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PHILOSOPHICAL EVOLUTION OF BRANDS AND ITS EFFECTS ON CONSUMERS OF RURAL INDIA

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ABSTRACT

'We are what we buy' is a phrase that's gaining currency in smart marketing circles. It is an oversimplification, of course, and can be attacked as such by those who recoil at the suggestion that the human sense of self can be reduced to the question of whether you happen to favour 'Nike' or 'Adidas'. In the end, we are what we are and we have many ways of affirming this to ourselves and communicating it to others. Some of these are subtle; some are obvious. But that one of these ways is through brand choke is not in doubt. Much is known about the role of consumption in personal identity, virtually all of it due to the theory and research generated by social and marketing academics from the mid-1960s onwards. The buying process of an individual consumer is explained through the different theory and models of Consumer Buying Behaviour under the scope of Marketing Management. This paper aims to discuss the imprint of Branded products on the consumer behaviour especially of the rural consumers of India through the review model by the chronological evolution of Branding philosophy

KEYWORDS: Brand Philosophy, Brand effects, consumer behaviour, rural consumers, Marketing Management

1. INTRODUCTION

Product is ultimately known by the name given to it, but according to the theory in the maturation and at the growth point this product name converts into the Brand in the mind-sets of the consumers. Generating of Brand not only increase the image of the company but also of the products or services thorough value generation and the perceptions of the consumers. At the end of consumer buying process consumer himself or herself confirm his or her choices, preferences, likes and dislikes of the products or services consume by them. Some of them are positive and also rationale one, some of them have negative views from the consumers, therefore Marketing has developed the models of consumer buying behaviour and contributing the separate theory of consumer psychology which assists the marketers to understand the behavioural norms and personal identity. This is precisely the kind of research that practitioners never commission, since the subject matter is too broad to justify

the investment by those whose focus tends to be at the level of a single brand. Yet it could have a surprisingly profound effect on the way brands are marketed. The fate of the academic literature, in respect of its use by practitioners, has followed the typical path: ignored for decades and then seized upon by a few looking for new ways to think about brands. Today it tends to pop up in the epigrammatic form on PowerPoint charts to illustrate the shift in the social role of brands from that of signalling status to that of signalling affinity. The theory deserves a little more engagement than that and we shall seek to do it justice here.

Key to the flow of reasoning is the concept of 'self'. Socrates' admonition to 'know thyself' dates back to three centuries BC, yet for almost the entire intervening period the freedom to 'be thyself' — Maslow's nirvana of self-actualization — has been a privilege denied to all but a few (Maslow, 2002). Even in Western societies, even until as recently as the 1960s, what a person really was at heart would be buried beneath the welter of circumstance. As Giddens illustrates in *Modernity and Self-identity* (1991), the self was bounded by birth, location, occupation and social class. The rigid social stratification of medieval times that divided the populace into noblemen, knights, yeomen, freemen, labourers, cottagers and paupers had disappeared in name but continued in spirit. Well into the 20th century, to be a farmhand or craftsman or shop-girl or teacher or clerk — or simply to be a person in your 40s or 50s implied the acceptance of distinct codes of behaviour, dress and speech, deviation from which would be considered eccentric, at charitable best. For most of history, to know yourself was, in large part, simply to know your place.

This changed during the period social academics call the 'post-modern era'. Bauman (2000) and Featherstone (1992), among others, showed how the dismantling of the barriers of social class since the 1970s created a new freedom: the freedom of individuals to express who they really were, and to vary that expression over time, rather than accept the stable social roles society had hitherto mandated.

Like all new freedoms, this one posed dilemma and came at a price. The price was the increasing fragmentation of society and the loss of certainty and comfort that the more structured the world had ensured. The dilemmas were of a nature that had scarcely before troubled the individual within society. Giddens reduced it to three reflexive questions: 'What to do? How to act? Who to be?' The way that individuals went about answering these questions came to be known as 'the project of self' and has been the subject of intense scrutiny ever since. It is summarized by Thompson (1990) as the process by which a person actively constructs an identity out of 'the available symbolic resources in order to weave a coherent account of who she or he is'. The 'available symbolic resources' include brands. They include, of course, famously symbolic brands like Harley, Apple and Saab, with their redolent power to assert and project the inner spirits of their owners. But they also include, at least potentially, and much more surprisingly, everyday brands in everyday categories, the kinds of brands that get tucked away inside cupboards in bathrooms and kitchens and garages. The point is that there is more to the

link between brands and personal identity than badge values, and it is perhaps the tendency of marketing professionals to conflate the two that inhibits the potential of mainstream marketing. It's not just a question of 'What does this brand say about me to others?' Just as important is 'What does this brand say about me — to me?' As Fournier (1998) and Elliott (Elliott et al., 1995, Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998) have shown, brand choice, in areas as private as cooking and cleaning, is as much to do with fit as it is with function; the brand has to feel right as 'a part of me'.

More recent research conducted by one of the authors in conjunction with London Business School and Warwick Business School endorses the important role of everyday brands in self-affirmation. The chosen methodology is one of the most illuminating in the pantheon of qualitative brand research: a deprivation study. For those unfamiliar with this kind of research, the technique is simply described: find people who are fiercely loyal to a brand and then, with their (albeit reluctant) consent, take it away from them.

2. Evolution of Traditional notions to contemporary ideology of Branding – A chronological Review

Stage: 1 Socrates' admonition to '**know thyself**' back to three centuries BC

Stage: 2 The rigid social stratification of medieval times

Stage: 3 simply to be a person in the 40s or 50s implied for most of history, to know yourself was, in large part, simply to know your place.

Stage: 4 Godden's illustrates in Modernity and Self-identity (1991),

Stage: 5 Maslow's nirvana of self-actualization welter of circumstance (2002)

Stage: 6 Bauman (2000) and Featherstone (1992) 1970s created a new freedom: the freedom of individuals to express

Stage: 7 Godden's reduced it to three reflexive questions: 'What to do? How to act? Who to be?' - The increasing fragmentation of society

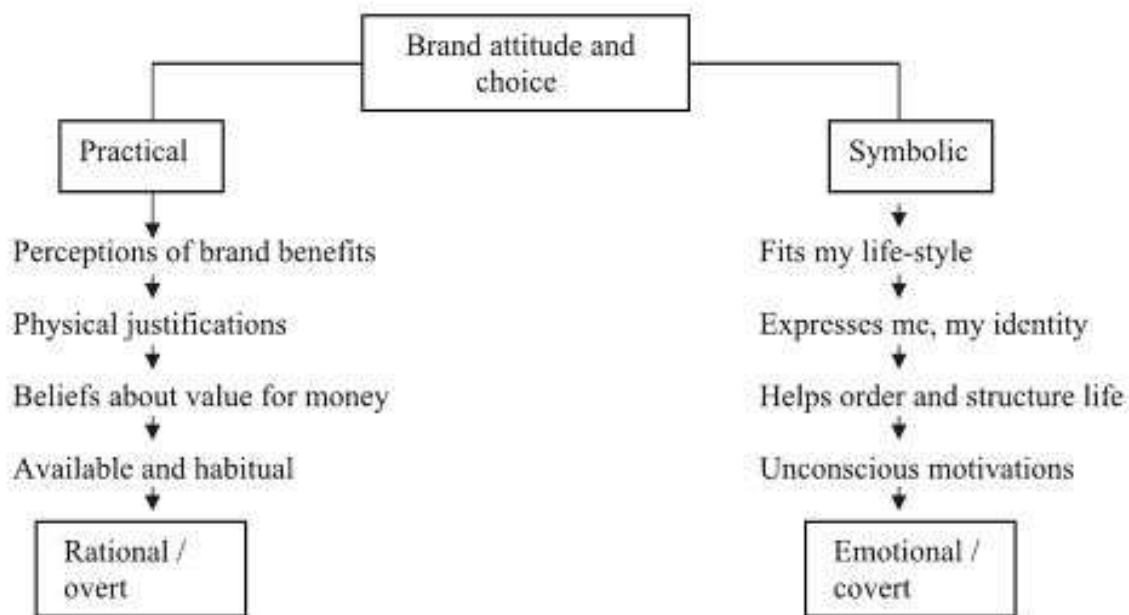
Stage: 8 Thompson (1990) 'the available symbolic resources in order to weave a coherent account of who she or he is'. The 'available symbolic resources' include brands.

Stage : 9 What does this brand say about me to others?' Just as important is 'What does this brand say about me — to me?' As Fournier (1998) and Elliott (Elliott et al., 1995, Elliott and Wattanasuwan, (1998)

Stage: 10 London Business School and Warwick Business School endorses the important role of everyday brands in self-affirmation.

The above ideology regarding branding and self concept theory had different phase of their respective development but among them the following is the most common phase of Branding which had affected more to the consumers to the individual while consuming goods or services especially for the rural consmers who are very price sensitive in nature.

Review of Practical and Symbolic nature of the Consumer



3. Impact of Brands on Consumer Behaviour – Discussion and implications of the study

Kulkarni Preeti M., (2011) study aimed to understand the rural consumer needs of detergent powder. The researcher found that most consumption brand of detergent as Nirma powder. The consumer brand selection depends upon their needs like their use of detergent powder for Utensil cleaners, Toilet cleaners, Floor cleaners and purpose of clothes washing. **Amarnath B. and Vijayudu (2009)** said that brand awareness in rural areas particularly in respect of beauty care and health care products is increasing. People are not worried about the price of the product. Customers are showing a willingness to spend a higher price when they realize that they can afford to spend. Researchers suggested that there is ample scope for such products to capture the markets in this area by increasing the supply of these products. **Muartan Koel (1994)** found that the problem of buying behaviour includes the selection of a supplier, a brand or a product and materialization of the choice. He suggested that relationship with suppliers of agro-inputs also affected to farmer's buying decision. **Ritesh Sud and Pritesh Y. Chothani (2006)** studied that there has been a significant rise in brand awareness among the people in the rural markets. As a result, they are becoming choosier and demanding than ever before, so any company has to properly analyze the psychographics factors before entering this market. Studies indicate that there has been a visible shift in people's preference for brands. People are upgrading from the use of tooth powders to toothpastes, and from using traditional mosquito repellents to using mats and coils. Also, there is a shift from low priced brands to semi-premium brands. In a

research study undertaken by **Kambiz Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, Sara Ghafelehbashi (2012)** which aimed at examination of Counterfeit Branded Products (CBP) & Consumer Behaviour with a focus on the effects of product knowledge, product involvement, and consumers' perceptions of CBP as well as the interaction between these variables and consumer purchase intention of counterfeit branded products (CBP). Their finding indicated a negative relationship between product knowledge and consumers' perceptions of CBP mediated the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention of CBP was mediated by consumer's perception of counterfeit branded products. Product involvement moderated the relationship between Consumer's Perceptions of counterfeit branded products and purchase intention of CBP. **Anand & Hundal, B.S. (2007)** examined the comparative behaviour of rural and urban counterparts towards the purchase of refrigerator. The factors considered by them are social status, advertising influence, brand reputation, and income. **Pakola et al. (2004)** surveyed 397 Finish consumer-purchasing motives on one hand and factors affecting operator choice on the other. The result indicates that while price and properties were the most influential factors affecting the purchase of a new mobile phone, price, audibility and friend's operators were regarded as the most important in the choice of the mobile phone operator. **Surender (2004)** researched to evaluate the impact of advertising on both rural and urban consumers, in terms of improving the sales of products and the living standards of consumers, to analyse the differences between rural and urban consumers. The study examined different media habits of the rural and urban consumers concerning the purchase of the selected Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), and also examined the effectiveness and usefulness of advertising to the society in general, and the rural consumers in particular. Further, the study suggested measures for the effective use of advertisement in rural India. **Kashyap Pradeep and Raut Siddharth (2008)** believe that the rural market is different as to urban counterpart in terms of dynamics to the marketing mix and also from the viewpoint of consumer behaviour and mind-sets. The decision of rural consumer for consumer durables requires great involvement and highly influenced by the opinion leaders, reference group, and others. Having consumer durable is believed to be a status in the society rather than utility and value addition. Rural consumer's taste for the product aesthetics and other out part is very basic and bold. Rural consumer's expectations are to be studied at a regular interval of time which makes the precision of various marketing mix. No of variables are affecting rural consumer behaviour which includes culture, subculture, locality, social class, custom, role and status and type family, sociability and influence of the technology etc. **Gupta, Agarwal and Sinha (2008)** explained that in India there have been almost forty-two thousand sales units. The average number of sales units per hectare is three hundred, standard trade per unit is INR 900 and the average number of shoppers entering the mall (footfall) is approximately four thousand five hundred. As the potential of the rural markets is getting increased it makes the retailers shift their market from the cities to the rural areas. It is also said that the industries should concentrate on the purchasing ability of the customers instead of their residential location. **Hundal (2001)** conducted a study in rural areas of Punjab region to examine rural

consumer's buying behaviour towards durable goods. He found out that rural consumers consider durables as necessity product and they buy durables for entertainment and comfort purpose. **Chandra Sekhar (2012)** studied buying behaviour of rural consumers with regard to FMCG products and examined that rural consumers have become the prime target market for consumer durable and non-durable products, food, construction, electrical, electronics, automobiles, banks, insurance companies and other sectors besides hundred per cent of Agri-input products such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and farm machinery. **Peter and Olson (1994)** define 'lifestyle' as 'how people conduct their lives, including activities, interests, and opinions'. Activities are manifest actions (work, hobbies, social events, vacation, entertainment, clubs, community, shopping, sports, etc.). Interest in some objects, events or topics (family, home, job, community, recreation, fashion, food, media, achievements, etc.) is the degree of excitement that accompanies both special and continuing attention to it. **Bishnoi Vinodkumar and Bharti (2008)** conducted a study on the awareness and consumption pattern of rural consumers towards home and personal care products. The study, on the one hand, has broken many old beliefs regarding rural market whereas it upheld many others. Contrary to the belief that only rich and well-educated consumers utilize the top national brands but even low-income level consumers were found to be absorbing such brands. Researchers found that consumers were well exposed to different media primarily to the television and newspapers and younger rural consumers were found more variety seeking in comparison to their older counterparts. **AliMd. Abbas et. al, (2012)** focused on understanding factors that affect the rural purchase of FMCG in South India. Researchers revealed that the rural customers (along with price) also think about quality, performance, reliability, brand and other critical aspects. It is recommended to promote FMCG in lines of rationality rather than just making low price appeals. **Kumar Pardeep (2013)** discussed that the biggest challenge today is to develop a scalable model of influencing the rural customer mind over a large period and keep it going. Traditional urban marketing strategies will have to be localized as per the demands of the rural markets. It has to reach out to rural consumers and relate to them at an appropriate level so that it can bring about the desired behavioural change. Government support is necessary for the development of the rural market in India to face the emerging issues and challenges in the core areas like; transportation, communication, roads, and credit institutions, crop insurance for better utilization of land and water management. **Sheetal Singla (2010)** conducted an exploratory research study with an aim to investigate & understand the behaviour of consumers of mobile phones in Ludhiana district & the Sangrur district and further capture their satisfaction level that is influenced by various technical & non-technical factors. Respondents were asked to rate 5 mobile phone motivators (Price, Quality, style, functions, Brand,) by using Stratified Random Sampling method to collect data from 500 respondents from Ludhiana and Angrur Districts, which includes rural & urban samples. The study concluded that while price & features are the most influential factors affecting the purchase of a new mobile phone, its audibility, network accessibility, are also regarded as very important in the choice of the mobile phones. The study has also concluded that 57 per cent of the

male has given importance to Quality of mobiles followed by price, features, Brand & style of mobiles. **Barry L. Bayus (1991)** studied “The consumer durable replacement buyer”, and found that replacements account for a substantial portion of the sale of consumer durables in the U S. Results of replacement of automobiles indicate that “early” replacement buyers are more concerned with styling and image and less concerned with costs than “late” replacement buyers. Moreover, early replacements have higher income but lower levels of academic achievement and occupational status than late replacement. **Bhawaniprasad and Kumari (1987)** have analysed “Impact of advertising on consumer durables markets: A study of Refrigerator consumer”, in this study a ranking/importance of refrigerator among other consumer durables is studied. Study of 200 owners of Allwyn refrigerator in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad and Districts of Nizamabad and Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh indicates that a very positive impact of advertising is found on the consumer durables market. **Behura K.C. and Pandapaper J.K. (2012)** studied that the rural marketing of FMCG companies in India and indicating the rural marketing through changing the penetration level, growth, globalization, communication and development achieved consumer in rural areas. Owing to the lack of education and knowledge about brand rural consumers are those purchased the things in the local shop, mandi bazar, Kirana store etc. The study concluded that huge potential and there is a lot of money in rural India but the smart thing would be to weigh in the roadblocks as carefully as possible. **Yuvarani R. (2013)** studied that post-purchase behaviour on the rural consumer of India. Extensively Indian economy is one of the fastest-growing economies of the world hence all the organizations are interested in entering India and in particular Indian rural sector. The study concluded that adequacy of awareness of the brands, images, loyalty and quality of the product is important for rural consumers. **Palanisamy Navaneethan, et al. (2011)** studied to measure the nutritional status of children in the rural area of Tamilnadu and calculated BMI (Body Mass Index) of children of age in between 11–19-year-old those whose were taken mid-day meal at primary school. An article analyzed that student’s age, gender and parent’s occupations significantly affects their BMI. The implication was that malnutrition is reduced by providing hygienic food in mid-day meal scheme and also by improving social and economic environment region. **Kaur P, et al. (2011)** aimed to study prevalence of behavioural risk factors, overweight and central obesity in rural population and using Body Mass Index and concluded as high prevalence of behavioural risk factor, and there is need of health promotion program in improving quality of lifestyle and social environment in rural population. **Prasad Kotni V V Devi (2012)** concluded in the study that in rural markets, customs and beliefs play a crucial role in success or failure of any product and so, every marketer has to focus on rural markets beyond urban markets also. The role of governments is to improve infrastructure, effective implementation of laws, rules and regulations and protect the interest of the rural consumer. **Gupta Vivek, et al. (2010)** studied the rural, urban and urban-slum patterns of tobacco consumption and using cross-sectional study method. The paper indicated it was clear that tobacco control policy in India is not geared adequately towards addressing the issue and there was a need to

modify it. **Quazi SZ, et al. (2010)** conducted a study to find out the profile of clients attending an Integrated Counseling and Testing Centre, and at private rural hospitals to encourage people from such areas can access services to establish their HIV status in Wardha district of India. The study concluded that ICTCs at private rural environment should be encouraged and supported by outreach components so that all HIV positive patients can be followed up and linked to the care, support and treatment programs. **Singh S. N, et al. (2010)** showed that control strategies for a PV-DG hybrid energy system for a remote village in the Jharkhand state of India. The paper identifies that a fuzzy logic controller optimizes the running time of DG and has resulted in less consumption of fuel thus reducing the cost of electricity and also reduces pollution. **Borazjani F, et al. (2011)** found the effect of maternal dietary intake and also socio-economic status on outcomes of pregnancy conducted at Pune of Maharashtra. The study revealed that the maternal fish, saturated oil and milk intake significantly and positively contributed to birth biometrical parameters and while unsaturated oil intake was negatively correlated, although the birth size was influenced by maternal income-educational status. **Majra JP and Gur A (2010)** carried out a study to find out the status of the school environment and sanitation in rural India. The study concluded that environment and sanitation facilities at many of the schools are not fully adequate so that advocating of good sanitation practices in the community, it needed to provide them with a healthy school environment. **Megdadi Younes A. A. and Nusair Talal Taher (2011)** conducted a study of the shopping consumer attitudes toward mobile marketing in Jordan. The study found that possible significant impacts of mobile phone technology developments on marketing and offers insights into mobile commerce and mobile marketing. Mobile phone users have a positive attitude towards mobile advertising, entertainment, discount coupons and mobile marketing excepting mobile shopping, yet demographics characteristics and prices were influencing factor on the mobile marketing adoption rate.

CONCLUSION

The effects of Brands are different according to the different psychic notions of an individual consumer. Moreover, some external stimuli which is proved extremely beneficial to them. The behavioural segment of Rural India is totally different from the perspective of the buying influences and the buying habits. Since brands have played signnifiacant role to convince their minds to buy and to behave accordingly, so Brands are not only a mission or vision of a Marketer to convince but it is the ultimate solution of the consumers problems towards their products and services with the help of modern Marketing Philosophy.

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