Chapter 10

Purchase Intentions of Consumer towards Foreign Brand Apparel: Evidences from India

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ABSTRACT

Clothing is an important product category through which people express their interests, status, and lifestyle. With the advance of consumerist culture in India, expression of identity and social standing through clothing is becoming imminent. In this context, we have identified the factors relating to self-concept, like the need for uniqueness and clothing interest are insignificant, but the perceived quality of foreign brand apparel is a significant factor in determining the purchase intention. The construct of perceived quality forms a significant component in the modified Ajzen (1991) Model, which along with its traditional constructs suit the Indian consumer. We also find that perceived behavioural control (PBC) if split into external PBC and internal PBC become insignificant to the model. We therefore recommend that foreign entrants into the Indian market adopt suitable segmentation, distribution and operational strategies to leverage on the high quality perception of foreign brand apparel in the Indian market.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of market orientation and relationship marketing are an integral part of supply chain management and are inextricably intertwined. The marketing concept, a market orientation, and their influences on the management of a firm and a supply chain are described by many authors (Min & Mentzer, 2000). The marketing concept has strong influences on the management of a firm, inter-firm relationships, and the supply chain (Mentzer & Gundlach, 2009).

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Brands play a significant role in a consumer's purchase decision. Branding acts as an important cue to guide consumer choice in the retail environment (Leighton and Bird, 2012). Clothing is a vehicle through which people reflect a person’s self as well as social identity (Noesjirwan and Crawford, 1982). It is an important product category that illustrates the relationship among individual’s self, their interests, and their behaviour in consumption (Kumar, Kim, & Pelton, 2009). Clothes symbolize status, position, class and personality. India is a status conscious country with income disparities, they use clothing brands to enhance their self-concept, to project a unique identity, or to exhibit their social standing (Kumar et al., 2009). Indian consumers show positive attitudes towards foreign brands and interests in foreign brands has increased every year (Bharadwaj, Swaroop, & Vittal, 2005, Thamizhvanan, & Xavier, 2013, Khare 2014), young urban Indian consumers are spending in congruence with their lifestyle on brands (Wonacott and Terhune, 2006). Hence through the choice of clothing, the Indians meet their Need for Uniqueness (NFU). Consumers express their NFU by the possession and display of original, novel, and unique consumer products for the purpose of developing and enhancing one’s self-concept (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001).

Clothing is considered to be a vital component in the “material self” which constitutes a major part of the overall self (Solomon and Schopler, 1982). It was also found that individuals who are conscious about their self in a public setting will show an increased Interest in Clothing - CI. An individual’s positive feelings about their self are contributed by the clothes they wear (Sontang and Lee, 2004). One of the ways consumers form perceptions about a brand is based upon quality (Doyle, 2001). Quality has been associated with brand name and is found that the association of quality with brand name is greater to Indian consumers (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000). Due to the many small, dispersed, uncoordinated manufacturers and retailers in India, the Indian consumers perceive branded goods to be of Superior Quality - PQ (Maxwell, 2001), more so, if the Indian consumers perceive the country of origin of the product to be the west (Batra et al., 2000).

It therefore becomes evident that brands present an image of quality consciousness, style quotient, and social status for the customer, the customer goes for branded apparel to meet Need for Uniqueness – NFU, enhance the positive self by increased clothing interest – CI, and purchase a product which customer perceives to have superior quality - PQ.

Earlier studies have tried to understand the effect of various variables like face saving, group conformity on the Purchase Intention - PI of the Indian consumer towards foreign brand goods have applied to the Ajzen (1991) Model (Son, Jin, & George, 2013), studies have also evaluated the effect of individual’s self-concept and product oriented variables (like need for uniqueness - NFU, and clothing interest - CI), and brand specific variables (i.e. perceived quality) on purchase intentions towards brands available in the Indian market (Kumar et al., 2009). However, in a fast transforming Indian society, towards consumerism, the relationship between the product-oriented variables NFU & CI, which are oriented towards enhancement of the self-concept, and brand specific variable PQ which is symbolic to the superior quality Indian consumers associate with foreign brands has not been applied to the Ajzen’s (1991) Behavioural Intention Model. With this background, the paper aims to study the Indian Consumers’ purchase behaviour towards foreign branded apparel. To facilitate this study a model is proposed by improvising the Ajzen (1991) Model to suit the Indian context. The proposed model is more representative of the Indian culture, as the Ajzen (1991) model is not sufficiently representative to the Asian context (Lee, 1990).

In the proposed model, we therefore propose to add three new constructs - Need for Uniqueness (NFU), Clothing Interest (CI) and Perceive superior Quality (PQ) to the Ajzen Model to explain Purchase Intentions thereby preparing a more inclusive model which is representative to the Indian context.