedman also reveals that 64 percent of the women get influenced by product samples, 49 percent by scent strips and 43 percent get influenced by special promotions.

In an article – Women wear fragrances to please themselves, published in Drug Store News, Feb 2, 1991, it was disclosed that 55 percent of the women who use fragrance call it a mood lifter; 21 percent said they wear fragrance to impress others, and only 11 percent saw it as a status symbol. About 80 percent of the women use fragrances atleast once a day. On an average, a woman owns five fragrances, 25 percent said they use fragrances to attract the opposite gender and 21 percent said they wear perfumes to impress others.

In a study conducted in US between April and May 2001, almost 8 on 10 (79 percent) of a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults polled via telephone, revealed that a product's scent is the most important factor they consider when buying a fragrance. (American Demographics, Feb 1, 2002).

According to Vertis customer focus 2001 fragrance industry report, released in November 2001, 61 percent of all adults who sniffed a scent strip in a magazine in the past three months said they find them somewhat or very helpful when choosing a fragrance to buy.

According to Mogelonsky Marcia, about two-thirds of the perfumes and fragrances business come from female consumers and hence rightly call it the lioness's share. According to AcNeilson, households purchase women's perfumes once every 83 days (American Demographics, 1997)

A survey conducted by the NPD Group finds that among those who use fragrances, 49 percent have purchased three or more bottles for themselves within the past year. (Dolliver Mark, 2000).

Kanika Goswami's study on perfumes purchase behavior in the Indian market, published in Business Traveller (www.businesstravellerindia.com) revealed that people choose perfumes for a number of reasons- the brand, the beauty of packaging, etc but the foremost reason is the scent itself.

## **NEED AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

Some studies have been undertaken in these regions with regard to consumer behavior towards cosmetics, necessities and consumer goods, but so far no study has been carried out in these regions to know the purchase behavior of both employed and unemployed women towards perfumes in particular, hence the present study.

The study is limited to the female residents of Dubai and Sharjah emirates of the U.A.E.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of the study is to know the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase behavior of both employed and unemployed women towards perfumes.

The other objectives of the study are :

- 1) To find out the attributes which are considered by both employed and unemployed women when purchasing perfumes.
- 2) To understand the motivating and influencing factors that affect the purchasing behavior of both employed and unemployed women when they decide to buy perfumes.
- 3) To make a few suggestions and recommendations based on the survey.

## **METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE SIZE**

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected with the help of a pre-designed questionnaire and secondary data was sourced from relevant books, journals, magazines, newspapers and the internet.

The survey was carried out between November, 2004 and January, 2005.

Using the convenient sampling technique, the questionnaires were distributed to 500 respondents residing in and around Dubai and Sharjah Emirates. The researchers got back 392 questionnaires after repeated follow up calls and reminders. Out of these, 356 questionnaires were found to be complete in all respects. The breakup of the respondents on the basis of gender was 137 males and 219 females. Out of the 219 female respondents, 163 were found to be employed and 56 informed that they were unemployed. Due to paucity of time, this study focuses only on the 219 female respondents and the same has been taken as the sample. However, the researchers plan to use the data to carry out further research. Only simple statistical tools such as averages and percentages have been used to analyze the collected data.

### **Pre-testing of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was pre-tested with the response obtained from 50 respondents; results of the reliability tests disclosed an overall Cronbach alpha value of 0.7006. Since the preliminary questionnaire had an overall Cronbach alpha value which is

higher than the benchmark (Cronbach alpha > 0.70 as suggested by Nunnally, 1978), the items included in the interval scale were considered reliable and internally consistent.

### MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

#### Employed women

1. Majority of the surveyed employed women informed that they have been using perfumes for more than a decade.
  2. Majority of the surveyed employed women indicated that they use perfumes twice a day.
  3. More than 95 percent surveyed employed women disclosed that they used perfumes primarily to feel good. To keep in tune with trend and fashion appears to be the next important factor for using perfumes according to the surveyed respondents.
  4. About two-fifth of the surveyed working women informed that they own upto 3 perfumes. This finding is in line with the findings of the NPD group survey, 2000.
  5. It is interesting to note that nearly 75 percent of the surveyed employed women indicated they use branded perfumes.
  6. The survey indicated that majority of the working women preferred to buy their perfumes only from a particular perfume retail outlet.
  7. When asked, about one-third of the surveyed respondents informed that they preferred to shop alone for their perfumes. However, more than 25 percent of their counterparts take their friends when they go to buy perfumes.
  8. Majority of the surveyed working women revealed that they do not have any particular day to go shopping for perfumes. However, about one-fourth of their counterparts appear to prefer weekends for perfume shopping.
  9. The survey revealed that majority of the respondents spend not less than 10 minutes to make a purchase decision. However, about 47 percent of their counterparts appear to require less than 10 minutes to make their choice. This is probably because they are pre-decided about the brand they want to buy.
  10. Majority of the surveyed employed women informed that they buy perfumes once in three months. This finding is in order with the results of the study carried out by AcNeilson, in 1997.
  11. More than 95 percent of the surveyed working women disclosed that they primarily buy perfumes for themselves.
  12. Majority of the surveyed respondents indicated that they spend on an average anything between 100 and 200 AED (Arab Emirate Dirhams) per month on perfumes.
  13. Uniqueness of the fragrance, quality (the number of hours the perfume smell lasts/lingers) and brand image in that order appear to be the attributes which sway the respondents when buying a perfume.
- This finding matches with the findings of the following surveys-
- Kanika Goswami's study on perfumes purchase behavior in the Indian market, published in Business Traveller, 2004;
  - A survey conducted by Vertis in 2003 (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2003);
  - A study undertaken in the US between April and May 2001, published in American Demographics, Feb 1, 2002 ; and,
  - A survey conducted by Conde Nast Beauty Lab and published in Drug Store News in 1999
14. Price, Budget and Packaging & Design have been indicated as other important attributes that are considered by the surveyed women when selecting perfumes.

15. The survey revealed that majority of the working women appear to be influenced by their friends and family members in their perfume purchases. However, samples, special promotions and scent strips, in that order, also influence their purchase decision, divulged the respondents. This finding is in tune with the results of the survey conducted by Conde Nast Beauty Lab that was published in Drug Store News in the year 1999.
16. Majority of the surveyed working women disclosed that when compared with last year, this year they have made additions to their stock of perfumes. This finding is consistent with the results of survey conducted by Vertis in the year 2003.
17. Majority of the surveyed respondents informed that they spent about the same amount of money on perfumes as compared to last year.
18. Majority of the surveyed working women feel that promotions and advertisements, in that order should be used more effectively as marketing tools to reach the target market.

### SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY

PARTICULARS	RESPONSE ( % )	
	Employed Women	Unemployed Women
<i>Period of usage</i>		
Last 10 years	74.8	58.9
Last 5 years	17.8	32.1
Last 1 year	7.4	9.0

#### *Frequency of use*

Twice a day	60.7	44.6
Once a day	24.5	30.4
Occasionally	11.7	12.5
For social gatherings only	3.1	12.5

#### *Reason for use*

To Feel good	96.9	100
To keep up with trend and fashion	62.6	64.3

#### *Number of perfumes owned*

Between 1 and 3	40.5	51.8
Between 3 and 5	31.3	30.4
Above 5	28.2	17.8

#### *Usage of branded/unbranded perfumes*

Use of branded perfumes	74.8	69.6
Use of unbranded perfumes	25.2	30.4

#### *Place of purchase*

Perfume retail outlet	57.1	55.4
Any retail outlet	17.2	25.0
Exclusive agents	9.2	3.6
Retail chains	16.0	14.3
Others	0.5	1.7

### Shop Loyalty

Yes	53.4	44.6
No	46.6	55.4

### In case not patronizing an outlet, number of shops visited

Between 2 and 5 shops	73.7	64.5
One shop	22.4	35.5
More than 5 shops	3.9	--

### People accompanying the respondents

Nobody	31.9	23.2
Friends	27.6	21.4
Spouse	22.1	21.4
Others	18.4	34.0

### Preferred day for perfume purchase

No particular days	73.6	66.1
Weekends	25.8	33.9
Public holidays	0.6	0

### Time taken to make a purchase decision

Less than 10 minutes	46.6	57.1
More than 10 minutes	53.4	42.9

### Frequency of purchase

Once a month	17.8	12.5
Once in 3 months	41.7	42.9
Once in 6 months	10.4	16.1
Once a year	3.7	1.7
No specific time frame	26.4	26.8

### For whom do they buy

Self	96.3	91.0
Spouse	3.7	9.0

### Money spent on perfumes per month

Less than 100 AED	21.5	53.6
100 - 200 AED	39.3	23.2
200 - 300 AED	21.5	10.7
300 - 400 AED	7.4	5.4
400 -500 AED	8.5	1.8
Above 500	1.8	5.3

### Attributes considered while choosing perfumes

Scent uniqueness	96.9	92.8
Quality	95.1	92.9
Brand Image	82.3	82.1
Price	75.5	75.0
Budget	71.8	78.5
Packaging and design	51.5	42.9

### Motivators

Friends	71.2	76.7
Family	65.7	78.5

### Influencing factors

Product samples	71.8	75.0
Scent strips	51.5	66.0
Product promotions	64.4	57.1

### Perfumes added to the existing stock as compared to last year (2003)

Between 1 and 5	74.2	71.4
More than 5	25.8	28.6

### Money spent on perfumes as compared to last year

Less than the previous year	15.3	26.8
About the same amount	53.4	42.9
More than the previous year	31.3	30.3

Source: Primary Data

## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

### Unemployed women

1. It is interesting to note that majority of the surveyed unemployed women informed that they have been using perfumes for more than a decade.
2. Majority of the surveyed unemployed women also indicated that they use perfumes twice a day.
3. All the surveyed unemployed women disclosed that they used perfumes primarily to feel good.
4. About 50 percent of the surveyed unemployed women informed that they own upto 3 perfumes. This finding is in line with the findings of the NPD group survey, 2000.
5. It is interesting to note that nearly 70 percent of the surveyed unemployed women indicated that they use branded perfumes.
6. Majority of the surveyed unemployed women revealed that they do not patronize any particular shop to buy their perfumes. The study further reveals that these respondents visit upto five shops before buying their perfumes.
7. When asked, about one-fourth of the surveyed respondents informed that they preferred to shop alone for their perfumes. However, more than 20 percent of their counterparts indicated that their friends accompany them whenever they go shopping for perfumes. A similar percent of respondents appeared to be accompanied by their spouse when they shop for perfumes.
8. About two- third of the surveyed unemployed women divulged that they do not have any particular day to go shopping for perfumes. However, about one-third of their counterparts appeared to prefer weekends for perfume shopping.
9. The survey showed that majority of the respondents appeared to take between 5 and 10 minutes to make their purchase decision. However, about one-fourth of their counterparts appeared to take more than 10 minutes to make their choice.
10. Majority of the surveyed unemployed women informed that they buy perfumes once in three months. This finding is consistent with the results of the study carried out by AcNeilson Inc. in 1997.
11. More than 90 percent of the surveyed unemployed women disclosed that they primarily buy perfumes for themselves.
12. Majority of the surveyed respondents indicated that they spend less than 100 AED (Arab Emirate Dirhams) per month

on perfumes.

13. Uniqueness of the fragrance, quality (the number of hours the perfume smell lasts/lingers) and brand image in that order appear to be the attributes which sway the respondents when buying a perfume.

***This finding matches with the findings of the following surveys-***

- Kanika Goswami's study on perfumes purchase behavior in the Indian market, published in Business Traveller, 2004;
  - A survey conducted by Vertis in 2003 (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2003);
  - A study undertaken in the US between April and May 2001, published in American Demographics, Feb 1, 2002; and,
  - A survey conducted by Conde Nast Beauty Lab and published in Drug store news in 1999.
14. Price and Budget have been indicated as other important attributes when selecting perfumes.
  15. The survey revealed that majority of the unemployed women appear to be influenced by their family members and friends in their perfume purchase. However, product samples, scent strips and special promotions, in that order, also influence their purchase decision. This finding is in order with the results of the survey conducted by Conde Nast Beauty Lab, which was published in Drug Store News , in 1999.
  16. More than 70 percent of the surveyed respondents disclosed that when compared with last year, this year they have made upto five more additions to their perfumes stock.
  17. Majority of the surveyed respondents informed that they spent about the same amount of money on perfumes as compared to last year and one-third say they have spent more this year as compared to last year.
  18. Majority of the surveyed unemployed women feel that promotions and advertisements, in that order should be used more effectively as marketing tools to reach the target market.

## **SUMMING UP**

To sum up, it must be stated that although both employed and unemployed women appear to exhibit similar buying behavior with regards to period of usage, frequency of use, preference for branded perfumes, preferred day for perfume purchase, frequency of purchase, additions made to the number of perfumes and money spent on perfume purchases as compared to last year, they do differ in their purchase behavior when it comes to place of purchase, persons accompanying the respondents during the purchase, time taken for purchase, money spent on perfume and motivators and influencing factors which help in their purchase decisions.

## **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

- The study reveals that about 25 percent of the surveyed women appear to be buying perfumes that are not branded. This gives an opportunity for the perfume marketers to find out the reasons behind women not buying branded perfumes and to know what the unbranded perfumes offer, which their products do not tender.
- The surveyed women have pointed out that special promotions and advertisements have to be made more effective. This gives

an opening for the perfume marketing executives not only to find out why their present special promotions and advertising campaigns are not rated effective but also try and make them successful. It is suggested that the perfume marketers can advertise their products, carry out special promotions and new product launches through beauty parlors and ladies saloons that are dotted all over Dubai and Sharjah Emirates.

- The surveyed women have indicated that they are accompanied by friends and family members when they shop for perfumes. It is suggested that whenever advertisements are created to promote perfumes this aspect should be kept in mind.
- More than two-fifth of the surveyed women have informed that they do not frequent any particular shop to make their perfume purchases. This provides an opportunity to the retail outlets who desire to develop long-term relationship with their customers to create a database about their customers and keep constantly in touch with them by sending fliers, samples and scent strips during their birthdays / wedding days and also whenever they launch new products.
- Middle East is always associated with sunny weather and long summers and the U.A.E is no exception to this. This presents a unique opportunity for the perfume marketers to launch their promotion campaigns during the months May to August when summer is at its peak.

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