Impact of Brand Consciousness on Young Indian Consumers Behavior towards Fashion Products

TTM 585: Research Proposal

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INTRODUCTION

A brand serves to add dimensions to a product to differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same needs. The strength of brands is measured by the price differential that consumers are willing to pay over other products in the same category (Keller, 2012). For many young people, it is not buying a pair of jeans, but buying GAP or Tommy Hilfiger or Levis. As per the article in Business Week (Wechsler, 1997, p. 64) this “barrage of brand names offers the irresistible promise of instant cool,” particularly for teenagers.

India has entered the league of the most brand conscious countries globally (India among 'most brand conscious countries' globally: Survey, 2014) due to the fast growing nature of its economy and the rising number of affluent consumers. According to study (Bhat et al., 2006), the population aged 15—24, constitutes some 222 million and represent 20 percent of the Indian population. In spite of such a large population consisting of youth, extensive research has not been carried out on understanding the impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour of young consumers in India.

The basic definitions of the terms in context to this study are:

**Brand consciousness:** A brand conscious person is someone who only likes to buy products made by certain famous companies, even if a purchase is expensive (Brand Consciousness).

**Consumer Behaviour:** The process by which individuals search for, select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services, in satisfaction of their needs and wants (Consumer Buying Behaviour).

**Importance of the Research:** Young consumers usually follows fashion, initiate fashion trends and many apparel brands are focused on selling products for them, hence, this research
is of key importance to such brands. This study aims at identifying what is the impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour based on variables like income level, gender, lifestyle and culture within the country. This research is focused on understanding this impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour for young Indians within the age group of 18 to 25 during the purchase of fashion products.

**Purpose Statement:** Understanding the impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour for young Indian consumers for the purchase of fashion products based on gender, lifestyle, income level, and culture.

**Major benefits of the research:** The research can help prospective brands in their product placement, marketing strategy, promotional activities and sales. It will help big brands and their brand managers in analysing the points of parity and points of difference between competing brands. This research can also be of prime importance for FDI into developing countries like India.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Need for this Study:** A fast growing economy and a rising number of affluent consumers have pushed India into the league of most brand conscious countries globally. According to Nielsen Global Luxury Brands Study, India is at the third position after Greece and Hong Kong as the most brand conscious countries in the world. Based on the survey, about 46 per cent people in Greece and another 38 per cent in Hong Kong responded positively to having bought such brands. This was followed by 35 per cent Indian respondents agreeing to buying designer brands. (India among 'most brand conscious countries' globally: Survey, 2014)

**Young Generation:** According to a research, (Jain et al., 2014) the younger generation or Generation Z as they are called operate in a diverse manner as consumers as they have a distinctive taste, choice, opinion, preference, attitude and behaviour. This makes it crucial to
understand how they perceive brands. They are highly fashion conscious, demand for high-end luxury goods, especially luxury apparels. As per another study (Gazhali & Abidin, 2011) within the entire country population, the younger generation is highly fashion conscious and survey studies reveal that exposure to movies and perceived influence from parents and peers are positively related to brand consciousness.

**Brand Consciousness in India:** The research study (Mukherjee et. al., 2012) assesses the extent of brand consciousness of Indians. This study gauges the purchase behaviour and perception of foreign brands by carrying out a survey of potential consumers through data analysis by simple regression techniques. The research findings indicate that Indian consumers are price-sensitive, and as disposable income are rising, consumption patterns are changing, and the level of brand consciousness is rising. Another research (Dubey, 2014) explores Young Indian Consumers’ Decision-Making Behaviour towards Casual Wear Purchase in Uttar Pradesh (a state in India). This research shows that six decision-making styles - recreational and hedonistic consciousness, perfectionism consciousness, confused by over choice, habitual and brand loyalty, price and value consciousness, and brand and fashion consciousness are found to influence consumer decision in casual wear buying. In a study on consumption of luxury western brands in India, (Eng & Julie, 2010) it is observed that Indians prefer to stick to their traditional styles and use western brands to boost their social image. They may integrate both the traditional styles and western style to suit their sensibilities and enhance their status in the society.

**Brand Consciousness and Consumer Behaviour:** Research by (Shah et al., 2012) on purchase intention towards foreign apparel brands shows that susceptibility to normative influence (the influence of other people that leads us to conform in order to be liked and accepted by them) and consumer confidence have a positive impact on brand consciousness. Brand consciousness in turn has a positive impact on perceived quality of international
apparel brands & emotional value that these brands generate. Both quality and emotional value are shown to have a significant impact on purchase intention.

The relationship between consumers’ decision-making styles and their choice between domestic and imported brand clothing is investigated using a sample of Indian consumers (Rajput et al., 2012). This study gauges the factors affecting purchase decision taking gender perspective as base. It intends to find out whether there is a significant difference in total expenditure on branded apparels done by males vis-à-vis females. The results exhibited show no significant differences in the brand awareness, shopping frequency and shopping expenditure between males and females. In a study on critically exploring the process that underlies the relationships of self and gender consciousness with consumers’ need for uniqueness and brand consciousness (Ye et al., 2012), it is seen that Self- and gender consciousness do impact brand consciousness indirectly through Chinese consumers’ need for uniqueness. Contrary to expectations, the study finds that self-consciousness has a negative direct impact on brand consciousness, while gender consciousness does not have a direct impact on brand consciousness. Furthermore, brand consciousness leads to positive brand perceptions, including brand attitudes, brand loyalty, and willingness to pay a price premium.

Another research (Bharadwaj et. al., 2011), assessed the consumers in developing countries experiencing improved standards of living and lifestyle and exhibiting a desire to consume global brands. This study examined the effect of life satisfaction of Indian consumers on brand consciousness and brand-specific variables (i.e., perceived quality, emotional value, brand loyalty) for a global apparel brand (i.e., Levi’s). This study results show that Indian consumers’ life satisfaction positively influenced their brand consciousness, in turn, influencing perceived quality and emotional value for the global brand; however, the effect of brand consciousness on brand loyalty was not significant.
According to another research (Chin et. al., 2009) on exploring the effects among brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention and mediating effects of perceived quality and brand loyalty on brand awareness and purchase intention, the relations among the brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty for purchase intention are significant and have a positive effect. Further, studies reveal that perceived quality has a positive effect on brand loyalty and perceived quality will mediate the effects between brand awareness and purchase intention. Also, brand loyalty will mediate the effects between brand awareness and purchase intention.

One of the major goals of salesman is to create and keep the proper position of a special brand in the customers’ minds in order to affect their decision making and also their purchase intention (Roozy et. al. 2014). The study results in this study show that brand loyalty has the most influence on the purchases intention.

**Shortcomings of existing research:**

A major part of the existing research has focused on factors impacting brand consciousness. Research has not specifically looked at understanding the impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour based on variables like age, gender, income level, culture and lifestyle. To date, no research has explored this relationship. Also, as per the statistics, Indians especially young Indians provide myriad opportunities for brands to invest and increase their sales. However, not much research is carried out to analyse these opportunities and understand the benefits from them.

**Objectives of Study:**

The study is a conclusive research which considers young Indians within the age group of 18 to 25 as the prime focus and analyses the impact of brand consciousness on their consumer behaviour for fashion products based on the following variables:
- Gender
- Income Level
- Culture
- Lifestyle

**Research Structure:**

**Hypotheses:** The following hypotheses can be drawn to be tested through this research for consumption of fashion products for young Indian consumers:

**H1:** Impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour is not affected based on gender difference. (Meaning – there is no difference in impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour for males and females)

**H2:** Impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour is not affected based on cultural difference. (Meaning – there is no difference in impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour for different cultures)

**H3:** Impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour is positive based on income level variation. (Meaning – for higher income level there is stronger impact of brand consciousness towards consumer behaviour)

**H4:** Impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour is positive based on lifestyle difference. (Meaning – for high lifestyle consumers there is a stronger impact of brand consciousness towards consumer behaviour)

**H5:** Brand consciousness has an overall positive impact on consumer behaviour.
METHODOLOGY

The research question and hypotheses can be analysed and studied by adopting a **conclusive research design**. This will involve collecting primary data using questionnaire, analysing data by measure of central tendency and measures of dispersion. This data can be further analysed and evaluated to test our hypotheses using structural equation modelling.

**Sampling and Data Collection:** The sampling frame includes the entire youth of India falling in the age group of 18 to 25 years. As this is a very big population under consideration, samples need to be taken to carry out research. This will be done by a study of 400 participants selected at random from the youth population. This random sampling will be done by stratified random sampling technique to analyse 100 participants selected at random while they are shopping at malls in 4 major tier 1 cities of India (Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, and Bangalore). Different cities have been selected for this process as we are also trying to assess the impact of brand consciousness based on cultural difference.

**Instrumentation:** The research will be carried out in the form of a paper based survey. The survey questionnaire will consist mainly of structured questions. These questions will be based on gaining information about age, gender, culture, brand preferences and lifestyle. The questions in the survey will include questions on a Likert scale and ordinal scale. The responses will be based on Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree to reduce response bias. The survey forms will be evaluated by following the technique of structural equation modelling.

**Measures and Analyses:** Initially, a pre-test will be conducted to judge the reliability of the constructs (variable that is not directly observable) before testing the model hypotheses. The responses obtained will be analysed using structural equation model which is a statistical technique for testing and estimating causal relations using a combination of statistical data
and qualitative causal assumptions. First an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) can be conducted using all the indicators representing the latent constructs under study. Selected indicators will be considered in the final validation leading to the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Initially, CFA will be conducted for individual latent constructs; all constructs showing adequate model fit and factor loadings will be considered for further analysis. When all individual constructs demonstrate good model fit, an overall CFA with all the latent constructs and their indicators can be undertaken. Following this, composite reliabilities and discriminant validities will be calculated. After the measurement model validation through the above process, the goodness of fit of the structural model can be assessed. If the overall structural model shows good model fit and exhibits acceptable levels of fit in terms of the sample size and model complexity then it can be accepted. The results will then be assessed to check if they support the hypothesis proposed at the start of the research and conclusions can be found accordingly.

**PROSPECTIVE BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS**

**Prospective Benefits:** Research study suggests that marketers need to be creative and interactive not only in their stores and advertisements but also on the digital platform and market in a subtle manner (Jain et al., 2014). Understanding how brand consciousness impacts consumer behaviour will help the **brand marketers** to place product in a better way in the market. Hence research is of immense importance to brand marketers. It will also help them in their marketing strategy, and in their promotional activities for channelizing their activities to grab the attention of the target audience. This can indirectly benefit sales of the brands.

For brand managers, this research is of importance to formulate brand positioning and promotion strategies for **brand managers**. The research findings can be used to analyse the points of parity and points of difference between competing brands. These brand managers
can assess the strength of their brand in comparison to competition brands. Understanding the effect of all the variables of influence that are associated with impact of brand consciousness on consumer behaviour can help global luxury brands as well.

Finally, this research could be important for foreign brands looking for FDI in India as India has one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world (The Indian Economy). Many of the global luxury brands are looking at the Asian market as a potential market for expansion and rise of sales. This research could prove beneficial for them.

**Limitations:** The major limitation that this research poses is that the sample group might not be a representation of the entire population. The sample group is a very tiny part of the entire population of 220 million youth. Thus, the research study results might not be substantiated or generalized for the entire population.

The second limitation that may arise within the scope of this research is that it considers the impact of brand consciousness based on only 4 variables of gender, income level, lifestyle and culture. Other variables can be considered which will influence brand consciousness based on further literature survey.

**TIMELINE AND BUDGET**

**Timeline:** The major steps involved in the research and thesis can be approximated as:

|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
**Budget:** The budget for the research will involve the following two types of cost.

- Direct Costs
- Indirect Costs

**Direct Costs:** The approximate direct costs involved in the research include cost for questionnaire, incentives to participants and supplies cost.

**Indirect Costs:** These costs include overhead costs like travel costs which will be around 10% of the entire budget allocated to the research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE COST</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Cost:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher/ Analyst Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey questionnaire (eg. Paper, printing and stationary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives to participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplies required during survey</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Costs</strong></td>
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<td>Overhead Costs</td>
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<td>Research Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Costs</strong></td>
<td>$ 7900</td>
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REFERENCES


10. India among ‘most brand conscious countries’ globally: Survey. Retrieved from, 


