

BRANDING: AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS BRANDED APPAREL

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Abstract

Purpose of this study is to deliberate upon the young consumer behaviour towards branded apparel in Delhi and NCR & to understand concept of branded apparel, to observe brand awareness for different apparel brands, to analyse factors responsible for brand recognition, discover significant factors which persuade a consumer to choose any brand among from available brands; to study factors creating brand association & to analyse how brand loyalty is beneficial to marketers. The study is descriptive in nature based on primary data for analyses of results. A structured questionnaire was formulated using likert scale, multiple grid, multiple choice questions administered to 400 young consumers (Age 15-34 Years) including both males and females varying from professional, businessman, student or job seekers using convenience sampling from different places of Delhi and NCR. The results were analysed based on demographic profile (work status, age, gender, education and income) which was the subject under study for this paper. This vital information can help the companies in better understanding customer needs & deliver them the products. Today buying has become a delightful experience rather than mere satisfaction. Following the entry of several new brands, the branded segment has grown at 25% annually. This represents a shift from unbranded to the branded segment which is mainly due to factors like, rising income levels of Indians, changing demographics, improvements in standard of living and increasing brand consciousness especially for young consumers in Delhi and NCR. Thus, marketer's should devise attractive consumer strategies to bring more loyalty towards their brands in young consumers to avoid brand shifting. Brand loyal consumers respond positively to a brand changes in terms of price, quality, competition, variety. This study is also useful for the researchers in understanding the entire branding process and how each stage in branding is important to ultimately ensure brand loyalty.

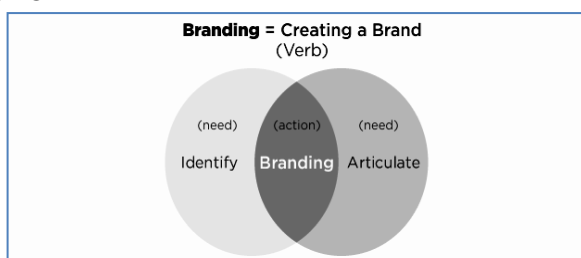
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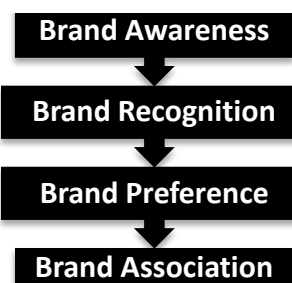
Keywords: Branded apparel, Brand awareness, Brand loyalty, Consumer behaviour.

Introduction: It is seen that brands describe personality of the users with particular lifestyle. It also helps to convey a sense of belonging to a specific social group (Murphy, 1990). He perceives brand not only as the actual product, but also the unique property of a specific owner. It has been developed over time as a set of values and attributes which significantly differentiate products of similar appearance.

In accounting, a brand defined as an "intangible asset". In accordance with assorted definitions of brands, two approaches of defining a brand are derived. The traditional one (brand as a product identifier), Aeker (1991) defines "A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol which intended to identify the goods, services of either one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors". Holistic view (brand is more than just the product) has been proposed by Ambler (1992) who defines "brand as the promise of the bundles of attributes that someone buys which provides satisfaction and attributes that make up a brand". According to Business Dictionary branding is, "The process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme."



STAGES IN BRANDING



Stage 1: Brand Awareness- Your product is the first that comes to mind in a certain product category. For example: washing powder- SURF, Antiseptic solution- DETTOL

Stage 2: Brand Recognition- Once a consumer is made aware he then recognises the product name, attributes or features according to his/her mental calibre.

Stage 3: Brand Preference- Once a customer has knowledge about a brand he then creates a set of attributes according to his requirement which is based on his preference of a brand over another.

Stage 4: Brand Association- Consumer starts linking the brand with favourable images, celebrities, country, etc. For example: Made in China (Product is cheap and of

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poor Quality).

Stage 5: Brand Loyalty- Brand loyalty can be defined as relative possibility of customer shifting to another brand in case there is a change in product's features, price or quality. As brand loyalty increases, customers will respond less to competitive moves and actions. Brand loyal customers remain committed to the brand, are willing to pay higher price for that brand, and will promote their brand always. A company having brand loyal customers will have greater sales, less marketing and advertising costs, and best pricing. This is because the brand loyal customers are less reluctant to shift to other brands, respond less to price changes and self- promote the brand as they perceive that their brand have unique value which is not provided by other competitive brands.

Brand loyalty is a scenario where the consumer fears purchasing and consuming product from another brand which he does not trust. It is measured through methods like word of mouth publicity, repetitive buying, price sensitivity, commitment, brand trust, customer satisfaction, etc. Brand loyalty is the extent to which a consumer constantly buys the same brand within a product category. The consumers remain loyal to a specific brand as long as it is available. They do not buy from other suppliers within the product category. Brand loyalty exists when the consumer feels that the brand consists of right product characteristics and quality at right price. Even if the other brands are available at cheaper price or superior quality, the brand loyal consumer will stick to his brand.

2. Impact of branding on firm's marketing strategy

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers." Therefore it makes sense to understand that branding is not about getting your target market to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem. The objectives that a good brand will achieve include:

- Delivers the message clearly
- Confirms your credibility
- Connects your target prospects emotionally
- Motivates the buyer
- Concretes user loyalty

To succeed in branding you must understand the needs and wants of your customers and prospects. You do this by integrating your brand strategies through your company at every point of public contact. Your brand resides within the hearts and minds of customers, clients, and prospects. It is the sum total of their experiences and perceptions,

some of which you can influence, and some that you cannot. A strong brand is invaluable as the battle for customers intensifies day by day. It's important to spend time investing in researching, defining, and building your brand. After all, your brand is the source of a promise to your consumer.

Brand loyal consumers are the foundation of an organization. Greater loyalty levels lead to less marketing expenditure because the brand loyal customers promote the brand positively. Also, it acts as a means of launching and introducing more products that are targeted at same customers at less expenditure. It also restrains new competitors in the market. Brand loyalty is a key component of brand equity. Brand loyalty can be developed through various measures such as quick service, ensuring quality products, continuous improvement, wide distribution network, etc. When consumers are brand loyal they love “you” for being “you”, and they will minutely consider any other alternative brand as a replacement. Brand loyalty is always developed post purchase. To develop brand loyalty, an organization should know their niche market, target them, support their product, ensure easy access of their product, provide customer satisfaction, bring constant innovation in their product and offer schemes on their product so as to ensure that customers repeatedly purchase the product.

3. Objectives of study

The purpose of research is to examine the behaviour of young consumers in Delhi & NCR towards branded apparel. Objectives of the study are:

- 1) To understand concept of branded apparel;
- 2) To observe brand awareness for different apparel brands;
- 3) To analyse factors responsible for brand recognition;
- 4) Discover significant factors which persuade a consumer to choose any brand among from available brands;
- 5) To study factors creating brand association &
- 6) To analyse how brand loyalty is beneficial to marketers

4. Scope of the study

Young people's marketplace is fast-moving and characterized by an increasingly sophisticated and brand-aware audience. What youth are thinking and doing offers ideas, insights and information on key issues across the whole youth market, from the initial stages of preparing for parenthood to kids, tweenies, teenagers and young people up to the age of 34. It offers a depth and breadth of knowledge and valuable data that is unobtainable elsewhere. In this competitive era marketer must be fully aware about the customer what are they expecting from a brand, factors which push them to purchase a

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particular brand, etc to attain a competitive edge. This vital information can help the companies in better understanding customer needs & deliver them the products.

Apparels are a major part of fashion throughout the world. Indians really believe in the famous saying "clothes make a man". A person more often than not is judged by the way he/she is dressed. Apparels define the personality of a human being. It talks a lot about his/her education, personality and way of thinking. It is said that it is the massive Indian fashion consuming class that will set the global fashion industry in the next few years. The boom in the Indian apparel industry is mainly due to factors like, rising incomes levels of Indians, liberal trade policies adopted by the government, and flexible investment policies on the apparel industry. Today most of the international brands have found their way into some of the best malls in the country. Brands like Mango, Armani and Diesel were unheard off in India till a few years back but today these brands are found in almost all Indian cities. It is said that in the last ten years the fashion industry in India has moved from a very nascent stage to a full-fledged booming industry. The value of the apparel market in India is estimated at around 20,000 crore. The branded apparel market's size is 5,000 crore which is a quarter of the total share. The apparel market in India is categorized into branded and non-branded. The Top Apparel Brands in India are Madura Garments, Arvind Mills, Provogue Zodiac Clothing, and Raymonds.

5. Review of literature

This study considers the importance of fashion involvement in the interpretation of brands of jeans as measured by Snyder's revised self-monitoring scale, which discriminates between people who are highly motivated to respond to social cues and those who remain "true to themselves". Over 650 people in the UK aged 14-34 were shown either a branded or unbranded stimulus. They were asked to record their attitude to 27 pairs of bipolar adjectives using a semantic differential scale. At the same time they completed Snyder's scale. It was found that self-monitoring is a significant mediator of meaning with regard to unbranded, but not branded, jeans. A model of choice by elimination of the unacceptable is suggested by high self-monitoring responses. It has implications for the amount of advertising required to support a fashion brand (Susan Auty, Richard Elliott, 1998). The relationship between consumers' decision-making styles and their choice between domestic and imported brand clothing is investigated using a sample of Indian consumers. The objective of this paper is to gauge the factors affecting purchase decision taking gender perspective as base. Empirical findings are calculated using survey technique and chi square test with a

sample of 320 participants in Delhi and NCR. The objective of this paper is to analyze the significance of demographic profile of consumers affecting the purchase decision of branded garments and to observe from gender perspective the consumer awareness about different apparel brands available in the Indian market and also to find out whether there is a significant difference in total expenditure on branded apparels done by males vis- a - vis females. The results exhibit no significant differences in the brand awareness, shopping frequency and shopping expenditure between males and females (Namita Rajput, Subodh Kesharwani, Akanksha Khanna, 2012).

One of the major components of brand knowledge is brand awareness, which is taken as the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Rossiter & Percy, 1987 and Aaker, 1991). It is created by an increase in the acquaintance of the brands through repeated exposure, strong associations and consumption cues (Keller, 2003). Brand knowledge defined as brand information that relates with the brand stored in a consumer memory. Brand knowledge can be categorized in two aspects: brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 2006). Brand awareness is the strength of brand which is reflected by the identification of that brand under several conditions. It is a combination of recognition and recall performance. Brand image is consumers' perception about the brand. Thus, a consumer's decision to buy a product or service is the result of interplay of many forces or stimuli (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006). While other studies conducted on consumer behaviour can be cited as, Anderson & Stephen (1963), Lichtenstein et al. (1993), Auty and Elliott (1998), Robertson (2000), Kim et al. (2002), Grundey (2006) and Jairam (2009). But there are not enough studies which considered location issue in respect of consumer attitude and branded apparels existing in fashion industry, except few.

6. Research methodology

Sample Size and sampling technique: Research was carried out on the basis of response from 400 respondents including both males and females in Delhi & NCR aged 15-34 using convenience sampling approach.

Data Collection and sampling technique: Data was collected based on primary data through structured questionnaires on branding awareness, brand recognition, brand preference, brand association and brand loyalty distributed via google docs, Whatsapp, emails & Facebook.

Data analyses: All question answers given by respondents are analyzed as follow in different parts.

7. Results and discussion (branding decisions)

Decision 1: Brand awareness

This part pertains to questions on brand awareness of the consumer. A well aware consumer is likely to make a better brand decision as compared to an uninformed consumer. In the table 1, brands were categorised in the following categories; premium, ethnic, kids, sports, teens, only ladies, only mens, others and consumers based on their level of brand awareness marked them. It was observed that brands like Nike, Raymond, Levis, United Colors of Benetton , Tommy Hilfiger were known by majority of consumers whereas, brand awareness was very less for brands like W, exclusive ladies brand, Liliput a kids brand. However, for other brands percentage of brand awareness was comparatively better.

Table 1: brand awareness

BRAND	Premium	Ethnic	Kids	Sports	Teens	Only ladies	Only Mens	Others (affordable)	Total	Key determinants	Awareness	(%age) awareness
Nike	120	-	-	240	29	-	4	7	400	Premium, sports	360	90
Raymond	175	9	-	117	40	3	40	16	400	Premium, Only Mens	215	53.75
W	126	10	3	123	54	58	3	23	400	Ethnic, Only ladies, affordable	91	22.75
Liliput	88	-	80	100	116	-	3	13	400	Premium, Kids	168	42
Levis	157	3	-	104	97	1	6	32	400	Premium, teens, others	236	59
Meena Bazaar	108	36	3	103	83	50	-	17	400	Premium, Ethnic, Only ladies	194	48.5
United Colors of Benetton	185	-	4	96	88	-	1	26	400	Premium, teens, others	299	74.75
Woodland	178	-	7	122	45	1	18	29	400	Premium	178	44.5
Tommy Hilfiger	214	1	4	107	47	6	8	13	400	Premium	214	53.5

Figure 1: brand awareness

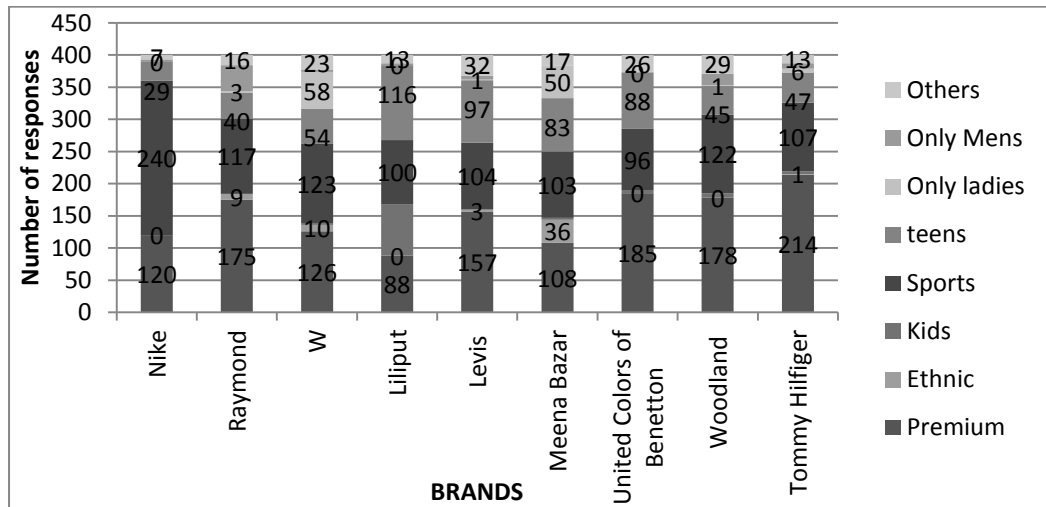
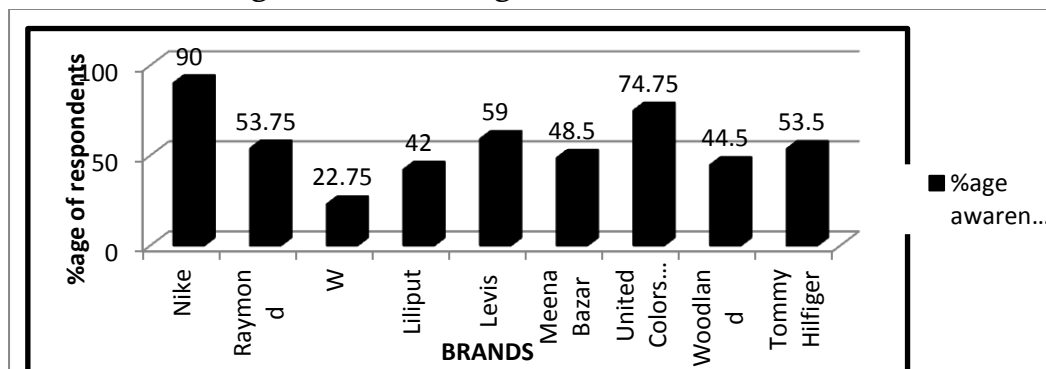


Figure 2: Percentage of brand awareness



Decision II: Brand recognition

How do you recognise a brand?

In the table 2, consumers were judged for how well they recognise a brand. The test was done based on 3 attributes namely; Mental calibre, Product features, Product Category. It was observed that all the 3 attributes have significant role in brand recognition. Consumers often feel that recognising a brand through its name, or features like quality, comfort, durability, price and categories like pants, shirts, jeans is quite easy and it help them to make branding decisions.

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Table 2: Brand Recognition

RECOGNISE A BRAND	YES	NO	Total
Mental calibre based on product name	314(78.5%)	86(21.5%)	400
Product features (quality, comfort, durability, price)	301(75.25%)	99(24.75%)	400
Product category (Pants, shirts, jeans)	321(80.25%)	79(19.75%)	400

Figure 3: Brand Recognition

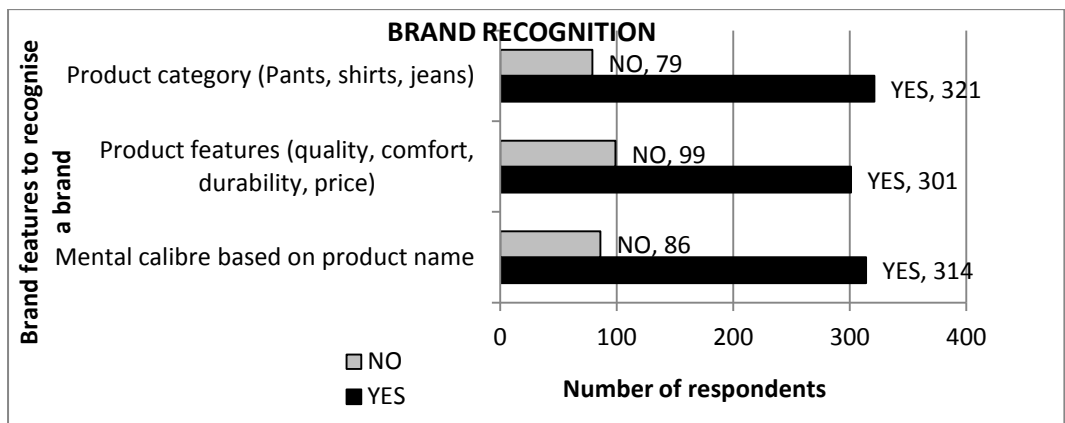
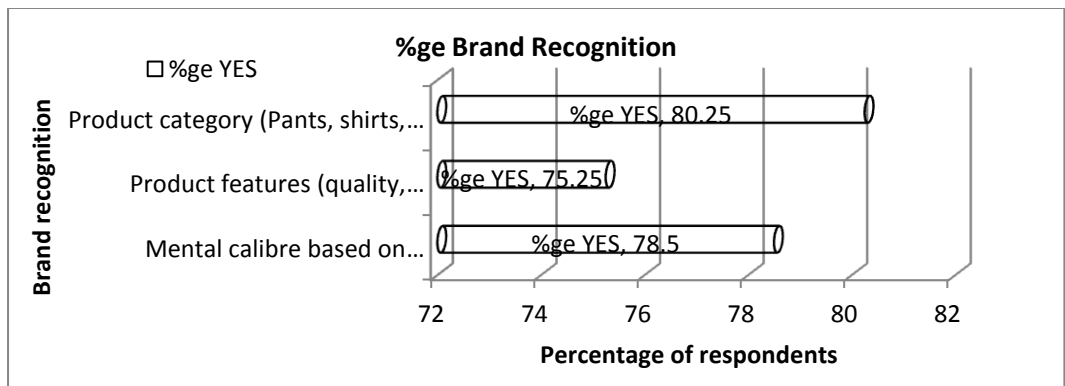


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents recognising a brand



Decision III: BRAND PREFERENCE

The following 5 parameters were tested to check brand preference of our sample of 400 respondents based on design, price, celebrities, brand image and country like Made in India, Made in china on a scale of 1-3. Based on scale ranks were given to each of these parameters on the level of their importance. The most important factor for creating brand preference is the favourable image of brand which ranks first, followed by price, design, Country and celebrities.

Table 3: Table showing brand preference

REASON	Most important (3*)	Important (2*)	Least important (1*)	Total	SCORE	RANK
Celebrities	132	168	100	400	832*	5 th
Design	186	196	18	400	968*	3 rd
Price	202	165	33	400	969*	2 nd
Country (Made in India, Made in China)	155	185	60	400	895*	4 th
Favourable image of brand	223	128	49	400	974*	1 st

Figure 5: Graph showing reasons for brand preference

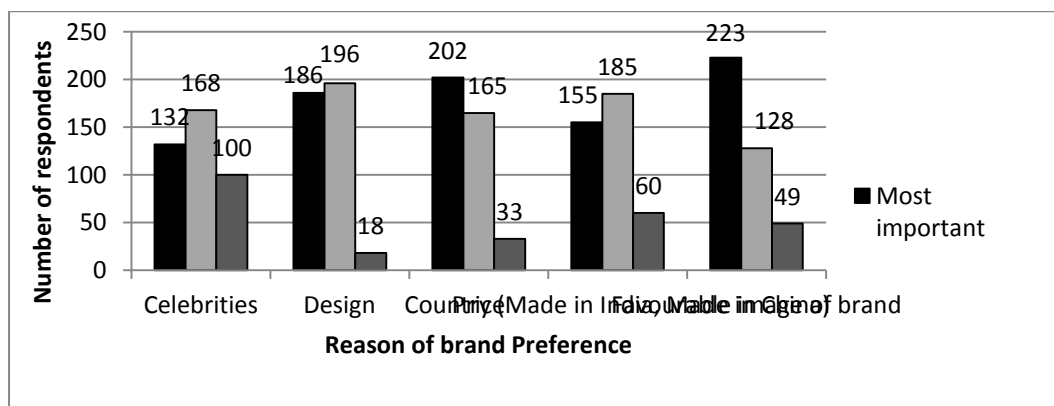
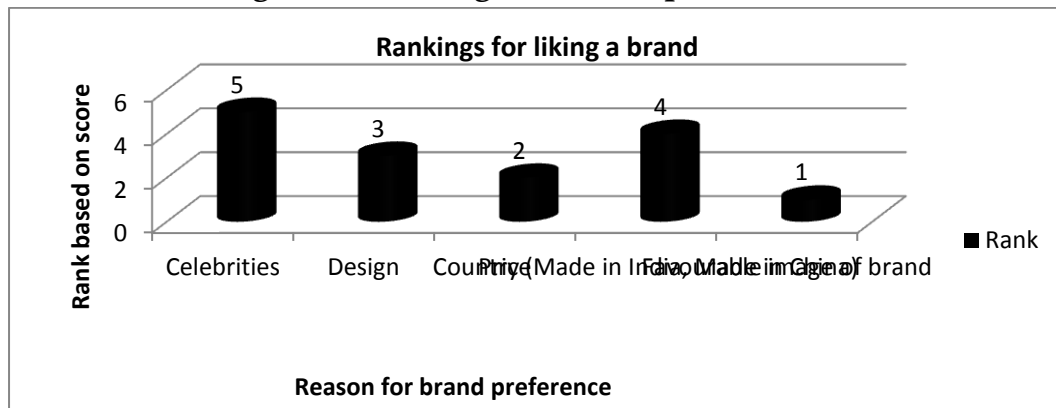


Figure 6: Rankings for brand preference



Decision IV & V: BRAND ASSOCIATION & BRAND LOYALTY

The following statements test the brand association and brand loyalty of consumers based on which a marketer can make requisite strategies. As a consumer who is brand loyal tends to buy the same brand again offering positive sales for the company whereas, for a particular attribute if a consumer is not loyal then there are chances of consumers shifting to other brands. About 50% consumers agree to pay higher price for the brand they buy. This shows consumers are price sensitive, any significant increase in the price can make customers shift to other brands. Also, 62% consumers buy the brand which is similar to their personality. Consumers chose their brands carefully after thorough information search and as such 60% of them agree to get the desired value added with the brand they buy. It was observed that despite of buying a particular brand repeatedly consumers might not promote them always either through word of mouth publicity or their past experience. 46% consumers remain loyal to their brand even with a price change, however, this percentage is insignificant which shows consumers are price sensitive so marketers must be careful not to invariably hike the price. Results show that majority of consumers have tendency of shifting to another brand in case of change in products features, price or quality. 52% consumers agree that they buy the same brand again and resort to repetitive buying. It was crucial to note that 63% consumers trust the brand they purchase, the highest brand loyalty so far out of all the 10 statements to test brand loyalty of respondents. 56% consumers fear purchasing products from another brand which they do not trust. This was also evident from the above statement that majority of consumers only buy the brand which they trust. 74% respondents agree that they are satisfied with the brand they buy, it is a good figure but still the marketers need to work on that remaining 26% consumers who are not satisfied with their brand purchases. Such brand association we discuss further in the following sub-sections.

Table 4: Table showing brand association & brand Loyalty

BRAND ASSOCIATION & BRAND LOYALTY	YES	NO	MAYBE	Total	%age Loyalty	Total Response (YES+NO)
Are you ready to pay a higher price for brand you like	163	166	71	400	49.54	329
Is the brand you purchased similar to your own personality	198	119	83	400	62.46	317
do you find brand equity or added value of a brand you buy	194	131	75	400	59.69	325
Promote your brand always	159	168	73	400	48.62	327
Respond to price changes	194	165	41	400	45.96	359
Possibility of shifting to another brand in case of change in products features, price or quality	233	123	44	400	34.55	356
Repetitive buying	184	173	43	400	51.54	357
Do you trust your brand	223	130	47	400	63.17	353
Do you fear purchasing products from another brand which you do not trust	186	144	70	400	56.36	330
Are you satisfied with the brand you buy	259	92	49	400	73.79	351

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Figure 7: Showing levels of brand loyalty

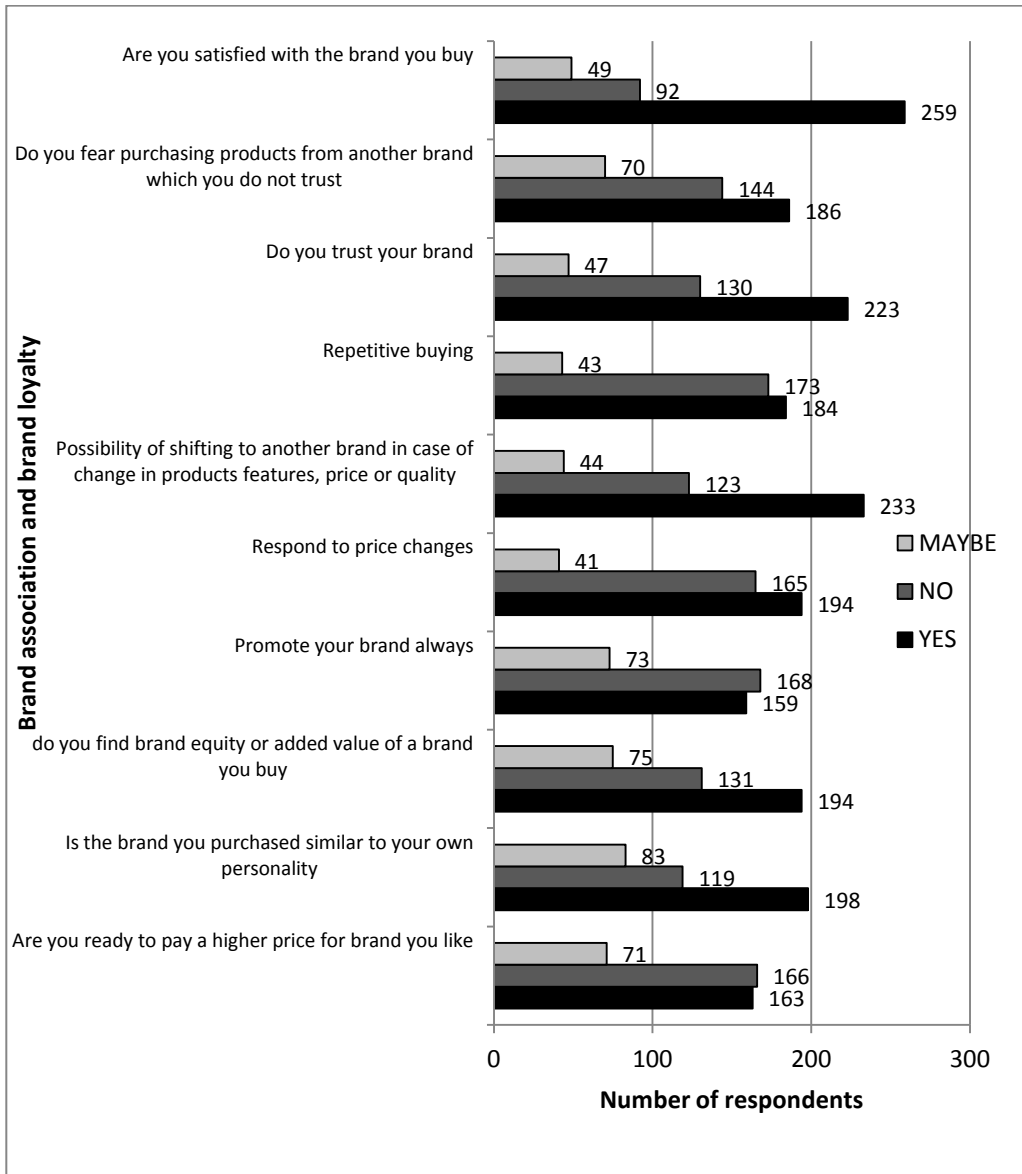
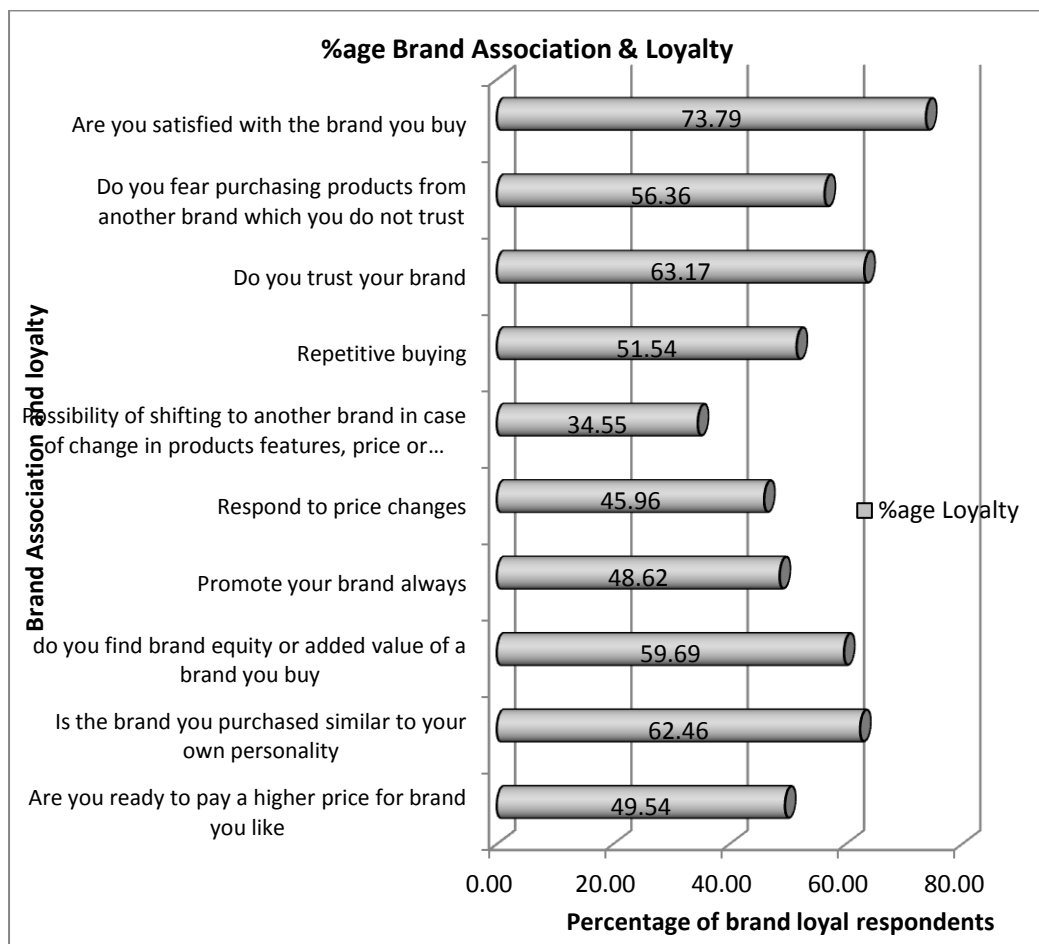


Figure 8: Percentage of brand loyalty



a. Will you change your brand if, other brands available at?

The following table 5 summarises the brand loyalty test of consumers, based on 6 parameters cheaper price, superior quality, wide distribution network, quick service, online shopping websites. On the basis of customer response these parameters were ranked for brand loyalty. It was observed that majority of consumers agree to change their brand if other brands were available at cheaper price or superior quality, having wide distribution network, quick service and online availability on shopping websites like amazon, Myntra, flipkart. There were certain categories of customers who were sure of changing their brands answered “yes” and the others brand loyal customers

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responded “no”, however there was one more category who were not sure of changing their brand (as such their brand association is weak and they can’t be categorised as brand loyal consumers) answered “maybe”. Marketers must work on all these attributes if they want to maintain the loyalty of their customers.

Table 5: Brand loyalty test

OTHER BRANDS AVAILABLE AT	YES	NO	Maybe	Total	(%age) loyalty	Total (YES+NO)	RANK
cheaper price	209	127	64	400	37.80	336	3 rd
Superior quality	226	143	31	400	38.75	369	1 st
Wide distribution network	215	135	50	400	38.57	350	2 nd
Quick service	225	127	48	400	36.08	352	4 th
Online shopping websites (Myntra, Amazon)	215	115	70	400	34.85	330	5 th

Figure 9: Brand Loyalty



Figure 10: Percentage of brand loyalty

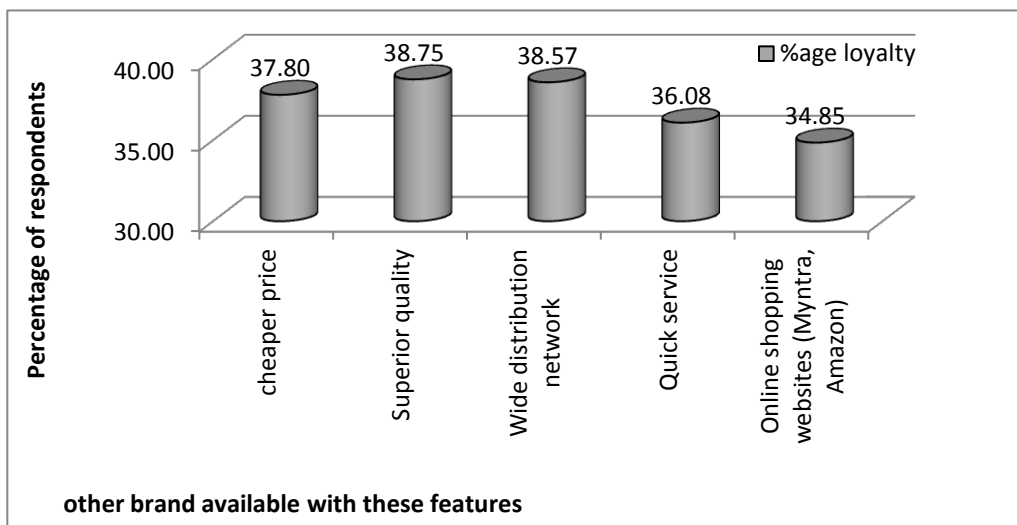
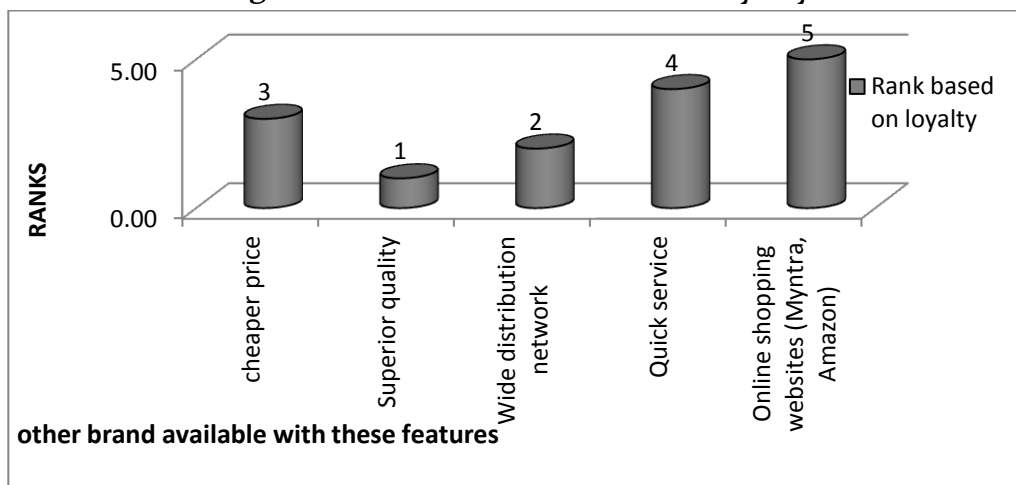


Figure 11: Ranks based on brand loyalty



b. Are you a loyal customer for the brands you buy?

Results show that 43.5% consumers agree that they always stick to the same brand they buy, this shows that for majority of respondents brand loyalty is less than 50% and they tend to shift to other brands. 56.5% consumers said that they keep experimenting with the new brands probably it is a very important piece of information about young consumers behaviour towards branded clothes. Young consumers are dynamic,

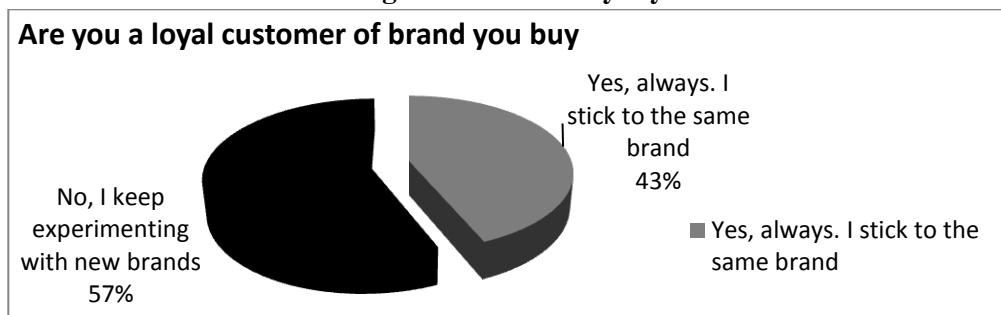
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experimentative, lust for something new and different so marketer must strategise accordingly to meet this requirement to ensure consumers don't shift their brand gradually.

Table 6: Brand loyalty opinions

STATEMENT	Responses	%age
Yes, always. I stick to the same brand	174	43.5
No, I keep experimenting with new brands	226	56.5
Total	400	100

Figure 12: Brand loyalty



8. Conclusion and suggestions

Growing economy has made Indian consumers more prosperous. An indication of this is clearly given by the investigation on consumer behaviour of young Indian consumers in the age of 15- 34. This study has focused on how the buying behaviour varies between the age group of 15-19, 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34. Based on the investigations the following conclusions can be drawn on the branding for this particular group. A well aware consumer is likely to make a better brand decision as compared to an uninformed consumer brands like Nike, Raymond, Levis, United colors of Benetton, Tommy Hilfiger were known by majority of consumers whereas, brand awareness was very less for brands like W, a ladies brand, Liliput, a kids brand. Consumers often feel that recognising a brand through its name, or features like quality, comfort, durability, price and categories like pants, shirts, jeans is quite easy and it help them to make branding decisions. The most important factor for creating brand preference is the favourable

image of brand, followed by price, design, Country (Made in India, Made in china) and celebrities. A consumer who is brand loyal tends to buy the same brand again offering positive sales for the company whereas, for a particular attribute if a consumer is not loyal then there are chances of consumers shifting to other brands. About 50% consumers agree to pay higher price for the brand they buy. This shows consumers are price sensitive, any significant increase in the price, change in products features or quality can make customers shift to other brands and other set of consumers who remain loyal to their brand they buy the same brand again and resort to repetitive buying even with a price change, so marketers must be careful not to invariably hike the price. Consumers buy the brand which is similar to their personality, they chose their brands carefully after thorough information search to get the desired value added with the brand they buy. It was observed that despite of buying a particular brand repeatedly consumers might not promote them always either through word of mouth publicity or their past experience. Majority of consumers are satisfied and trust their brand, they fear purchasing products from another brand which they do not trust. Based on the current study we make the following suggestions:

1. In order to gain more consumer confidence local companies need to emphasize more on the quality of their products. Many companies produce products that are of impeccable quality, which they need to portray to the consumers in the advertising campaigns.
2. Local companies need to work on strong electronic and print media campaigns that are more targeted towards particular segments. They need to target the younger generation more with their advertising campaigns by using up beat advertisements, as it is this group of consumers that go for international brands the most.
3. Moreover, local companies should work more on the product placement of their products and build up and sustain core competencies.
4. To compete against international brands, local companies can gain a competitive edge by maintaining low prices and high comparable quality. This can be accomplished by keeping production cost low, using economies of scale and scope and controlling wastage. Thinking globally and competing in the international market can also achieve this.
5. Furthermore, companies need to build on and sustain brand loyalty by forming strategies such as exchange and return policies as well as guarantees and warranties.
6. Marketers should even increase their visibility on social networking sites as this is the favorite pastime of youngsters who are hyper- active in the digital world. They can use social media as a platform to spread awareness about their brands, scheme and other discounts. Mobile marketing has now become a rage as many youngsters

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today prefer to receive updates about latest arrivals, sales and discounts through their mobiles which can serve as a promotional platform for the marketers.

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