Exploring The Sources Of Influence In Formation And Changing Of Girls' Attitude Towards The Consumption Of Fashion Products

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a research paper based on the study conducted among college-going girls in Silchar town. The main aim of this paper is to explore the various sources of influence in formation and changing of college girls' attitude towards the consumption of fashion products. The nature of the study is both exploratory and descriptive research. The study was based essentially on the primary data captured through a specially designed questionnaire and was administered to a total of 248 respondents. In order to identify the sources of influence in formation and changing of college girls' attitude towards consumption of fashion products, the factorial analysis technique was considered appropriate. The results of factor analysis suggests that advertisements play the most significant role in determining college girls' attitude towards consumption of fashion products. As indicated by the results, the most suitable media to disseminate information pertaining to fashion products are Fashion magazines and Television. The college girls in Silchar town have easy access to local, national and international magazines, therefore, advertisements in fashion magazines act as an inspirational source for the college girls for the consumption of fashion products. However, the results of the study also suggest that Social groups, Direct experience and Direct marketing efforts are some other important indicators in determining college girls' attitude towards consumption of fashion products.

Keywords: Attitude, Consumer Attitude Formation and Change, Fashion, Fashion Products

INTRODUCTION

Fashion today is a lucrative market in India. Marked with increasing profitability, the fashion market in India has mushroomed with similar positioning of a large number of national and international brands, resulting in increasing competition for survival in the market. Women, especially the younger cohort, have been the lucrative segment in this market. One of the reasons for being the appealing segment in the market is the extent of fashion consciousness, which reflects a person's degree of involvement with fashion products (Summers, 1970). Female consumers are more involved with fashion as compared to the male consumers (O'Cass, 2004). They invest time and energy in learning from fashion magazines, programs in television, and relatives and peers (Workman and Studak, 2006). Within this appealing segment, college going girls are found to possess a unique self-image as fashion innovators and consider themselves as more exciting, dominating and colorful than fashion followers (Tamboli, 2008). Understanding the sources of influence that drives this lucrative target segment to adopt fashion products, therefore, turned out to be an important area for marketing researchers in order to trace the possibilities of using the major sources of influence as a tool for better marketing management. Keeping this in mind, an attempt has been made in the present study to explore the sources of influence in formation and changing of girls' attitude towards the consumption of fashion products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumers use fashion products to manage their public image and sense of affiliation or autonomy (Banister and Hogg, 2004). In this process, consumers acquire knowledge and perception towards an object from various sources of influence. Some of the important sources of influence that have a strong influence on consumers' attitude formation and change are personal experience, the influence of family and friends, direct marketing, mass media, and the Internet (Schiffmn and Kanuk, 2007; Loudon & Della, 1993; Robertson & et al., 1984; Solomon, 2002). Researchers have given attention to the usefulness of each of the sources of influence towards attitude formation and change in order to better predict the subsequent buying behaviour of the target market for better marketing management. For instance, a

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study by Smith and Swinyard (1983) examined the usefulness of the concepts of direct and indirect experience in the advertising domain and concluded that attitude based on direct experience - such as through product trial - better predicted subsequent behaviours (like purchasing) than did attitudes formed through advertising, an indirect experience. The study also indicated that attitudes formed through product trial were more confidently held than those formed through advertising. However, literature also indicates that for consumers who lack direct experience with a product, exposure to an emotionally appealing advertisement message is more likely to create an attitude towards the product than for consumers who have beforehand secured direct experience with a product category. As per their findings, emotional appeals are most effective with consumers who lack product experience (Lee et al., 2000). The family is an extremely important source of influence on the formation of attitudes (Hovard and Gengler, 2001), for it is the family that provides us with many of our basic values and builds up the essential convictions. According to Robertson et al. (1984), the family and co-workers' characteristics and features of a particular culture and sub-culture represent social aspects of attitude formation and change.

Direct-marketing programs are also one of the important sources of influence to carefully target customers on the basis of their demographic, psychographic, or geo-demographic profiles, with highly personalized product offerings and messages that show they understand their special needs and desires. Such direct-marketing efforts (e.g., Catalogs) have an excellent chance of favourably influencing target consumers' attitudes, because of the products and services offered, and the promotional messages conveyed are very carefully designed to address the individual segment's needs and concerns and, therefore, are able to achieve a higher "hit rate" than mass marketing (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2007; Banyate et al., 2007).

Research also indicates that Internet advertising is an important source in influencing consumer attitude formation and change. Internet advertising or e-advertising gives a new dimension and unique charm to the product, which is an added advantage for the marketers (Srivastava & Mishra, 2012). According to Shiffman and Kanuk (2007), just as television provided the advertiser with more realism than is possible in a radio or print ad, the Internet has an even greater ability to provide telepresence, which is the stimulated perception of direct experience.

Although consumers' attitude formation and change towards a product or service are influenced by a variety of sources of influence, yet, research works in order to explore the relative worth of the sources of influence on a specific group of customers with respect to a particular product type turned out to be an important source of knowledge for the marketers for favourably influencing the target customers' attitude and in the process, their buying behaviour.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

❖ **Population Framework :** The population (N) of the present study comprised of the total number of college-going girls (in Silchar Town) pursuing Bachelor Degrees under the jurisdiction of Assam University, Silchar. As per the secondary data that has been collected from the Assam University affiliated colleges of Silchar Town, the total number of college-going girls in Silchar Town was 3,429.

Sampling Framework

a) Size of The Sample: The size of the sampling units (n) was determined with the help of sample size calculator, which is available online at http://www.macorr.com/sample-size-calculator.htm. At 95% confidence level, the sample size that has been obtained is 248.

b) Method of Sampling : The method of sampling that was taken into consideration is the Stratified Random Sampling Technique. While applying stratified random sampling technique, the procedure that hadZ been followed is delineated as follows:

1) The population was sub-divided (or stratified) according to the nature of Bachelor's Degree awarded by Assam University, Silchar viz., Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), Bachelor of Laws (L.L.B), Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S). Of the 3429 numbers of college-going girls pursuing Bachelor's Degree in Silchar Town, 2038 girls were pursuing B.A; 572 girls were pursuing B.Com; 478 girls were pursuing B.Sc., 60 girls were pursuing L.L.B.; 93 girls were pursuing B.Ed ; and 188 girls were pursuing M.B.B.S.

2) The next step that was carried out was the consideration of the size of the observations from each of the mentioned strata. The consideration was made in proportion to the relative weight of each of the strata.

3) Finally, systematic sampling method was followed independently from each stratum by selecting one unit at random and then selecting additional units at evenly spaced intervals (k) until the sample had been formed.

❖ **Research Instrument :** In order to achieve the objectives of the research, a questionnaire was technically designed and administered to a total of 248 respondents. The time period of the research was from 2010 - 2012.

❖ **Statistical Tools and Techniques:** The data so collected were captured in SPSS 16 version for analysis and interpretation. Further, in order to address the objectives of the study, factor analysis technique was considered appropriate.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

	Bachelor Degrees:	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Bachelor of Arts	147	59.27%
2.	Bachelor of Commerce	41	16.53%
3.	Bachelor of Science	35	14.11%
4.	Bachelor of Laws	4	1.62%
5.	Bachelor of Education	7	2.82%
6.	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery	14	5.65%
Parental Education: **Father's Education -**			
1.	Below class 10	-	-
2.	HSLC	15	6.04%
3.	HS	24	9.68%
4.	Graduate	185	74.60%
5.	Post Graduate	24	9.68%
Mother's Education			
1.	Below class 10	44	17.74%
2.	HSLC	38	15.32%
3.	HS	87	35.09%
4.	Graduate	79	31.85%
5.	Post Graduate	-	-
Family Income: **Father's Income -** ₹			
1.	₹100000 - 200000	15	6.05%
2.	₹ 200001 - 300000	106	42.74%
3.	₹ 300001 - 400000	120	48.39%
4.	₹ 400001 and 500000	7	2.82%
Mother's Income -₹			
1.	**Nil**	160	64.52%
2.	₹ 100000 - 200000	30	12.09%
3.	₹ 200001 - 300000	50	20.16%
4.	₹ 300001 - 400000	8	3.23%
5.	₹ 400001 and 500000	-	
Sources: Primary Data			

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.844
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	1102.582
Df	78
Sig.	.000
Sources: Primary Data	

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.772	36.710	36.710	4.772	36.710	36.710	2.865	22.035	22.035
2	1.194	9.188	45.898	1.194	9.188	45.898	2.507	19.281	41.316
3	1.119	8.611	54.509	1.119	8.611	54.509	1.670	12.845	54.161
4	1.034	7.954	62.464	1.034	7.954	62.464	1.079	8.303	62.464
5	.884	6.800	69.264						
6	.755	5.811	75.075						
7	.744	5.721	80.796						
8	.660	5.078	85.874						
9	.525	4.035	89.909						
10	.442	3.402	93.311						
11	.390	2.998	96.309						
12	.302	2.320	98.630						
13	.178	1.370	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Sources: Primary Data

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The questionnaire was administered to 248 respondents among the college going girls in Silchar town affiliated to Assam University. The profile of the respondents is presented in the Table 1.

❖ **Results From The Factor Analysis :** In order to identify the sources of influence in formation and changing of college girls' attitude towards fashion products, the factor analysis technique was considered appropriate. The results from factor analysis using Principal Component Extraction are as follows:

The Table 2 shows the results of the KMO and Bartlett's test. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is a statistic that indicates the proportion of variance in the variables that might be caused by underlying factors. High values (close to 1.0) generally indicate that a factor analysis is useful with the data set, and the value less than .50 indicates that the results of the factor analysis are not very useful. The results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) indicates that factor analysis is appropriate for the present database, as the KMO value is .844 (between 0.5 and 1.0) and the statistical results of Bartlett's test of sphericity are significant (where, p = .000; d.f. = 78) for all the correlations within a correlation matrix. Small values less than 0.05 of the significance level indicate that a factor analysis is useful to a particular dataset. From the KMO and Barlett's test, we can observe that the significance level is .000, thus, it was appropriate to conduct factor analysis for the study.

In Table 3, the variance is explained by the initial solution, the extracted components and rotated components are displayed. The first section of the table shows the variance explained by the initial solution. As the components with eigen values greater than 1 are requested for extracted solution, so the first four components form the extracted solution. The second section of the table shows the variance explained by the extracted factors before rotation. The

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix[a]				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Ads in Fashion Magazines	.821			
TV ads	.813			
Newspaper ads	.666			
Hoardings/billboards	.619			
Online advertisements	.565			
Close friends		.724		
Family		.712		
Social gatherings like birthday parties, weddings, college fresher's day etc.		.681		
Peer group		.615		
Social Networking Sites - Facebook etc.		.515		
Trial purchase			.828	
Free samples			.775	
Retailer's Catalog				.937

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.
Source: Primary Data

cumulative variability explained by these factors in the extracted solution is about 62.46%, which is similar to the initial solution and thus, no initial solution is lost due to latent factors. The rightmost section of this table shows the variance explained by the extracted factors after rotation. The rotated factor model makes some small adjustments to all the four factors. The results of the factor analysis indicated four factors in determining college girls' attitude towards fashion products. These four factors are presented in the Table 4.

The first factor has been named as *"Advertisement"* since all the variables under this factor are directly related to the various advertisement media viz., *"Fashion magazines (.821)", "TV ads (.813)", "Newspaper ads (.666)", "Hoardings/Billboards (.619)",* and *"Online ads (.516)".* Several studies on different aspects also support that view that advertisements play an important role in the formation and change of consumer attitude towards an object. A study conducted among Asian and U.S. immigrants explored their attitude towards 12 advertisements and purchase intention of six different products and supported that the ads feature reveals a positive relationship between attitude towards the advertisement and purchase intention for each of the advertised products (Durriya and Zahid, 1999; Shiffman and Kanuk, 2007). Research works also indicate that for consumers who lack direct experience, exposure to an emotionally appealing advertising message is more likely to create an attitude towards the product than for consumers who have beforehand secured direct experience with the product category (Lee et al., 2000).

The second factor encompasses *"Close friends (.724)", "Family (.712)", "Social gatherings like birthday parties, weddings or college fresher's day (.681)", "Peer group (.615)"* and *"Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Orkut...(.515)".* These factors are mainly associated with the society and are ,therefore, termed as *"Impact of Social Group."* A study conducted by Pinheiro (2008) revealed that one of the principle drivers of consumer behaviour towards fashion apparel (one category of fashion products) is the dominance of *social interactions*. The third factor consists of *"Trial purchase (.828)"* and *"Free samples (.775)"* that influences consumers' choices for fashion products consumption. This factor is named as *"Direct experience."* The fourth factor consists of the direct marketing tools i.e., *"Retailer's catalog (.937)"* used by the marketers to influence their target consumers. Therefore, the factor is named as *"Direct marketing".*

CONCLUSION

It is quite evident from the results that among the various sources of influence on consumer attitude formation and change (viz., direct experiences, social group, direct marketing, mass media and Internet advertising), advertisement through various media plays a significant role in determining college girls' attitude towards fashion products consumption in Silchar Town. This is quite obvious in countries where people have easy access to a variety of special-interest magazines, television channels, newspapers and the Internet. These mass-media communications provide an important source of information that influences the formation of consumer attitude (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2007). However, to place an advertisement in an appropriate media is an extremely important task (Sharma & Singh, 2011) on the part of the marketers for effective communication of the messages to their target customers. From the results, it is clear that as far as the degree of exposure is concerned, advertisements in "Fashion Magazines" and "Television", with a high correlation of .821 and .813 respectively, were considered highly influential by the college girls in Silchar town than the advertisements appearing in newspapers (.666), hoardings/billboards (.619), and online advertisements got the least correlation of .565. Besides, as far as the mixed media strategy is concerned, television and fashion magazines will be more effective than any other choices in determining the attitude of college going girls towards fashion products in Silchar Town.

In addition to Advertisements, the results also indicated three more factors viz. Social group, Direct/personal experience and Direct marketing (forming second, third and fourth factor respectively) which cannot be overlooked and must be taken into consideration while taking decisions regarding the sources of influence on college girls' attitude towards fashion products in Silchar Town. The social group is the part and parcel of any human being. Every bit of social interaction like the family we belong to, different persons we meet (close friends, relatives, colleagues, peers, acquaintances), and the religion and culture we follow can enhance our knowledge and also our lives. Under a social group, the components that were found important in influencing college girls' attitude towards fashion products are *Close friends (.724), Family (.712), Social gatherings like birthday parties, weddings, or college fresher's day (.681), Peer group (.615) and Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Orkut etc. (.515).*

Personal or direct experiences that the college girls gain with the product also influences their choices. Their positive experiences lead to favourable attitude towards the product and vice-versa. Under this head, *Trial purchase (.828)* and *Free samples (.775)* were found to be the important components in determining the girls' attitude towards fashion products. Finally, direct marketing efforts also have an excellent chance of favourably influencing the college girls' attitude through *Retailers' catalog (.937)*.

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