
Original Article

Predictors of fashion clothing involvement among Indian youth

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ABSTRACT In developing countries, consumers are becoming conscious of fashion brands. The research was directed towards understanding the determinants of fashion clothing involvement of Indian youth. A primary research study was conducted on Indian college students aged between 18 and 24 years using the fashion clothing involvement scale developed by O’Cass to understand the importance of fashion clothing in their lives. The scale had constructs related to consumption involvement, product involvement, advertising involvement and purchase decision involvement. Research findings show a high correlation of consumption involvement with the other three involvement dimensions. The results show that Indian youth has an involvement with branded fashion wear. There was not much significant difference in the involvement of females and males towards fashion clothing.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years consumers in developing countries have attracted much attention from marketers. Brand awareness and realization about the self have gained importance among consumers. Clothing is one domain that is supposed to fulfill both functional and symbolic needs of the consumers. Growing consciousness about the self and the role of brands in enhancing the consumers’ image are being recognized in

developing countries. In India, liberalization has not only brought western brands amongst the Indian consumers, but has also introduced more of a western wear and lifestyle. The Indian consumer is associating western brands with status symbol, better quality of life and enhancement of self-image.¹ The youth or Generation Y is considered a major consumer segment receptive towards globalization trends and is thus the focus of much attention from marketers. Recent years have seen the intermingling of traditional Indian values with western values and Indians are adopting global brands as a symbol of global value-system. Indian consumers’ aspirations and values are group dominated and social acceptance

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is given high priority.² The choice of products and brands is based upon family and group acceptance and, Kinra³ posits that Indian consumers prefer western brands as these connote luxury and status. Lindridge and Dibb⁴ in their research suggest that India demonstrates high levels of materialistic values and these are related with spirituality.⁵ For most Indians, possessions indicate happiness and well-being, and wealth is bestowed from compliance with religious rules and regulations,⁶ and material possessions bring prestige to family as well. Fashion clothing may be seen as a symbolizing status not only to the individual but also to the family and social groups.

The research attempts to understand the Indian youth's involvement with fashion clothing and its implications to marketers. The branded clothing manufacturers are establishing apparel stores in India, and fashion involvement of youth with branded clothes would open marketing opportunities to them. Viera⁷ states: 'Fashion may be conceptualized both as an object and as a behavioral process'. Clothing helps in enhancing the self-image of the individuals, and for the Indian youth it may signify global values and lifestyle. Clothing serves to help individuals with low self-esteem adapt in the social setting and for those with high self-esteem it acts as an expressive function.⁸ Fashion products are positioned to improve the social image of the consumers.⁹ Tigert *et al*¹⁰ state that fashion involvement is based upon behavioral activities and perceived personal interest of the individuals.¹¹ Fashions are supposed to communicate the values of the society¹² and the involvement of the consumers in their clothes provides a deeper understanding of the consumer behavior and consumption predispositions.

Research suggests that global brands portray improved social image for Indians.^{1,3} Thus, brands are no longer viewed as a supportive domain of marketing; but may be perceived as the very quintessence of marketing efforts,¹³ as they are viewed as improving the lifestyle of the consumers. The core benefit associated with brands is that it symbolizes a rank, and bestows status, value, quality to the consumer and thereby enhances the image of the user.¹⁴ In the same

vein, we selected fashion clothing to ascertain the level of involvement University students had with its purchase decisions. The purpose of the study was to understand the relationship between fashion clothing consumption involvement of the Indian youth and their fashion clothing product involvement, purchase decision involvement and advertising involvement of fashion clothing and how it fits in Indian traditional social values. The consumption of any product is dependent upon the kind of involvement consumer has for the product category and high involvement would imply greater cognitive, and affective evaluations of the product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rothschild¹⁵ defines involvement as: 'a state of motivation, arousal or interest, evoked by a particular stimulus or situation, displaying drive properties'. Houston and Rothschild¹⁶ in their research paper have conceptualized the different types of consumer involvement, which were 'enduring', 'situational' and 'response-based' by identifying the sources for involvement. Cohen¹⁷ developed the concept further by defining the 'antecedents' from 'consequent outcomes' from 'involvement', which was regarded as an internal state of behavior. Consumers' involvement with a product relates to their identification with the product¹⁸ and the personality of an individual determines his/her involvement with products. If involvement was dependent upon internal drives and motivations, it would differ from individual to individual^{19,20} and should satisfy certain individual goals.²¹ Involvement was considered as an internal variable that was affected by motives and internal drives to behavior^{16,22,23} and was related to the risk perceived by the consumers in their purchase decision. Consistent with the internal drives and motives, involvement in a product category is described by the arousal, interest and motivation for a product category.²⁴⁻²⁶ Thus, consumer involvement may be defined as a goal-directed behavior.²⁷ Bloch and Richins²² posit that involvement is dependent upon the characteristics of products, people, and situations, which presumably interact with each other. Mittal and

Lee²⁵ have refined the view and state that they 'view these characteristics to produce (in interaction) the three antecedents (utility/risk, sign-value, and hedonic value)', which generate the involvement.

The involvement of consumers with a product category would be a consequence of multiple factors like risk perception, importance of the product to the consumer, and its capability to improve their lifestyle and self-image.²⁸ Involvement with products would vary across consumers and is the central motivation construct determining individuals' purchase behavior.¹¹ Products are chosen for the value and the intangible benefits they present to the consumers. Purchasing the right product would garner greater acceptance from the peer groups and reduce the risk of rejection from them. The purchase of fashion clothing may be governed by social sanction and acceptability. In India, where most of the values are still family-driven and group-directed,² the purchase of fashion products would be governed by strong social approval.¹ Batra *et al*²⁹ suggest that Indian consumers' purchase and consumption behavior is significantly different from other cultures, as Indians are more influenced by social values. For Indians, possessions connote a link with their traditional values and cultural artifacts and this is more conspicuous in the case of Indians settled abroad.³⁰ The fashion acceptance process is mechanistically characterized by social influence and diffusion⁷ and the motivation of Indian consumers for selecting a fashion brand would differ from western consumers.

According to Dittmar³¹ 'an individual's identity is influenced by the symbolic meanings of his or her own material possessions, and the way in which s/he relates to those possessions'. Earlier research has examined various kinds of involvement related to consumer involvement,³²⁻³⁴ impact of advertising involvement,³⁵ purchase involvement,³⁶ purchase decision involvement,³⁴ consumers' shopping involvement³⁷ and consumer involvement.^{38,39}

Involvement with apparel products has been addressed by several researchers.⁴⁰⁻⁴⁸ Consumers' involvement with clothing may be perceived in

the light of the value the consumer places on acquiring clothes to improve their social and self-image. Research for many years has recognized apparel as a high involvement product category^{44,46,48,49} because of its capability to be linked with individual's personality and communicating his/her attitude. Mittal³⁴ posits that purchase involvement may occur without much product involvement, and if the product class (like fashion clothing) is involving, the purchase decision would not be made casually. Further, Mittal and Lee²⁵ reiterate 'product-involvement is an antecedent of purchase-decision involvement'. We tend to get interested in a product category if it has significance with our motives and desires; as a consequence we would be spending more time evaluating the different brands in the product category.

Traditionally, acquiring expensive and luxurious items was associated with status such as art items, jewellery and expensive vehicles.^{39,50,51} Researchers have used 'fashion involvement'^{38,52-54} to indicate the consumers' interest in the apparel product category. Kim⁴⁸ states that consumers' involvement with product category influences consumer information search about the brands in that product category and decision making. Consumer involvement is fundamentally dependent upon the self-concept of individuals, and also varies from situation to situation. Sirgy²⁸ posits that a consumer's overall self-concept depends upon how the individual views himself in different situations or expects others to perceive him, or would like to be (ideal self and ideal social self). Marketers have used the self-concept in branding, as research^{12,55} establishes that consumers are interested in brands that have congruence with their self-concept and enhance it. Brands are seen to symbolically represent a lifestyle and bestow status to the user, and consumers assess the brands according to their capability to match their overall self-concept.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁹ Research has examined the relationship between brand status consumption and consumer social class,^{29,60} or how consumer evaluates himself according to reference groups or does it differ with gender.³⁹ Brands are evaluated on the basis of emotional feelings they connote,⁶¹ and this is

based upon the emotional and rational assessments of consumers. The involvement of the consumer is dependent upon their value system and their belief that the given product class will satisfy their needs.⁶²

O’Cass and Choy⁶³ examined the involvement of Chinese Generation Y consumers with fashion clothing. A more fashion conscious consumer may feel more inclined towards fashion clothing⁶⁴ and would spend more time buying these products.⁶⁵ We have adapted O’Cass’s³⁸ questionnaire to assess the involvement construct. It was believed that the greater relevance the consumers attach to the fashion clothing construct, the more involved they would be in its purchase decision. This is line with Mittal and Lee’s²⁶ work that product involvement follows purchase involvement. In the same vein, we have examined the fashion clothing involvement of Indian Generation Y, aged between 18 and 25 years. Feelings towards the brand may be aroused directly after interacting with the brand^{66,67} or due to effective advertising or awareness about the brand^{68–70} and would be reflected in the consumption involvement regarding the fashion clothing.

Involvement of consumers would be affected by their awareness of the product and the role advertising plays towards increasing consumption.^{38,23,62} Muehling *et al*⁷¹ had studied the various involvement types, but it was not clear whether advertising involvement affected the other types of consumer involvement. Some researchers contend that consumers’ product involvement shape their beliefs about the advertisements.^{72–74}

Luxury brands are preferred for the status they connote and the recognition they bequeath to the user in social settings.⁷⁵ Consumer involvement in the fashion clothing product category^{38,63,76–78} can be used to explain consumers’ purchase behavior. Involvement can be understood in the light of the relevance product occupies in the consumers’ life and the preference the consumer gives to it.

Perception of males and females about fashion clothing and what it connotes may differ. Women place more importance on choice of apparel as it helps to improve their self-image;

the choice of apparel fashion brands is based on current trends and express a target group’s desired image.⁷⁹ Women are better equipped to understand fashion clothing⁸⁰ as it is an integral part of their personality. We believe that gender differences in fashion clothing involvement may be reflected among Indian youth also. These differences may be examined in terms of the importance society places on women’s physical appearance compared to men.⁸¹ However, the gender roles have become fluid and flexible⁸² and fashion clothing holds similar significance to both genders.^{81,83} Manrai *et al*,⁸⁴ in their study on fashion consciousness in Eastern Europe, suggest that young males were more fashion conscious than the females. Fashion products may not be thus singularly related with female consumption and involvement. Sahdev and Gautam⁸⁵ in their research state that product satisfaction of the Indian consumer is dependent upon the ‘high’ price image of the products. The Indian market reflects a unique blend of western lifestyles and Indian traditional values. Even though Indian women endorse western lifestyles by wearing western wear, the traditional values are strongly entrenched in cultural values. For Indians, family is important and individuals’ needs are governed by the group and family affiliations.^{2,86} Family is consulted in all personal and professional decisions and individual achievements are viewed in the light of family and social framework,⁸⁷ and clothes would communicate sense of achievement. In India, fashion clothing reflects the status of the individuals and conveys education and career achievements.

In the same vein, this research measures the Indian Generation Y’s involvement with fashion apparel consumption and the factors most affecting it. The three involvement variables involvement of Indian youth with fashion clothing, advertising involvement with fashion clothing and purchase decision involvement (as discussed in the literature review) were considered for research.

Hypothesis 1a: There will be a relationship between fashion clothing consumption involvement and product involvement.

Hypothesis 1b: There will be a relationship between fashion clothing consumption involvement and purchase decision involvement.

Hypothesis 1c: There will be a relationship between fashion clothing consumption involvement and advertising involvement.

Hypothesis 2: The consumers' involvement with fashion clothing, its advertising and purchase decision would affect the consumers' decision to purchase fashion clothing.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant difference between the male and female consumers' involvement towards advertising involvement, consumption involvement, purchase decision involvement and product involvement of fashion clothing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A self-administered questionnaire was used on Indian college students aged between 18 and 24 years studying in a college in the national capital region of India. These students were residents of different states from India, who were studying in various colleges in the capital region. As the students in the capital region of India are more brand and status conscious owing to their greater exposure to fashion global brands, it was felt that their responses would provide the inclination and attitude of the consumers' towards fashion clothing. O'Cass's³⁸ questionnaire was adapted for the study. As all the students were fluent in the English language, the English version of the questionnaire

was used. A five-point Likert scale was used for the constructs. The questionnaire was distributed in the class and the students were asked to help in the research. The sample size was 350, and we were able to use 319 questionnaires for the analysis. The remaining questionnaires were illegible or incomplete and therefore could not be used for the analysis. The sample consisted of larger cross-section of male population than females. This may be attributed to the fact that in higher studies (at graduate and post-graduate levels) the ratio of females is less than the males. Most Indian females are not encouraged to pursue higher education and career.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Consumer involvement is a motivational state that may be used to comprehend and predict consumers' attitudes towards products. Hague and Flick⁸⁸ posit that for high involvement products consumer expends cognitive effort. The Cronbach α was computed to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's⁸⁹ coefficient α measures the extent to which the scale items cohere with each other. We ascertained the reliability of the items by computing the Cronbach α and the score for the same was 0.954 for 41 items of fashion involvement scale. According to Nunnally,⁹⁰ reliability coefficients of 0.70 or more are considered as a criterion for an internally consistent scale constructs; however, the use of a minimum α -value of 0.60 is also considered appropriate for initial research instrument validation.

The total sample size used for analysis was 319, out of which the total male respondents were 228 and female respondents were 91 (Table 1).

Table 1: Male and female group statistics

Gender of respondents	N	Mean	SD	SE mean
Male	228	46.7277	9.69317	0.64195
Female	91	48.7429	9.37476	0.98274
Male	228	33.9328	6.87732	0.45546
Female	91	35.3519	6.18902	0.64879
Male	228	25.8383	6.17122	0.40870
Female	91	26.8571	5.88137	0.61653
Male	228	24.9737	4.72403	0.31286
Female	91	26.0879	3.81997	0.40044

Table 2: Factor loadings for fashion clothing involvement

<i>Fashion clothing involvement factors</i>	<i>Component</i>	
	1	2
Fashion clothing means a lot me.	0.597	—
Fashion clothing is a significant part of my life.	0.628	—
I have a very strong commitment to fashion clothing that would be difficult to break.	0.619	—
I consider fashion clothing to be central part of my life.	0.628	—
I think about fashion clothing a lot.	0.631	—
For me personally fashion clothing is an important product.	0.630	—
I am very interested in fashion clothing.	0.667	—
Fashion clothing is important to me.	0.699	—
Fashion clothing is an important part of my life.	0.711	—
I would say fashion clothing is central to my identity as a person.	0.610	—
I would say that I am often pre-occupied with fashion clothing.	0.541	—
I can really identify myself (LE please check)with fashion clothing.	0.583	—
I am very much involved in/with fashion clothing.	0.694	—
I find fashion clothing a very relevant product in my life.	0.692	—
I pay a lot of attention to fashion clothing.	0.678	—
Making purchase decisions for fashion clothing is significant to me.	0.668	—
I think a lot about my choices when it comes to fashion clothing.	0.629	—
I place great value in making the right decision when it comes to fashion clothing.	0.611	—
Purchase decisions for fashion clothing are very important to me.	0.634	—
I attach great importance to fashion clothing.	0.672	—
I like being involved in making purchases of fashion clothing.	0.643	—
The purchase of fashion clothing is important to me.	0.762	—
Purchasing fashion clothing is significant to me.	0.734	—
The feeling of self-fulfillment I get from wearing fashion clothing is significant.	0.698	—
I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when I wear fashion clothing.	0.690	—
Wearing fashion clothing is one of the most satisfying and enjoyable things I do.	0.736	—
I like to think about wearing fashion clothing.	0.647	—
I often become pre-occupied with wearing fashion clothing.	0.669	—
Wearing fashion clothing is important to me.	0.730	—
Wearing fashion clothing means a lot to me.	0.748	—
Wearing fashion clothing is a significant part of my life.	0.690	—
Ads about fashion clothing are no concern to me.	—	0.773
Ads about fashion clothing are relevant to me.	0.580	—
Ads about fashion clothing are important to me.	0.576	—

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.

Table 1 shows the two group means (males and females) in the four variables of fashion clothing involvement. There is variation in the means, with higher mean scores for females than males. The differences in the means on all the four variables appear somewhat different.

To understand if any significant difference existed between the fashion clothing involvement of Indian youth as compared to the previous study conducted by O’Cass,³⁸ a factor analysis test was run. The 41-item scale was factor analyzed using the principle component method with Varimax rotation of factors. The results are shown in Table 2. Initial extraction of components gave us seven components, and items with factor loading less than 0.5 were removed and the remaining items were again analyzed through the principle component method. We obtained a final component matrix comprising

of 35 constructs segregated under two components. Seven constructs removed from the scale were as follows:

1. Some individuals become completely involved or engrossed in making purchase decisions for fashion clothing. For others, purchase decisions for fashion clothing are not that involved. How involved do you feel in making purchase decisions for fashion clothing?
2. Making a purchase decision for fashion clothing requires a lot of thought.
3. I pay a lot of attention to ads for fashion clothing.
4. Some individuals become completely involved, absorbed in ads for fashion clothing. For others, ads for fashion clothing are simply not that involving. How involved do you feel in ads of fashion clothing?

5. Ads about fashion clothing are interesting to me.
6. Some individual becomes completely involved, absorbed in any information about fashion clothing. For others information on fashion clothing is not all involving. How involved are you in information about fashion clothing?
7. I have little or no interest in ads of fashion clothing.

The results showed that the scale fitted the Indian data and the factor loadings for components were lower than O'Cass'³⁸ factor loadings and ranged between 0.541 and 0.773. In the research study conducted by O'Cass the factor loadings for the items ranged from 0.67 to 0.9.

The research findings suggest that the limited exposure of Indian youth with global fashion clothing brands may affect their choice and involvement. Global brands are slowly finding their way into India; however, not all the popular global fashion wear are available in the country and therefore the Indian youth has limited exposure to them. They are aware of the global brands but as the Indian stores do not stock branded fashion wear, they are unable to purchase them. The difference in involvement levels may be attributed to the slow dissemination of fashion products for Indian population.

To understand the relationship between fashion clothing product involvement, purchase decision involvement and advertising involvement with consumption involvement correlation was computed. The consumption involvement attribute was kept as the dependent variable. We intended to study the impact of consumers' consumption involvement with fashion clothing

with respect to other three variables. These three were taken as motivational variables that affected the consumers' decision and consumption involvement with fashion clothing. The results in Table 3 demonstrate the involvement relationships of Indian youth with fashion clothing consumption. Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c were accepted in the test.

The test results show (see Table 3) a high correlation between dependent variable, consumption involvement, with the other independent variables of advertising involvement, purchase decision involvement and product involvement. The correlation score of 0.777 with product involvement shows that Indian youth gives importance to fashion clothing brands. The high correlation further implies that western fashion brands connote an image of high quality and it holds a relevant place in their life. Our findings are on similar lines with earlier researches on consumer involvement in fashion clothing product category,^{38,63,76-78} which posit that consumers show a high involvement in fashion clothing.

The Pearson correlation of 0.744 between purchase decision involvement and consumption involvement shows that the consumption of fashion clothing has a positive relationship with purchase decision involvement. It may be viewed that Indian youth is engrossed and considers fashion clothing to be of significant importance. The findings suggest that if the product is important for the consumer, there will be greater purchase decision involvement experienced by the consumer for that product category. Our findings are similar to the work of Mittal,³⁴ where he examined the purchase decision involvement.

Table 3: Correlation scores of fashion clothing consumption involvement with product involvement, purchase decision involvement and advertising involvement

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Advertising involvement</i>	<i>Purchase decision involvement</i>	<i>Product involvement</i>
<i>Consumption involvement</i>			
Pearson correlation	0.562**	0.744**	0.777**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	319	319	319

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	-3.331	1.192	—	-2.793	0.006
Product involvement	0.291	0.028	0.460	10.389	0.000
Purchase decision involvement	0.332	0.040	0.365	8.369	0.000
Advertising involvement	0.170	0.051	0.125	3.319	0.001

Dependent variable: Consumption involvement.

The results of correlation also show a positive relationship of fashion clothing advertisement with consumption involvement. The results are significant at 0.01 levels. The consumers’ perception about the relevance of fashion clothing may be based upon their evaluation of intrinsic motives and determining the role of fashion clothing in their lifestyle. The findings imply that advertising of fashion brands plays a significant role in determining the consumption involvement of the youth.

The simultaneous multiple regressions were conducted to investigate the best predictors of fashion clothing consumption involvement (Table 4). The test results of regression analysis demonstrate a high significance of product involvement, purchase decision involvement and advertising involvement of consumers towards consumption of fashion clothing. For product involvement and purchase involvement’s impact on consumption involvement, $P < 0.001$ and for advertising involvement $P = 0.001$, which is significant at 0.01 levels. Thus Hypothesis 2 is accepted. This supports our earlier findings that to increase consumers’ involvement with fashion clothing, the advertising, product and purchase involvement must be looked into. The marketers may formulate strategies to design advertisements that help consumers to associate with the fashion clothing and consider them to be an intrinsic part of their lifestyle. This may help in generating greater degree of product, and purchase decision involvement. The consumers’ interest towards fashion clothing may be enhanced by positioning it as a product that enhances the self-image of the Indian youth and helps them to establish their

membership with their counterparts in other developed countries. This would significantly increase their endorsement for it. This is supported by earlier research that suggests that Indians place greater value of global brands.^{1,3} Our findings support earlier research that consumers involvement with fashion clothing reflects their need to look good as it reflects their status^{38,76–78} among peer groups.

To test whether there was any significant difference between the four variables and gender of the student, ANOVA was computed. The results mentioned in Table 5 show that between groups differences for advertising is significant ($P < 0.05$), whereas for those of purchase decision involvement, product involvement and consumption involvement is not significant. Hypothesis 3 gets partially accepted where gender affects advertising involvement of Indian youth. The males and females differ in their involvement levels. Our findings support the previous research that men and women differ in their perceptions towards clothing.^{80,81} In India it appears, women are more influenced by advertising and this may be attributed to their interest to look at the latest fashion clothing worn by models in advertisements before purchasing it. This can be of immense importance for marketers in creating advertisements specifically targeted to women. The television advertisements of fashion clothing can use the celebrities to target the young women.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the most important aspects of selecting a brand is the symbolism that it represents and the value it communicates to the user. Brands are

Table 5: ANOVA-fashion clothing involvement between male and female

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Product involvement</i>					
Between groups	264.145	1	264.145	2.864	0.092
Within groups	29238.113	317	92.234	—	—
Total	29502.258	318	—	—	—
<i>Purchase decision involvement</i>					
Between groups	130.980	1	130.980	2.927	0.088
Within groups	14183.903	317	44.744	—	—
Total	14314.883	318	—	—	—
<i>Consumption involvement</i>					
Between groups	67.517	1	67.517	1.820	0.178
Within groups	11758.197	317	37.092	—	—
Total	11825.714	318	—	—	—
<i>Advertising involvement</i>					
Between groups	80.748	1	80.748	4.013	0.046
Within groups	6379.139	317	20.123	—	—
Total	6459.887	318	—	—	—

supposed to represent rank and value associated with the status of a brand.¹⁴ The benefits of using a brand enable ego enhancement, recognition and risk aversion.^{29,75} In a similar vein, the fashion brands are perceived by the Indian youth as adding to their self-image and self-esteem. Fashion brands are supposedly transmitting a new culture of self-awareness and social recognition. The research findings indicate that in a developing economy, where income levels are still not very high, and demographic profiles of the consumers indicate a greater percentage of middle-class homes, fashion products are perceived as items of social recognition and individual enhancement. The Indian youth is affected by global brands and perceive it to symbolize style and fashion trends.¹ The increased consciousness about the self is being reflected in the youth's choice of products that enhance their self-image. The accessibility to global apparel brands has made it possible for Indian youth to view it as an extension of their personality.^{91,92} The involvement of the Indian youth with fashion clothing suggests that fashion clothing is accepted as an important purchase item that is supposedly improving the overall image of the individual in groups. The research on fashion clothing by O'Cass³⁸ had indicated that advertising, product involvement, purchase decision involvement and consumption

involvement constitute the dimensions of overall consumer involvement with a product category. O'Cass³⁸ posits that overall involvement is greater than sum of its parts. Changes in Indian demographics indicate that in the coming decades India will be a home to a large youth population. Research findings suggest that fashion apparel sellers in India can work upon enhancing their brand awareness as the market for the fashion wears, accessories and other products is promising. Communication from the global fashion firms should focus more on enabling consumers to associate with the fashion brands as a part of their lifestyle. Clothing being a high involvement product the brand acceptability will depend upon cognitive information processing and evaluating the various fashion brands available in the markets. As fashion clothing has a prestige and status value attached to its use and adoption, Indian youth would be willing to wear it for improving their social position. In India, products reflect the success of an individual and fashion clothing connotes status in terms of education and good family background. Thus, advertising efforts of the firms should also take into cognizance the 'material symbol' communicated through these products and messages should be framed accordingly.

There is a huge scope for Indian firms to foray into branded apparel category in India at a lower

price range, as at present the market is dominated by international labels at higher price. Youth especially is extremely price-sensitive and are dependent upon their parents for financial assistance. The Indian youth starts shopping independently while studying in University and are governed by the peer groups in their purchase decisions. The purchase of global luxury clothing by the Indian youth echoes the sanction they have received from their parents for pursuing their goal of self-enhancement. Wicklund and Gollwitzer⁹³ suggest that individuals self-symbolize through products and the evaluation by the members of society about their success may be based on the physical possession they own, and fashion clothing connotes success to the youth.

The youth constitutes a major market in India, and their inclination towards western brands reveals a desire for global products as a symbol for more emotional value (Kumar *et al*, 2009). The research indicates that there is a growing market for fashion products in India. The consumers' interest towards fashion clothing reveals their strong positive feelings towards the product category. Thompson *et al*⁹⁴ posit that the value of the brand is linked to the intensity of the feelings it arouses in the minds of the consumers. The manufacturers of fashion wear may consider this as a major opportunity for their products in the country.

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