

# VALUES AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF YOUNG CONSUMERS

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*The value research has demonstrated that values are guiding force behind all consumer actions. Values are closely related to consumer needs. These are mental representations of underlying consumer needs. These represent an individual's ideas about what is desirable. Consumers tend to have some preferred end states of existence and modes of conducts. These end states of existence influence buying criteria the consumers use to evaluate product and brands. The present study was conducted in four product categories in order to explore the values held important by youth consumers. In order to obtain values, the Rokeach list of value scale (RVS) was used. The other part of the study focussed on micro aspect of value research.*

The term 'why' remains elusive to most marketers even today. The fundamental question 'why do consumers behave the way they do?' Or 'the choices they make as they do?' has been a source of tension to many marketers. If answers to these issues were available, the marketing community would save crores of rupees that go along with endeavours that go off the mark. The need is to get a firm hand on the consumer motivational system-the invisible core that makes him respond favourably to one offer, rejecting hundreds of others which look almost the same. The real question is-what is the driving force behind consumer actions?

## VALUES

To many, a casual observation of a consumer's buying behaviour may signal

randomness. No links or connections perhaps could be deciphered in those behaviours. Or is it that most of a consumer's behaviours carry a common theme? There lies some invisible commonness behind all haphazard appearing behaviours. It has been widely known that behaviour is a goal directed activity. In other words, the basic propellants of consumer behaviour lie deeply buried in the consumer psychology. Behaviours are guided to achieve what is held important by an individual-the end states that one wishes to achieve.

Consumers engage in diverse activities, make product and brand choices, take memberships of clubs and various bodies. What is instrumental behind all these actions? The value research has demonstrated that values are a powerful

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force in governing the behaviour of individuals in all spheres of their lives(1). The question is what are values? Values are closely related to consumer needs. These are mental representations of underlying consumer needs. These represent an individual's ideas about what is desirable. More formally value is defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode or conduct or state of existence is personally and socially preferable to the opposite modes of conduct or state of existence"(2). Values function as a guide to consumer actions. They influence attitudes and judgments which get reflected in actions.

The widely held view of the value distinguishes between two types of values: the terminal values and instrumental values. The terminal values are desired end states of existence. These are enduring beliefs held by an individual that a specific end state of existence is personally and socially preferable. For instance personal happiness, esteem or accomplishment. The instrumental values, on the other hand, are about the modes of conduct or behaviours. These refer to beliefs about desirable ways of behaving to help some one attain the terminal values (e.g. being ambitious, cheerful or broadminded)(3). Values mentally represent underlying needs. They seem to exert powerful influence on consumer behaviour. People who hold different values exert different buying preferences and behaviours. But values and the ways in which they influence the behaviours of consumers who look at and choose brands, product classes, and product attributes is not clear (4).

## VALUES AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Values influence buying behaviour by

affecting the standards or criteria that consumers use to evaluate and buy products and services. They are the shapers of buying or selection standards. People having different values are likely to exhibit varying consumption and other aspects of behaviour. One study discovered that LOV (list of values) related well with behaviour. It found that people who valued a 'sense of belonging' were heavily involved in leisure activities, particularly group activities. The consumers who highly valued 'fun and enjoyment' preferred more exciting media and exciting sports. Conversely, the people who highly valued 'security' engaged themselves in fewer high energy activities. These people watched more television and reported more hobby activities(5). In another study it was discovered that people who emphasised internal values- self-fulfilment, excitement, self respect., accomplishment- were consumers of natural foods more than people with external values (sense of belonging, being well respected, having security)(6). The values and behaviours are so inter-linked that "various combination of values significantly differentiate men from women, hippies from non-hippies, hawks from doves, police men from unemployed egroes, good students from poor students,....(7)".

Differences in the values imply the end states or goals that are considered important and are strived for in human efforts. Consumers are often categorised according to their buying. Essentially consumer buying involves two sets of choices the first being the product category choice and second being the brand choice in the selected product category. Values play an important role in product as well as brand choice decisions. When confronted with a diverse set of product categories the consumer

begins by asking a very basic question: Is this product for me? Or Am I the type of person who wants to buy and use this product? Through this question the buyer tries to build a connection between the external world-the product category and his internal world-the value system (the end states and preferred modes of conduct). For example a person who attaches significant importance to value-comfortable life- is likely to view the product through this angle. Hence a product category like washing machine might achieve consistency with this value. Similarly a person holding fitness and health as core value is likely to get positive answer to the question (Is this product for me?) in case of products like jogging shoes, sports equipment, fitness clubs etc. At this level consumer engages himself in rigorous exercise of learning product's characteristics and relating them to the value system.

Once the product relates well with the values, the buyer moves on to the second level of building relation.: Is this brand for me? or What does the brand offer that is relevant to me? Or Do I prefer what the brand offers? Values influence brand choice decisions by shaping the evaluative criteria which is used in making brand evaluations. It is the evaluative criteria that-causes the consumers to look for specific attributes in the brands. Thus the consumer choice is determined by brands location on relevant,-choice criteria. The resultant effect of this is formation of attitude toward a brand. For instance, an individual who is guided by the terminal value of fitness and health is likely to relate well with healthy food products. Further his brand evaluation would revolve around product attributes such as nutritional value, calories, fat, cholesterol level (the buying criteria).

## VALUE PERSPECTIVES IN MARKETING

Values guide consumer behaviour, including product and brand choices. It is because of this role, values continue to attract attention of marketing practitioners and researchers. Understanding of consumer values holds a great potential in critical areas of marketing strategy including segmentation, advertising execution, product positioning, and product development.

The term value draws its meaning from several fields of study. Anthropologists, conceptualisation of the term value focuses on life style and cultural patterns, sociologists concentrate on ideologies and customs, the psychologists look at values from the stand point of attitudes and motives. Broadly there are two perspectives. The sociologist perspective seeks to classify people on the basis of values. The grouping of customers based on values provides a marketer with segmentation which can serve as the basis of targeting the relevant group with the strategy crafted as per its unique structure. The grouping of customers relies on survey research using value instruments. The important-value instruments which one could use for respondent categorisation purposes include Rokeach Value Survey (RVS), List of Values (LOV) and Values and Life Styles (VALS).

A marketer, by administering value instrument on the population can easily arrive at broad clusters of customers who have homogeneous values. This perspective helps marketing strategist fine tune efforts as per inter- group differences. However, these methodologies fail to provide insight into how a product or brand really gets connected with the consumer's value frame work. A marketer needs to understand

much more than the value orientation of a market segment. The real issue is how a product- a marketable entity or a bundle of attributes on the one hand, and the invisible, conscious or subconscious values- the preferred end states get related? What are the inter-linkages that are formed between the two ends.

The answer to the issue of inter-connections between the product or the brand and the values lies in the micro or psychological stream of value research. The micro view offers the explanation that a product gets connected to a customer's value as an assortment of attributes is of less meaning to the consumer. The consumer instead, tends to be concerned about benefits. Thus the product-value connection takes place through an intermediate variable i.e. consequences. The products are seen as means to achieving -ends, the values. Thus, the statement by the Rexona deodorant that it contains an attribute 'deostral' is of little use to the consumer. This would not go much deep into the cognitive frame work of customer. The product would get connected once the effect of attribute is demonstrated and how it helps customers achieve the end state. Thus the product becomes means to an end (the value), through deodorant - deostral- long lasting protection- confidence-success, ladder. Similarly a woman who prefers diet soft drink might reveal that diet attribute is linked to low calories. A consequence of low calories is that it prevents her from getting fat (look more slim). Accordingly she maintains an attractive figure. This attractive figure wins her admiration an appreciation which results in greater self esteem. The knowledge about these ladders or means- end claims can contribute to effectiveness in various areas of marketing, especially product

development and promotion.

## THE STUDY

The present study was undertaken with a specific focus on the youth. The purpose was to explore youth buying motivation in the context of values and means-end perspective. The following were the specific objectives for the study:

- (i) To discover value orientation among the youth. That is what values-the preferred end states are considered important by them.
- (ii) To explore values that drive the youth buying in four product specific situations. The idea in this case was to reach to the end values/terminal values, indirectly through series of probes following means- end model.
- (iii) To explore inter-linkages between product attributes, consequences and values that serve as means to connect product with consumer's value system. Specifically, the purpose was to develop hierarchical value map (HVM) in four product situations.

**Method of Inquiry:** The method of inquiry used for developing HVMs was 'phenomenologist' in nature. It followed the following steps: (i) No assumptions were made about which attributes were important to consumer nor were suggestions made as to the relevant values or the way in which to reach these values. No preconceived notion was applied to infer relationships; (ii) The relationships between elements were described, not just mentioned. The respondents were made to explain how a particular attribute lead to a value; (iii) The list of commonly mentioned elements was generated through the content analysis (universal elements); and (iv) once elements



were identified the relationships between them were understood and mapped.

**Sample Design:** The population taken for the study was youth in the age group of 18-24 years/in Delhi. The sampling procedure used was convenience. The primary reason for choosing the convenience sampling was that an effort like this using qualitative depth probing requires respondent cooperation, ability to articulate and interview environment. In order to ensure that proper information is extracted, the respondents were chosen with an element of judgment and convenience. The focus of study was students, hence sample unit for the study was educational institutions and hostels falling within purview of University of Delhi. The global value survey is based in a response of 44 respondents and hierarchical value maps were developed using laddering interview with 10 respondents in each product chosen for the study.

**Data Collection:** The anthropologists approach to inferring the values is based on observation. The members in any community are observed and values are inferred from their behaviours. The method for gathering information on values in this study was survey based. The value identification was done with the help of an instrument. The data were collected using Rokeach Value Survey instrument. The respondents were asked to rank a set of 18 terminal and instruments values each. The purpose was to measure relative importance of end states of existence (personal goods or terminal values). The instrument value component of the instrument was used to reveal the basic approach or way of behaving youth might take to achieve the end states important to them. The instrument was administered personally to the respondents.

The product related attribute- value linkages were probed using laddering interview methodology. This method needs an indepth focused interview with the respondents. Prior to the in-depth probes, six members of population were presented with triads of brands in particular product category. Through the method of triadic sorting, they were asked to mention an important way in which two brands were similar to each other and therefore different from the third. The product attributes were generated in this manner. Also, respondents were given option of adding other attribute. The list of attributes generated for each product in this manner served as the basis for laddering. Now each respondent was asked to identify from the list those attributes that were important. It is on this set of important attributes a series of typical 'why is that important to you?' Questions were asked to develop ladders between attributes-consequences-instrumental value and terminal value. Each interview lasted for about 30 to 60 minutes.

### FINDINGS: THE VALUE SURVEY

In order to obtain importance youth attach to various values (the preferable end states), the Rokeach list of value scale was used. The RVS divides values into the groups, each part measuring different but complementary types of values(8). The first part consists of 18 terminal values: a comfortable life, an exciting life, a world at peace, equality, freedom, happiness, national security, pleasure, salvation, social recognition, true friendship, wisdom, a world of beauty, family security, mature love, self respect, sense of accomplishment, and inner harmony. The second part is designed to capture relative importance of instrumental values: ambitious, broadminded, capable, cheerful, clean, courageous, forgiving, helpful, honest,

independent, intellectual, logical, loving, obedient, polite, responsible, and self controlled.

The results of the rankings obtained on the ROV are presented in table 1. What are the end states that hold significant preference of the youth? The value preference survey reveals that the top three values considered important are : self respect, personal happiness and true friendship. That is, the youth are driven by the desire of self esteem, contentment and friendship. At the second level, the other values that are also significant for the youth are: accomplishment, freedom and social recognition. All these values signify an internal orientation. The focus appears to be the self. What does this value ranking imply for the marketers? One very powerful implication is that marketers targeting the youth, must portray their products as means to achieving these end states. The products/brands positioning and advertising execution must be done taking these values into account. In the absence of such communication, the brand identification is less likely to occur. The products that are conventionally associated with these end states like liquor, cars, watches, occupation, hotels, restaurants can easily focus on youth market with slight fine tuning of positioning.

Surprisingly, youth do not attach most importance to family security. The other values that were ranked lower are national security, salvation, equality and world at peace. It appears, the youth today are less bothered by 'external' concerns. The focus seem to be on self and immediate social environment. The results on the instrumental values the preferred mode of conduct that being ambitious, independent and responsible is the most important. They tend to be hardworking, aspiring and self

reliant individuals. These are the preferred ways of behaving. The youth attach less importance to being cheerful, courageous, and loving. The other instrumental values that are considered least important are being courteous, well mannered, dutiful and respectful. This appears to be in sync with the popular perception that youth today are not polite and obedient.

Values drive behaviour. The values identification provides vital clues for the development of marketing strategy. For example, one study discovered that people who placed high priority on values like sense of belonging were demographically older, and were more likely to read Reader's Digest and TV guide, drink and entertain more. They also preferred group activities. The people who endorsed the value of excitement were younger and read Rolling Stone magazine(9).

Table-1:  
Terminal and Instrumental Values : Rank Order\* for the Youth

TERMINAL VALUES		INSTRUMENTAL VALUES	
Value	Rank Order	Value	Rank Order
Self Respect	1	Ambition	1
Happiness	2	Independent	2
True Friendship	3	Responsible	3
Wisdom	4	Broad-minded	4
Accomplishment	5	Capable	5
Freedom	6	Intellectual	6
Social Recognition	7	Logical	7
Comfortable Life	8	Honest	8
Exciting Life	9	Cheerful	9
Family Security	10	Courageous	10
Inner Harmony	11	Loving	11
Mature love	12	Helpful	12
Pleasure	13	Self Controlled	13
World at Peace	14	Forgiving	14
Equality	15	Clean	15
World of Beauty	16	Imaginative	16
National Security	17	Polite	17
Salvation	18	Obedient	18

Rank order is based on median values.

Another study(10) which segmented Brazilian people found that a group of customers which was characterised by values Such as self respect, a comfortable life, pleasure, accomplishment and recognition were attracted to ward unconventional clothes, fashion, new products and active life style. Getting an understanding of values in the target market is necessary but not sufficient for effective marketing. Simply portraying the end states in the communication may not move a customer completely into buying of the product or service. Rather a marketer needs to explore the pathways that connect the product attributes to these end states.

#### FINDINGS: THE LADDERING

The hierarchical value map (HVM) depicts the linkages between the product attributes and consumer end values/terminal values. These interconnections are uncovered through laddering technique. It involves making the consumers reveal how product attributes are associated with consequences, instrumental values and terminal values. That is, consumers are helped to climb up the ladder of abstraction revealing the attribute value linkages(11). The following procedure was used in the laddering probes:

- (i) Identification of the product attributes perceived to be important by the respondent. This was done through a process of trading sorting.
- (ii) The development of means-end chain by asking respondents a series of 'why is it important?', questions.
- (iii) The content analysis of means-end chains to get an understanding of elements mentioned by respondents. Then the elements mentioned were

categorised into attributes, consequences and values. See table-2.

- (iv) The development of summary content codes to codify everything that has been mentioned in the interview.
- (v) The summary implication matrix is developed. It displays all summary codes in first column and summary codes of the consequences and values in the first row. Each cell in this matrix denotes how many relations exist between corresponding row and column elements.
- (vi) To construct HVM from the matrix, a cut off is decided. Since the means end chains were based on a sample of 10 in each product case; a cut off of 2 and above was decided. The cells having number 2 or more were identified.

From the summary implication matrix, the hierarchical value maps (HVMs) for the products under consideration were developed. These HVMs are shown in figure 1,2,3 and 4. As can be seen that cigarette HVM is built on only five product attributes instead of seven given in the original list. Two attributes: smooth flavour and low price do not make it to the map because they do not lead to higher level of abstraction. The longest chain connects the attribute long cigarette with the value belonging through a series of connections (long cigarette-can smoke more- help relax-socialise-belonging) . The other value to which the long cigarette attribute is connected with is self esteem through in between consequences of looks good and impress others. The other important chain is between attribute filter and sincerity to work. Overall these attributes are related to five important terminal values: self-esteem,



Table 2: Summary Content Codes : Elements used to Represent Responses Elicited

CIGARETTES	MOTORCYCLES	SUNGLASSES	SANITARY NAPKINS
ATTRIBUTES	ATTRIBUTES	ATTRIBUTES	ATTRIBUTES
1. LONG CIGARETTE	1. HIGH ENGINE CAPACITY	1. UV PROTECTION	1. DRY SHIELD
2. MILD	2. 4-STROKE	2. LIGHT WEIGHT	2. ABSORBENT
3. FILTER	3. SLEEK DESIGN	3. SUBTLE BRANDING	3. PLASTIC SHIELD
4. SMOOTH FLAVOUR	4. INEXPENSIVE	4. STYLISH DESIGN	4. SPECIAL SHAPE
5. EASILY AVAILABLE	5. SILENT ENGINE DESIGN	5. STRONG MATERIAL	5. STICK ON
6. MENTHOL	6. TRADITIONAL DESIGN	6. EXPENSIVE	6. BELT
7. LOW PRICE	7. DARK COLOURS	7. COMFORT ORIENTED STYLING	7. EXPENSIVE
		8. VISIBLE BRANDING	8. SMALL PACKET(10)
		9. SCRATCH PROOF LENSES	
<b>CONSEQUENCES</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCES</b>		<b>CONSEQUENCES</b>
8. RELAXING	9. POWER		9. NO WET FEELING
9. CAN SMOKE MORE	9. HIGH MILEAGE		10. COMFORTABLE
10. REFRESHING	10. LOWER FUEL EXPENSES	<b>CONSEQUENCES</b>	11. CARRY ON NORMAL WORK
11. ENJOY THE SMOKE	11. MODERN IMAGE	10. SAVE FROM SCRATCHES	12. ENJOY THE DAY
12. LESS INJURIOUS	12. BUY OTHER THINGS	11. PROTECT EYES	13. CHANGE LESS FREQUENTLY
13. AVOID PAIN	13. VALUE FOR MONEY	12. HEALTHY	14. AVOID CARRYING EXTRA NAPKIN
14. CONCENTRATE ON WORK	14. DISLIKE WASTING MONEY	13. COMFORTABLE	15. AVOID EMBARRASSMENT
15. SMOKE WHEN I WANT	15. HIGH SPEEDS	14. WEAR REGULARLY	16. AVOID FEELING INFERIOR
16. AVOID TOBACCO IN MOUTH IT LOOK GOOD	16. GET A THRILL	15. MAKE GOOD IMPRESSION	17. PREVENT STAINS
18. NICE TASTE	17. BETTER PERFORMANCE	16. LOOK GOOD	18. AVOID WASHING
19. IMPRESS OTHERS	18. KEEP COMMITMENTS	17. FEEL CONFIDENT	19. DOESN'T BEND
20. FEMININE	19. DO WELL	18. LAST LONGER	20. EASIER TO USE
21. SOCIALISE	20. SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE	19. NOT WASTE MONEY	21. MINIMISE CONTRACT
22. DOING MY WORK WELL	21. SOPHISTICATED IMAGE	20. QUALITY	22. DONT WANT TO BE REMINDED
	22. IMPRESS OTHERS	21. SOPHISTICATED IMAGE	23. QUALITY
	23. QUALITY	22. DO WELL	24. HEALTHY
<b>VALUE</b>	24. TRAVEL FREELY		25. HOLD NAPKIN IN PLACE
23. ENJOY LIFE		<b>VALUE</b>	26. NAPKINS STAY FRESH
24. ACCOMPLISHMENT	<b>VALUE</b>	23. ENJOY LIFE	27. CAN CONCENTRATE ON WORK
25. PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE	25. SELF ESTEEM	24. SELF ESTEEM	28. DO MY WORK WELL
26. SINCERITY	26. ACHIEVEMENT	25. RESPONSIBILITY TO FAMILY	
27. BELONGING	27. RESPONSIBILITY TO FAMILY	26. ACCOMPLISHMENT	<b>VALUE</b>
28. SELF ESTEEM	28. BELONGING		29. ENJOY LIFE
	29. SINCERITY		30. SELF ESTEEM
	30. FREEDOM		31. ACCOMPLISHMENT
	31. ENJOY LIFE		

belonging, accomplishment, sincerity to work and enjoying life. Some cigarette brands do seem to position their products as means to the end states identified in the study. For example, Wills tries to take the prospects to 'enjoyment' through made for each other' slogans (implying perfect blending). The Four Square tried to connect with the self esteem state through 'live life king size' headline. All time favourite campaign of Marlboro depicting cowboy and western setting aims to serve belonging needs. The focus of many brands such as

Chancellor Haward luxury ('An experience in luxury'), Rothmans ('Best tobacco money can buy') and India kings is on accomplishment and self esteem blended together.

The HVM depicting the means end chain for motorcycle is given in figure- 2. It is based on six product attributes - bike design, engine design, colour, inexpensive, four stroke, and engine capacity. The attributes move up to six values in the customers' mind: belonging, self esteem, responsibility



**hierarchical Value Map of the Cigarette Category**

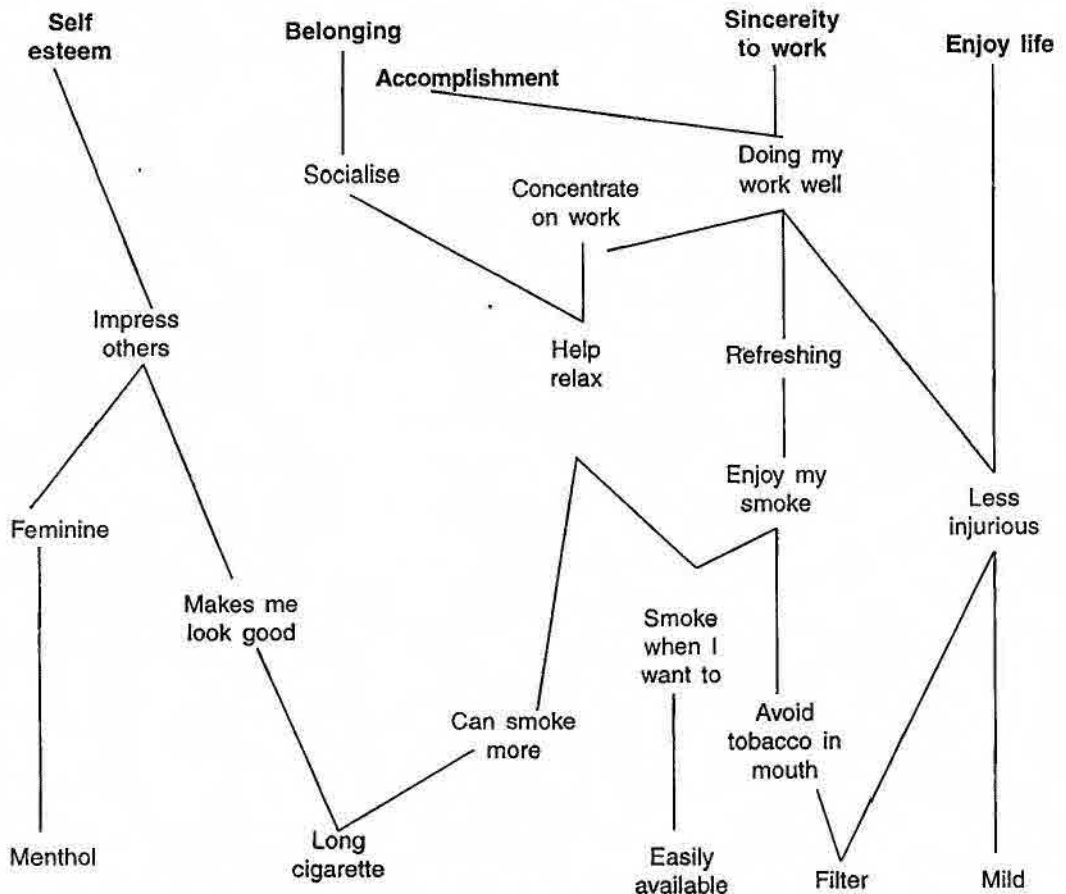


Fig. 1: This HVM represent 87.3% of the relations mentioned by the ten respondents.

to the family, freedom, achievement and enjoyment. The chain between the four stroke and- achievement is the longest. The consequence- impressing others is important which is based on three product attributes (bike design, engine design, colour) and ultimate get connected to the belonging and self esteem values.

The hierarchical value map for sunglasses is built on seven product attributes. These seven attributes lead to four values through

a network of consequences and instrumental values in between. The values driving the buying of sunglasses are accomplishment, enjoyment of life, self esteem and responsibility to family. The chain lightweight - comfortable- wear regularly- protects eyes- stay healthy - enjoy life, is the longest. Two attributes could not make it to the x map are visible branding and comfort alienated styling. All the values extracted through laddering interviews, however could make it to the map. As is evident, 'protects

eyes' is an important consequence which is related to three product attributes. The sunglass brand Raybon does seem to focus on the values- self esteem, enjoyment, and accomplishment- starting with the product attribute U/V protection, light weight, expensive and design. The HVM reveals a very close depiction to what has been

practised by Bausch and Lomb.

In case of sanitary napkins the HVM turned out to be the most complex. It is based on eight product attributes. These attributes are linked to a set of three terminal values. The young customers attach importance to end state of life enjoyment, self esteem and

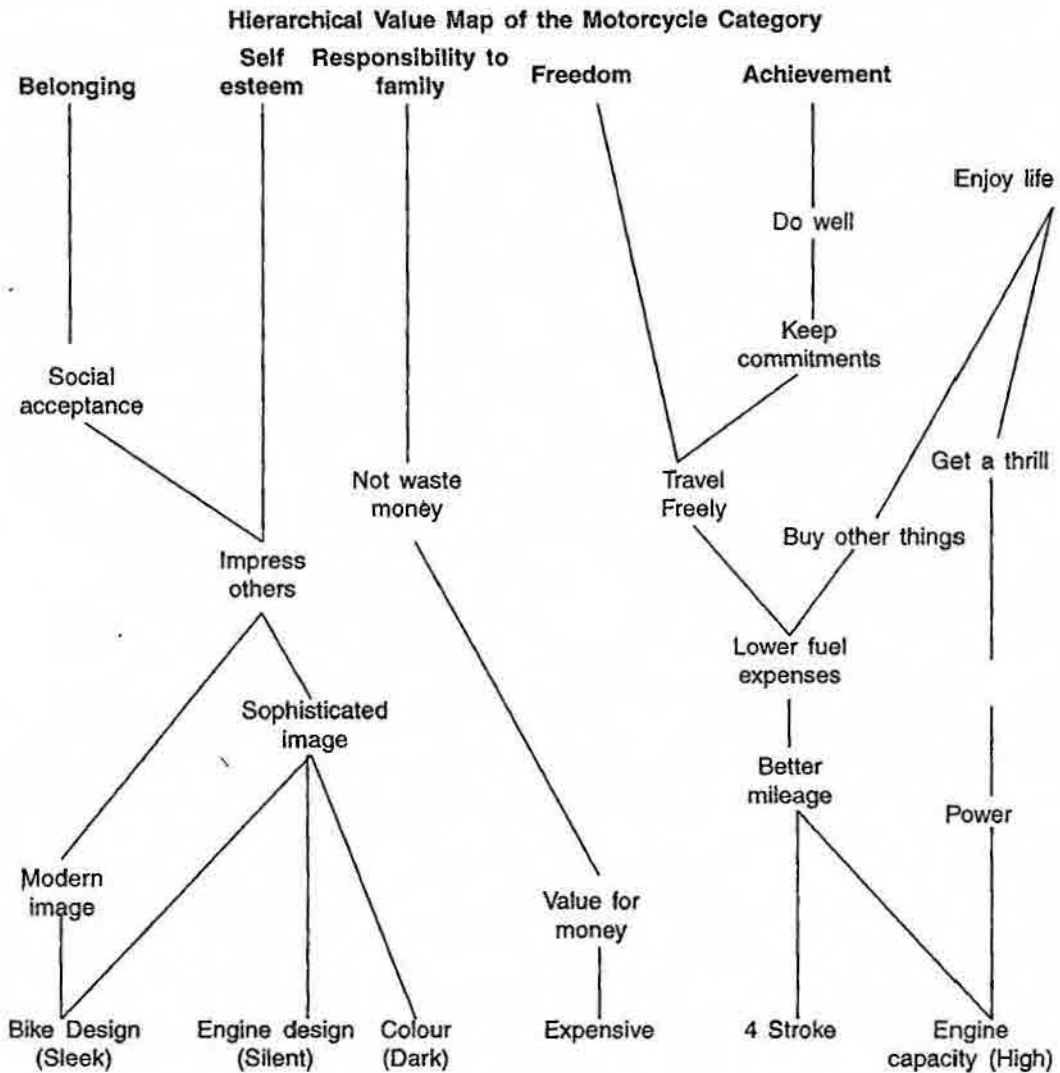


Fig.2 This represents 89% of the relations mentioned by the ten respondents.

Hierarchical Value Map of the Sunglasses Category

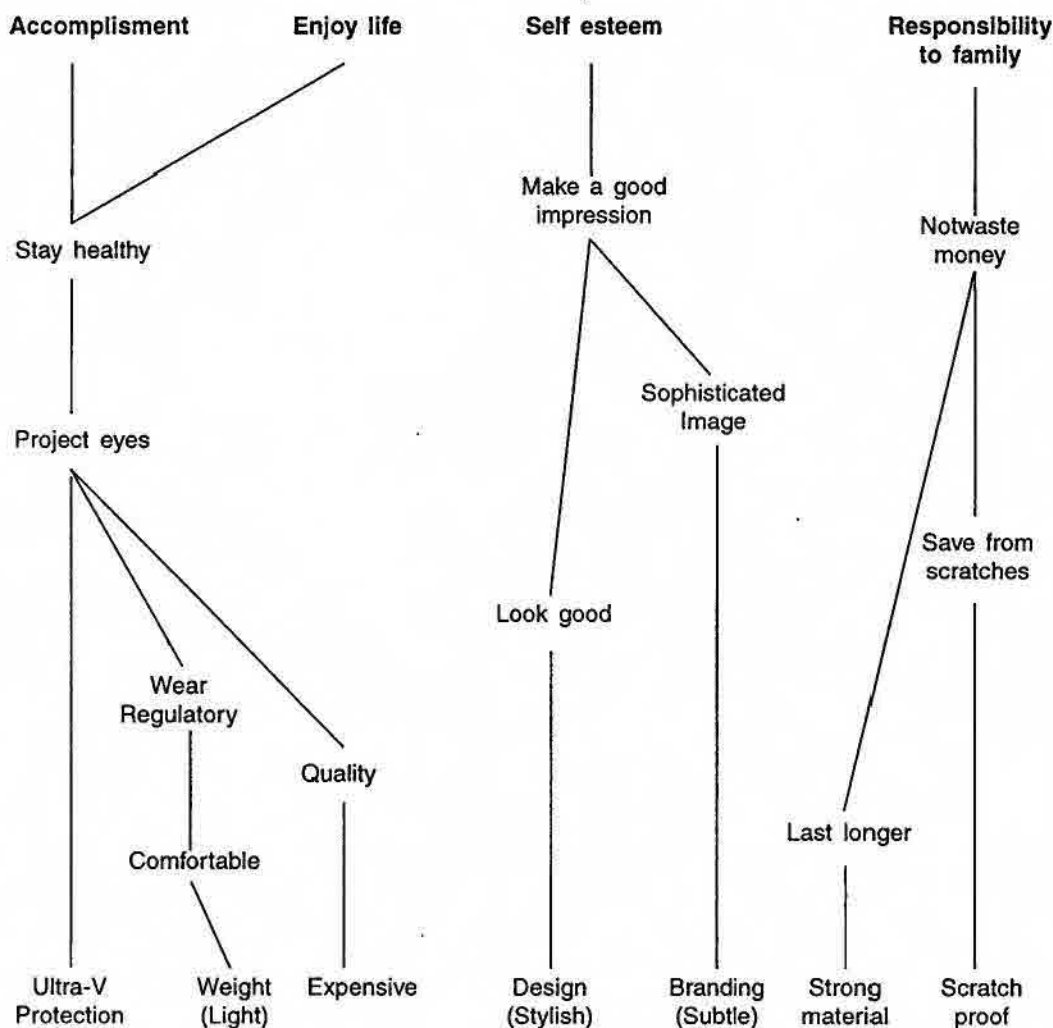


Fig. 3 This HVM represents 89.4% of the relations mentioned by the ten respondents.

accomplishment. The longest chain is discovered to be between attribute absorbent and value self esteem. Remarkably is this HVM, all the product attributes, consequences and values mentioned by the subjects have made it to HVM. 'Preventing stain' is an important consequences, related to five attributes. A

casual scanning of advertisements of various brands of sanitary napkins does reveal close connections between what is portrayed and what has been found in the study. For instance, brands like Whisper and Stayfree Silky Dry focus on consequence 'removal of tension' leading to a desirable state of enjoyment of life. Whisper owes its success



Hierarchical Value Map of Sanitary Napkin Category

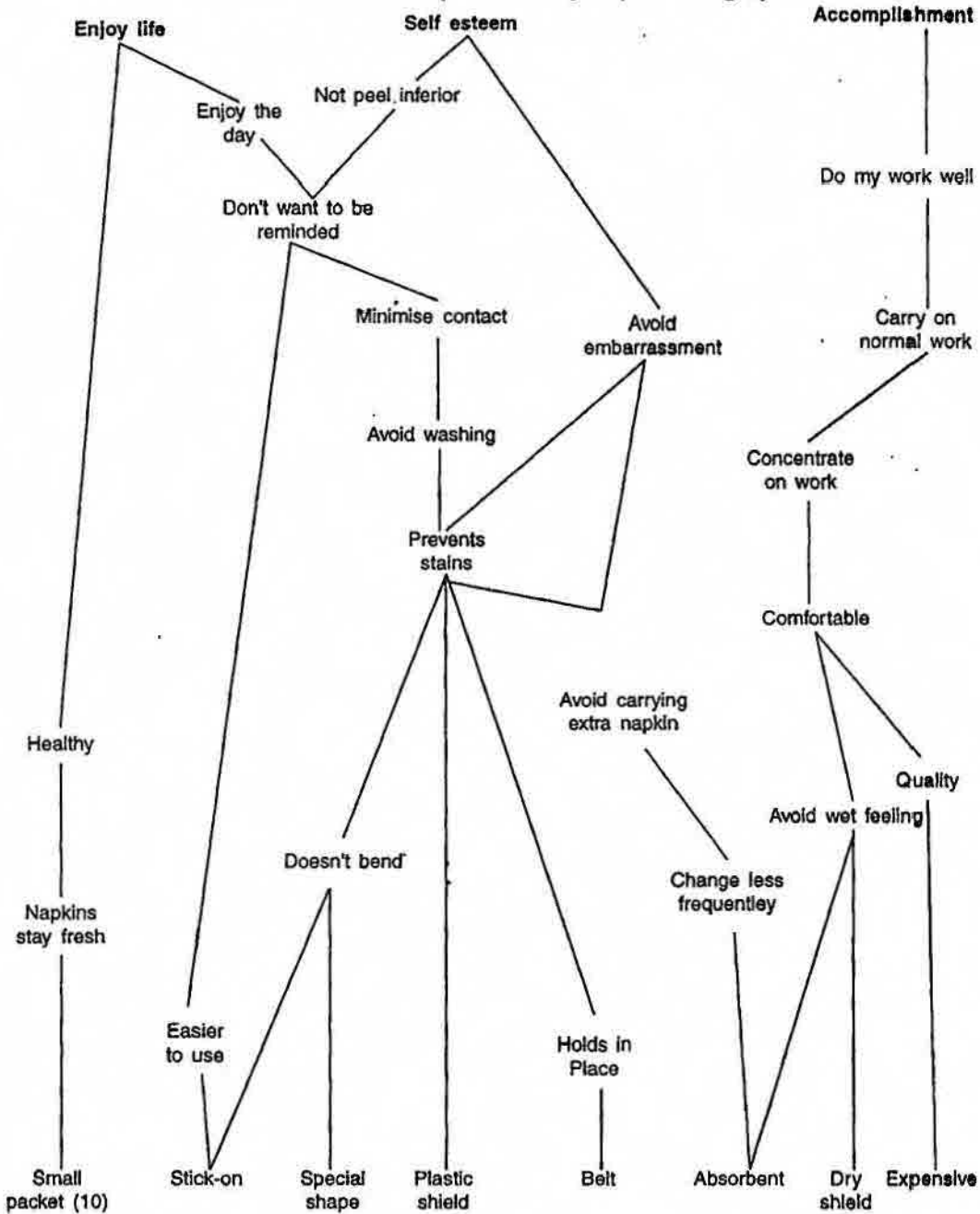


Fig. 4 This HVM represents 90.4% of the relations mentioned by the ten respondents.

to carefully crafted commercial in which they showed 'accomplished' persons (e.g. Renuka Shahane) talking straight to the audience. In their conversation, the spokesperson related how feature 'dry weave' led to dry sensation - comfortable-not reminded of-concentrate on work-carry on work well - accomplishment chain.

## APPLICATIONS

Sometimes marketers fall victim to the dichotomy of view points. For marketers the product and its attributes are important. Hence they draw the most attention. But for customers attributes are not significant. For them their end states or values are important. Consumers are drawn to the product not because of product attributes perse, rather how these attributes help them reach the states of existence which they prefer. For instance a tooth paste with attribute 'Fluoride' has no significance unless its consequence is revealed (fights cavity- protects teeth) and how it leads to some state which he/she values (health and enjoyment). Unless this connection is made clear, the product is less likely to be perceived meaningful by the prospects. The level of abstraction framework which underlies the formation of means-end chain provides a basis for coordinating the realities of laddering to segmentation strategy development. The elements and their interlinkages can become a sound basis for developing strategy which will appeal to consumers with that orientation toward the product class. In an HVM, each pathway from an attribute to value represents a possible perceptual orientation with respect to viewing the product category. Herein lies an opportunity to differentiate a brand not by focussing on the product attribute rather by communicating how it delivers higher level consequences. For example, a motorcycle may take the path of inexpensive- value for

money- not waste money- responsible behaviour, to appeal customers with 'responsible to family' value orientation. While the other marketer may take the route of engine capacity- power-high speeds- get a thrill - route to appeal to people with 'enjoyment' orientation. One of the major headaches for the marketers in contemporary environment is emerging product parity. Brands in a product category come very close to each other in terms of their attributes. The creation and holding of real differentiation is a thing of past. In such a situation differentiation based on attributes 'has become near Even a marketer attempts to build its differentiation on a basis of an attribute (e.g. Pepsodent-Germs check- keeps working even after brushing) the competitors call easily destiny the same by cloning the strategy (e.g. Colgate Total- fights germs between two brushings). In such a situation HVM can provide insight into the positioning of brands along value pathways stemming from same attribute. The differentiation based on attribute- value pathway tends to be stronger and more difficult for customers to copy. For instance, 4 stroke attribute may lead to two distinct values following different paths: (i) 4 stroke-full economy-saves money-spend on other things- happy family-contentment; (ii) 4 stroke- full optimum use low emission- greener environment- In harmony with nature. Thus unique positioning opportunity could be found by plotting attribute-value pathways.

Finally, the results obtained through laddering could be used in the development of advertising strategy that really works. Many elements which form integral part of the advertising can be identified through HVMs: the message elements (specific feature or attribute to be shown); consumer benefit (the resultant consequence of

attribute); exceptional framework (the style and tone of advertisement); leverage point (how message will activate terminal value by connecting it with attribute); and the draining force (the terminal value on which the advertising will focus)(12) One such illustration of advertisement based on A-C-V is that of Surf Excel with Active Oxygen effective for dried stains- no- tension- carefree- enjoyment). The advertisement triggers these connections following the slice of life 'user net door execution style.

### CONCLUDING REMARK

Marketers need explanation as to why do consumers behave the way they do? Value research has demonstrated that - values are guiding force behind all consumer actions. Consumers tend to have some preferred end states of existence and modes of conduct. These end states of existence influence buying criteria the consumers use to evaluate products and brands. This study was, conducted in order to explore the values held important by the youth consumers. The method used to obtain the ranking was RVS. The other part of the study focused on micro aspect of value research. The attempt was made to uncover the attribute- consequence- value inter connections in four product categories. Accordingly four HVMs were generated using means- end methodology. These HVMs portray how various product attributes form different pathways to the end values held by the consumers. The attributes value path ways are extremely useful in market segmentation, product development, advertising execution and positioning decisions of marketing strategy.

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