CHAPTER-6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The final chapter presents a synoptic view of the study, followed by summary of the key findings, conclusions and suggestions. This chapter also highlights the reasons which have limited the scope of the study. Based on the conclusions and discussions, inferences have been drawn pointing the extent of self-brand connection among adolescent consumers, leading to suggesting some strategies for the marketers so as to encourage them and proposing a policy mechanism using self-brand connection in order to develop positive attitude and high product involvement especially among adolescents.

6.1 SYNOPTIC VIEW

The dawn of new century has seen India rising as one of the largest markets for products and services. Commercial organisations have started recognizing that their actual worth lies not in production and distribution, but beyond it i.e., in the minds of prospective buyers. Thus, the marketers have started giving due relevance to brands and the equity they generate in the market and in consumer minds. Not only this the marketers have started extensively using an interactive two-way communication between companies and consumers (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Li & Bernoff, 2011) thereby creating a connection with them especially the adolescent consumers.

With such changes, India has turned out to be one of the most promising and increasingly growing economies. Therefore in such a scenario, the marketers are intensely putting efforts to create brand connectivity among the adolescent consumers. It is so due to the fact that adolescents are seen as “hyper-consumers” (Chaplin & John, 2005b) in the majority of the markets. They are defining their identity and preferences concerning various products (John, 1999), as a result the marketers have shown an increased interest in the behaviour of young consumers (Grant, 2004). The present-day researchers articulate that children constitute a key consumer market, since they not only have direct purchasing power for food and drinks but also indirect purchase influence on adult buyers when shopping for big items (Halan, 2002; Singh, 1998). They are well informed as well
as are far better than their parents in terms of market information. This is due to an increased exposure to TV commercials, banner ads, billboards, logos, and product promotions.

Brands have a strong positive impact on buying behaviour of adolescents due to an increased awareness and greater consciousness for branded products to show off their personality traits. It is not incorrect to say that brand image is playing a crucial role to change the people’s buying behaviour, thereby suggesting that companies that are targeting them should focus more on developing their brand image because it has been found that most of the adolescents are influenced by it (Contractor, 2016). Brands play a crucial role to boost up any business performance as brand image is an implied tool which can absolutely revolutionize people’s buying behaviours. They are one of the most valuable intangible assets that firms have and serve several other valuable functions. At their most basic level, brands serve as markers for the offerings of a firm. For customers, brands can simplify choice, promise a particular quality level, decrease risk, and create trust.

The adolescent business is portrayed as ‘trend setting loyal’ (Bakewell &Mitchell, 2003) 'agents of change' (Spero & Stone, 2004) and ‘the consumer of the future’ (Goldenberg, 2005) They have emerged out to be a promising force in almost all the global markets which is encouraging marketers to disclose the buying behaviour of this segment. Adolescence is said to be the phase when individuals tend to develop preferences for brands (Berk, 2006) and identify themselves with different brands. As individuals go through the phase of adolescence, not only do they recognize themselves better, but they also begin to comprehend the concept of the brand (Chaplin & John, 2005), as a result their brand awareness increases (Ross & Harradine, 2004).

Brands are a vital part of our economy, culture and our society and a brand is what a consumer thinks and feels when he hears a name or sees a sign, a product, or a place of activity; suggesting that branding is a way of life (Post, 2004).However this brand meaning varies from consumer to consumer, as it is a set of perceptions and images that defines a company, product or service and represents the essence or promise of what will be delivered or experience. It plays a vital role particularly during adolescence, when
they commence to interact more with their environment and start to form their identities and experience their connectivity to brands that make them feel important and empowered. Brands have been shown to convey otherwise hidden aspects of a consumer’s self-image because consumers frequently choose brands that they consider appropriate for the image they have of themselves (Dolich, 1969; Tucker & Painter 1961). Adolescents begin to incorporate brands into their self-concepts and make use of them to describe and communicate their sense of self as well as judge others (Achenreiner & John, 2003; Chaplin & John, 2005, 2007).

As a result of the above discussion the first research question which has emerged is:

**RQ1 - Is brand used as a communicating tool to define self-concept among adolescent consumers?**

Brand is evaluated by consumers on various attributes such as quality, exclusiveness, ability to symbolize style, enhance the self-image and provide identification with the group. Adolescents are responsive towards the happenings in the market that is why they are considered as the most influential youth market group. They are described as the richest and most prominent generation in history from the marketers’ point of view. Today the adolescents are exposed to a wide variety of media leading to learning so much so that it has become very difficult to surprise them with new products and brands moreover they have become savvier consumers at a younger age. They are given freedom to make choices about their brand and even their opinion is taken by parents before they make any purchase decision, in addition they also ensure that family purchases go their way and are able to influence their parents’ brand choice even when brand is aimed at the parents. Various studies have shown that many parents think that their children know more about brands than they do. Therefore, brands play an essential role in shaping adolescents perception of products as well as being a focal point for the meaning and values that products have for different individuals.

The consumers when choose what to buy, are mostly affected by the match-up between self-image and brand image. The brand image is defined as “a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers’ memory” (Hsieh &
Lindridge, 2005); however on the other side, the concept of brand personality should also be considered; which is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997). Therefore, Self-brand connections (SBC) exist when consumers use certain brands to construct, strengthen and articulate themselves (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

Several researchers have established that individuals make use of products to construct and communicate their self-concept, so as to create self-brand connections. Self-concept connotes the entirety of the individual’s opinion and beliefs having reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979). It refers to the degree to which brand expresses important aspects of the consumer’s self identity, values, and goals. However, it is important to point out that the notion, despite of its marketing importance, has been overshadowed by other psychological concepts. Therefore, the self-concept is significant and appropriate to the study of adolescent consumer behaviour because most of the purchases made by them are directly influenced by the image an individual has of himself.

Brand relies upon the worth of consumers’ experiences with that brand and the degree to which these experiences succeed in creating vivid linkages within the mind of the consumer (Fournier, 1998). Several consumers may form significant and personal connections between themselves and a given brand in such a way that the brand itself gets closely associated with the individual's self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2004). Therefore, Self-brand connection can be explained with the help of three elements i.e. consumer ought to have brand association that can be linked to the self, such as user characteristics, personality traits, reference groups, and personal experience. Secondly, consumer ought to possess a illustration of their self-concept and thirdly, consumers must connect in a evaluation process to conclude whether the perceived brand images are congruent with aspects of their self-concept (Chaplin & John, 2005). Therefore, the second research question arises as:

**RQ2- Does self-brand connection exists among adolescent consumers?**

Consumer research has revealed that a consumer’s attitude toward a product is influenced by the matching of the product user image with the consumer’s self-concept (Sirgy,
Consumers after developing a favourable attitude towards a brand get fully involved with a product suggesting that attitude is one of the factors that can affect a person's decision to purchase the product. Therefore while understanding attitude; it is the response or assessment given by consumers consistently, favourable or unfavourable, positive or negative, like it or not, agree or not to an object leading to the conclusion that attitudes have a significant role in making marketing decisions and there is a strong tendency to assume that attitude is the most powerful factor for predicting the future behaviour and can help companies predict product demand and to develop appropriate marketing programs.

As attitude is an individual’s feelings towards a product therefore marketers consider it important since it is related to purchase behaviour. Positive and negative feelings and behavioural tendencies decide a consumer’s evaluation of a product. The significant brand connections determine the degree to which it is essential for the brand to be related to the consumer's self-concept and psychological needs, then individuals with strong self-brand connection must exhibit higher levels of attitude strength. This point is well established in the study on adult consumers conducted by Moore and Homer (2008). Hence, Self-brand connection reveal stronger and more positive brand attitude and attitude strength among adult consumers thus giving rise to another research question i.e.

**RQ3 - Whether self-brand connection enhances brand attitude and attitude strength among adolescent consumers?**

Consumers after developing a positive attitude towards a brand get entirely involved with a product purchase. The significant variable in consumer research is consumer involvement in goods and service purchases (Martin, 1998) with a high predictive value for purchase behaviour (Evrard & Aurier, 1996). Involvement has become one of the most important variables to describe and foresee consumer behaviour (Evrard & Aurier, 1996). It is personal and associated not only to values and needs, but it also says a bit about an individual’s emotions and feelings about a brand. Therefore, it can change over time, and it depends on the situation (Zaichkowsky, 1985). By affecting consumers’ attitude towards a brand, a strong bond can be created (Rafi, Ahsan, Saboor, Hafeez, & Usman, 2011)
Consumer involvement makes sense when the consumer is aware of the product or the brand and has received some information in this field. Then this information is processed in the consumer’s mind and is used when required. These days companies make use of various strategies in order to attract new customers, retain current customers and distinguish their products from their competitors. Hence, the most important and effective strategy to create consumer involvement is to make connection of self with the brands that consumer purchase. Thus, arises the next research question:

**RQ4 Is there any relationship between self-brand connection and product involvement among adolescent consumers?**

A research study conducted by Te’eni-Harari, Lampert, and Lehman-Witzing, (2009) has demonstrated that attitude effectiveness is extensively and positively influenced by product involvement. Once consumer recognizes the product as being suitable and meaningful, their attitudes are influenced and when the product is perceived as not relevant and meaningful the attitude measures are influenced to a significantly lower degree. Thus the results of the study indicate that the product-involvement variable is important and significant in understanding the processes that consumers undergo when they are exposed to marketing stimuli.

Consumers accomplish self presentation goals with certain branded products which are perceived to share commonalities with their self-concept. Their self assessment leads to positive evaluation of brands and such positive evaluation leads to emotional attachment. It is the key indicator of the sustainability of a brand. Customers may subsequently develop strong connections between the brand and the self as well as mental models of the brand and the self (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). In this stage, the brand-related thoughts and feelings are easily and frequently accessed and brand attitudes developed. This affective relationship phase is very essential in the formation of attitude and customer brand relationship (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007; Oliver, 1997, 1999)

Thus stronger self-brand connection among adolescents strengthens their attitude towards the brand enforcing them to be totally engrossed in purchasing of product.
Thus, leads to another research question i.e.

**RQ5- Does attitude plays a mediating role on self-brand connection and product involvement relationship?**

Consumer research has revealed that among various factors of marketing; demographic profile of a consumer plays a significant role in understanding their purchasing habits. Among various demographic factors it has been propounded by Ksacen (2000) that consumption has always been gendered base. As a consequence, behaviour of an individual generally depends upon gender to which they belong. Hence, gender has been recognized as a factor influencing different constructs of consumer behaviour (Putrevu, 2001). Moreover, with reference to other demographic factors, age plays a significant role in the development of consumer-brand relationships, as younger consumers demonstrate enthusiasm toward building relationships with their brands in contrast with older respondents who tend to focus on functional characteristics (Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012). Many purchasing habits of consumers also depend on the economic situation of an individual (Adcock et al., 1995). The economic data of an individual involves one’s income, savings, disposable capital, borrowing capability and attitude towards consumption regarding savings (Kotler, 1991; Armstrong & Kotler, 2003). Therefore, the above discussion gives to rise another research question i.e.

**RQ6 – Is there any difference in attitude and involvement across various categories of adolescents?**

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The data was collected and subjected to a detailed analysis to achieve the desired objectives and hypotheses framed for the study.

6.2.1 OBJECTIVES AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

6.2.1a Objective 1: To understand the role of brands in communicating self – concept.

The preliminary objective of the research was to recognize the role of brands in communicating self-concept. To achieve this objective an experimental study was
conducted based on a psychological test and collage making. The results of the experiments were examined and explained in terms of self-concept description, brand awareness and type of self-brand connection.

The existing research studies demonstrate that individuals make use of products to create and communicate their self-concepts (Belk1988; Kleine, Kleine, & Allen 1995; Sirgy 1982; Solomon1983; Wallendorf & Arnould 1988). It is also suggested that adolescents make use of brands to communicate their self-concept. The fundamental basis being the fact that brand associations are developed and nurtured based on individual’s self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Therefore, the present research has identified that adolescents of different age group develop their connectivity with self and brand specifically and besides this they have distinct tastes and preferences in terms of branded product. Hence, they make use of brands to communicate their self-concept.

**Objective 2: To examine self brand connections among various categories of adolescents.**

The second objective of the study has examined self brand connection among different categories of adolescents. The Independent t-test and ANOVA test has been used to study the above objective. The results of independent t-test show that the relationship between self-brand connection and gender is insignificant (p>0.05) thus suggesting that there is no difference in self-brand connection among male or female adolescents, therefore, suggesting that the self-brand connection does exists among adolescents irrespective of their gender.

Further, result of independent t-test with regard to self-brand connection (SBC) and age suggests that the relationship is significant as p<0.05. Thus indicating that self-brand connection differs among different age group of adolescents. Therefore, it can be concluded that adolescents in India begin developing self brand connection; the moment they recognize the brands and strengthen their relationship with them as and when they attain higher age.
The results of ANOVA test shows that the relationship between self-brand connection and income group is significant (p<0.05), therefore, the amount of self-brand connection differs among Indian adolescent consumers with diverse household income groups.

In line with the existing research by Chaplin and John (2005) which has suggested that Self-brand connections increase with age, accompanied by increases in the depth of the connections being made, the present research confirms that existence of self-brand connection among adolescents in India depends upon the age and Income group to which they belong whereas gender is the only factor which does not have any impact on SBC. Thus among the demographic factors age and income are the two important factors that causes differences in self-brand connection among adolescents.

**Objective 3: To study the causal relationship between self-brand connections and attitude towards brand.**

To study the third objective a regression analysis has been undertaken. The results of the ANOVA test indicates that the p-value is statistically significant (p=.000) thus leading to the conclusion that there exists a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variable. Further, the R square value of 0.195 indicates that self-brand connection causes 19.5% variation in brand attitude among adolescents.

The other relationship was studied with the help of ANOVA table to find out the association between self-brand connection as independent variable and attitude strength as dependent variable and the results of ANOVA state that there exists a linear relationship between the dependent variable (attitude strength) and independent variable (self-brand connection) as the p value=0.000 (p<0.05) is statistically significant. Further, the R square value of 0.286 indicates that self-brand connection causes 28.6% variation in brand attitude strength among adolescents.

The result of the research study by Moore and Homer (2008) has concluded that SBCs are strongly related to brand attitude and attitude strength. The present research also confirms that there is a the causal relationship between self-brand connections and attitude towards brand.
Objective 4: To find out the relationship between self-brand connection and product involvement.

The correlation analysis depicts a significant p-value (p = 0.000) which means that there is a positive relationship between the two constructs i.e. self-brand connection and product involvement. Thus, the results evidently states that the self-brand connection (β = 0.515; p = 0.000) has a positive relationship with product involvement. Therefore, in this study it has been confirmed that any attempt to enhance self-brand connection among adolescents would eventually results in high product involvement among them.

Objective 5: To investigate the mediating role of attitude on self-brand connection and product involvement relationship.

To explore the mediation effect of attitude on self-brand connection and product involvement Baron and Kenny’s (1986) linear equation method has been followed.

Another test which has been used in this study to check the mediation effect among the variables is Sobel test. The purpose of this test has been to confirm whether mediator carries the influence of an independent variable to a dependent variable.

The results depict the impact of mediator attitude on self-brand connection (IV) and product involvement (DV). It appears that mediation through attitude is statistically significant. Thus suggesting that attitude variable is exerting a partial mediating effect.

Another, test named Sobel test was also done to confirm the mediation effect.

The values were used to calculate Z-value and its significance level using the equation

\[ Z = \frac{ab}{\sqrt{b^2s_a^2 + a^2s_b^2}} \]

After the application of the formula the results of sobel test yield the statistics Z=11.6854, P=0.000. Thus, according to the mediation analysis it has been confirmed that attitude partially mediates the relationship between self-brand connection and product involvement.
Objective 6: To measure the difference in attitude and product involvement across various categories of adolescents.

This objective deals with analysis of how demographic i.e. age, gender and income cause differences in attitude and product involvement among different categories of adolescents. Therefore, Independent t-test and ANOVA has been used.

The results indicates that the relationship of attitude with regard to gender is insignificant (p>0.05). Thus, indicating that gender causes difference in brand attitude among adolescents. Similarly, the relationship of attitude with regard to age is again insignificant as the results of Independent t-test also depicts that p value is greater than .05 thus representing that brand attitude differs among adolescent belonging to different age group.

Further, the ANOVA test has been used to study that income of a family does not causes any differences in brand attitude among adolescents. The results shows that p-value is less than 0.05 thus there is a significant relationship between household income and brand attitude among adolescent. Therefore, it can be concluded that among gender, age and income only income does not causes any difference in brand attitude among adolescent consumers whereas brand attitude differs among adolescents belonging to different age group and gender.

Again, in order to study the demographic relationship with regard to involvement an independent t-test was conducted on age and gender. The results of independent t-test indicates the relationship between involvement and gender; involvement and age as insignificant (p>0.05). This means that gender and age does have an impact on product involvement among adolescents. Therefore, it can be concluded that adolescents product involvement differs among adolescents belonging to different age group and gender.

The results of the ANOVA test used to study the relationship between product involvement and income level of family among adolescents is significant (p<0.05), therefore, it shows that adolescents belonging to different income groups does not differ in Product Involvement. Thus, household income of a family does not influence product involvement among adolescent consumers.
Therefore, from the above results it has been analyzed that income of the family is the only demographic factors which does not cause any difference in adolescents attitude towards brand and product involvement.

6.2.2 HYPOTHESES VALIDATION

The present research study was based on six basic assumptions, which were formulated as research hypotheses. These hypotheses were subjected to qualitative and statistical analysis to test and validate the findings.

**H**<sub>1</sub>: **Brands play a significant role in communicating self - concept.**

To establish the first hypothesis a qualitative analysis has been done. The results of this study states that adolescents belonging to two different age groups have diverse tastes and preferences in terms of branded products. They start developing insight about their self at a very young age and once they gain maturity their description of self-concept become more logical. The study also indicates that both categories of age group have defined their connection between self and brand exclusively.

*Therefore, H<sub>1</sub> is accepted.*  
**HENCE, H<sub>1</sub> IS ACCEPTED AND VINDICATED.**

**H**<sub>2</sub>: **There is difference in self-brand connections among various categories of adolescents.**

The results of the Independent t- test from table (5.5.1b) shows that the relationship between self-brand connection and gender as insignificant (p>0.05). As a result, inferences can be drawn that that self-brand connection does exists among adolescents irrespective of their gender.

Similarly, to study the relationship between self-brand connection and age again independent t-test has been used. The results from the table (5.5.1d) indicate that the association is significant (p>0.05) between self-brand connection and age. This means that the self-brand connection differs among adolescents belonging to different age groups and the ANOVA test from table (5.5.1f) shows that the relationship between self-brand
connection and income group is significant (p<0.05). Thus, the kids belonging to higher income groups have higher disposable income to spend on purchasing branded products. Thus, the result suggests that the difference in self-brand connection among various categories of adolescents exists in terms of age to which they belong and household income of the family.

**Therefore, H2 is partially accepted.**

**HENCE, H2 IS PARTIALLY ACCEPTED and VINDICATED.**

**H3:** Self-brand connections are positively related to brand attitude and its strength.

The third hypothesis has been split up into the following two sub hypotheses i.e.

**H3(a):** Self-brand connections are positively related to brand attitude.

**H3(b):** Self-brand connections are positively related to attitude strength

The regression analysis was undertaken to study the relationship of self-brand connection with brand attitude and attitude strength. The results depicted by ANOVA table (5.5.2a) states that there is a significant positive relationship between independent variable SBC and dependent variable attitude.

The table (5.5.2b) indicates that adjusted R² value of 0.194 suggests that 19.4% variability in brand attitude is explained by the independent variable self-brand connection. Further analysis of the calculated “F” value from table (5.5.2b), 201.251 which is quite greater than the standard value of 3.85, suggests that self-brand connection has an impact on brand attitude.

The beta value (β = 0.441, p=0.000) from table (5.5.2c) suggests that there is a positive relationship between brand attitude and self-brand connection.

Similarly, the results of ANOVA table (5.5.2d) suggests that there is a significant relationship (p<0.05) between the self-brand connection and attitude strength and the table (5.5.2e) indicates that the adjusted R² square value of .285 indicates that 28.5% variability in attitude strength can be explained by self-brand connection. Further, the calculated value of “F” i.e. 332.996 from table 5.5.2e indicates that it is greater than the
standard value of 3.85 suggesting that self-brand connections have an impact on attitude strength and moreover, beta value ($\beta = 0.535$ and $p= 0.000$) from table (5.5.2f) indicates that there is a positive relationship between attitude strength and self-brand connection.

**Therefore, all the sub hypotheses H$_3$a and H$_3$b are accepted**

**HENCE, H$_3$ IS ACCEPTED AND VINDICATED**

**H$_4$: Higher is the self-brand connection higher is the product involvement.**

The results of the table 5.5.3a identifies that since $p =0.000$, as a result, there is a significant linear relationship between the two variables i.e. self-brand connection and product involvement. Moreover, table 5.5.3a indicates that ($\beta = 0.515$) there is a positive correlation between the above two variable.

**Therefore, H$_4$ is accepted.**

**HENCE, H$_4$ IS ACCEPTED AND VINDICATED**

**H$_5$: Attitude has a mediating role on self-brand connections and product involvement.**

The results of the table 5.5.4a, 5.5.4b and 5.5.4c indicates that attitude which act as a mediator between self-brand connection and product involvement has a mediating effect on self-brand connection and product involvement. It can be seen from table 5.5.4a and table 5.5.4c that the Beta coefficient for self-brand connection and product involvement reduces from 0.515 to 0.281 while attitude is added as a mediator to the regression, thus suggesting that attitude variable is exerting a mediating effect.

**Hence, H$_5$ is accepted.**

**HENCE, H$_5$ IS ACCEPTED AND VINDICATED**
**H₆**: Attitude and product involvement do not vary across various categories of adolescents.

**H₆(a)**: There is no difference in the attitude across various categories of adolescents.

**H₆(b)**: There is no difference in the product involvement across various categories of adolescents.

This hypothesis studies the relationship among attitude and product involvement between various categories of adolescents. To study the above hypothesis it was further divided into two sub hypotheses.

The results of the table (5.5.5.b) independent t-test indicates the relationship between gender and attitude as insignificant (p>0.05). Thus, inferences can be drawn that brand attitude differs among male and female adolescents.

Similarly, to find out the relationship between age and attitude, independent t-test has been used again. The results from the table (5.5.5.d) exhibit that the relationship is again insignificant (p>0.05). This means that there is a difference in brand attitude among adolescents belonging to two diverse age groups.

The results of the ANOVA table (5.5.5e) suggest that attitude towards brand does not differ among adolescent belonging to different income group. The relationship between brand attitude and income group is significant (p<0.05), hence, the results shows that brand attitude do not vary among adolescents belonging to different income groups. Thus, the above results suggest that there is a no difference in the attitude among adolescents in terms of the income group to which they belong.

Likewise, same test has been used to validate whether product involvement causes any difference among diverse categories of adolescents. The result of tables (5.5.5g and 5.5.5i) of independent t-test suggests that the relationship between gender and product involvement; age and product involvement is insignificant (p>0.05), thus, it reveals that age and gender of adolescent have an impact on product involvement but the results of ANOVA test table (5.5.5j) depicts that income causes no difference in product
involvement among adolescent consumers. Therefore, the above analysis suggest that income of the family is the only factor among demographic factors which does not causes difference in product involvement.

Thus, it can be concluded that among all the demographic factors i.e. age, gender and income; the only factor which donot causes any difference in brand attitude and product involvement is the income.

**Hence, H_{6a} and H_{6b} is partially accepted**

**Therefore, H_{6} IS PARTIALLY ACCEPTED**

**6.3 DISCUSSION**

This research has exposed a number of interesting and imperative aspects about the adolescent consumer behaviour. It has focused on understanding the relationship between self-brand connection, brand attitude, attitude strength and product involvement among adolescent consumers. In developing country like India, adolescents consumers have emerged as extremely brand conscious generation. They are eager to connect their self concept with the brands they acquire and therefore develop a strong connectivity with them irrespective of their age or gender. Thus they have emerged as the most hopeful and progressive consumer segment, which has shown a keen interest in shopping of different brands available in the market.

The results of the study have further brought out the fact that the adolescents at the age of 11 start developing perceptions about their self and as they gain maturity; they are able to explicate them. They are conscious about those brands which compliment their personality and develop connectivity with a particular brand only when it satisfies their psychological desires. They match their personality attributes with brands they purchase and also relate their different self concepts like actual self-concept, social or ideal self concept with brands and thereby establishing strong self-brand connection.

This study further suggests that the adolescents belonging to higher age group have a wider awareness of national and international brands available in the market. In addition ,their preference of brands also differs, as the adolescents belonging to age group
between 11-14 years desire to have sports brand and have expressed their connectivity with the sports brand like adidas, reebok, nike etc; whereas higher age group have shown their fondness for luxury or fashion oriented brands as they believe that they are quite fashion conscious. Thus, emphasising that the adolescents belonging to different age group have diverse tastes and preferences for branded products.

The analysis also suggests that strong self-brand connection among adolescents leads to creation of higher brand attitude among them. They build up strong connection with the brands and develop a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards them. Therefore, this study has established that there is a positive and moderate relationship between self-brand connection, attitude and attitude strength. Thus, marketers need to consider such strategies as a consequence of which the adolescents would establish connectivity with a larger number of brands and over a period of time this connection would get more strengthened leading to creation of strong positive attitude as well as attitude strength. It is so due to the fact that higher is the intensity of attitude towards brands, higher will be the attitude strength. Attitude and attitude strength further signifies that the adolescent market can be captured easily by building strong brand connectivity with them.

Moreover, this study has also highlighted that product involvement among adolescents has been because of their higher self connectivity with the brands they acquire. Therefore, it lays stress on the fact that brand involvement is related with the self-brand connection and the results show that there is a high positive correlation between self-brand connection and involvement. Hence, self-brand connection is strongly related to product involvement. If adolescents show higher self-brand connection then it is obvious that their involvement in purchase of brand will be higher and their level of involvement will intend them to make appropriate choice. High involvement will lead to more purchases and this is possible only if marketers focus on those marketing plans and strategies which target the adolescent consumers.

The study has further laid stress on the fact that demographic profile of adolescents has an impact on brand attitude and involvement. Thus, the results of the study clearly point out that age and gender both have an impact on their attitude and involvement towards the brand they purchase, but income of the family is the only factor which does not
causes differences in their brand attitude and brand involvement. Since eventually they are the future consumers and marketers dream too thus to keep hold of this section of consumers, who have erratic minds it is vital for the marketers to get them involved in purchase and this will be feasible only when they relate their self with the brands.

Therefore, to boost sales and capture more markets, marketers need to create increased loyalty among adolescents consumers and this is achievable only when they will show positive signs of self-brand connection, attitude and involvement.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS

The researches in the past have persistently indicated that adult consumer behaviour is the direct antecedent of child consumer behaviour, realizing this fact marketers should give serious consideration to this segment. They must target the consumers by using children not only in the case of product meant for them but also for the product used or purchase in household sector.

- Adolescents are believed to be an imperative segment which marketers cannot afford to ignore. Therefore, marketers have to focus on innovative ways of using advertising and promotional techniques to target them and influence their buying behaviour. As adolescents are keen for the latest, the coolest and the newest available in the market therefore as a result the marketers must update them frequently. This means posting new features, pictures, ads, and offers every day, if possible.

- Brand connection is essential to study for the marketers because till date no one has been able to develop a test which could predict, with a high level of certainty, what kinds of connection people would develop with a particular kind of product. The findings from this study has revealed a number of interesting and important aspects about the consumption behaviours, SBC, attitudes and Involvement level of adolescents. Thus this type of information would be valuable to the business community, particularly the product planners and product testers.

- Continuing with image and brand characteristics, some implications based on the involvement constructs have been formulated. It is suggested that the information
from the involvement dimensions could be very useful while designing the brand identity for a product or service. By aiming at personality traits, it would be possible to gain consumers’ attention and therefore involvement through the brand design. This can also be used by managers in turn to create loyalty, word of mouth and lastly charge price premiums since the product or service image in itself actually rationalizes it. These findings can also be useful for managers looking to rebrand a product or service, especially when wanting to move the brand between different levels of involvement, price or quality.

- Brand managers, especially in sports and fashion oriented brands should instil their brands with a clear brand personality. The brand personality should be tailored to the self-concept of the adolescent consumers. Accordingly, brand managers should identify the self-concept of their target consumers and build a brand personality (mostly through promotion) to match the self-concept of their consumers.

- Brand managers should make every effort to create positive customer–brand interactions. Doing so might foster a strong emotional bond between the customer and the brand, which strongly contributes to their association with brands as psychological aspect of consumer must be incorporated into brands. Research should be conducted to identify a variety of social interactions with the brand that may lead to higher levels of brand relationship quality for target consumers.

- Since this study has proved that adolescent consumers in India also like their counterparts in west associate their self with the brands they like to purchase thus creating an opportunity for the company behind the brand to gain an enduring competitive advantage because this type of connection is difficult for competitors to imitate.

- Kids in India may not have the purchasing power comparable to their Western counterparts, but they are still the center of the universe in the Indian family system, who actually compel their parents to visit a place time and again. They are an extremely influential medium for building a consumer brand relationship in India. They not only influence markets in terms of the parental decision-making to buy
certain kinds of products, they are also future consumers. Hence, creating an urge among marketers to do more investigation of adolescents consumer behaviour to have them as future customers.

- Companies must carry out detailed research in association with psychologists to have better understanding of children’s psyche and consumer behaviour since they constitute a huge consumer segment.

### 6.5 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

- Branded products are used by person to construct and correspond their self-concepts thus in this manner they create self-brand connections. Since this concept is well recognized in the adult consumers but a very little research has been conducted on adolescent consumers. Therefore, this study is a clear contribution in establishing relationship of adolescent consumers with regard to brands they purchase.

- Since adolescents represents a significant consumer market, to be exploited by every industry that trades in material for identity. Therefore, this study has undoubtedly segmented that lower adolescent age group have preference for sports brand whereas higher age group have preference for luxury or fashion oriented brands. Thus, creating a need for the marketers to focus on such a vast and influential marketing segment.

- Adolescent marketing has become very critical due to the sheer demographics and the buying power this amazing group has and can influence. Thus, this research work has evidently assured that among the demographic factors, age and income has been identified as a crucial factor that has a great influence on creating self-brand connection among adolescent consumers. Therefore, marketers should segment the market in such a way so as to reach the different income groups so as to build strong consumer behaviour.

- It is vital for the marketers who are framing out marketing strategies to understand consumers attitudes and involvement in developing Self-Brand Connections. From the business point of view it is very critical to the company to acquire this tender age
group as once they learn to trust a brand as adolescents they will trust the brand for a life time by creating a self-brand connection. Therefore, this study shows that there is perfect relationship between attitude and involvement among adolescents consumers and it has also been proved that the brand attitude enhances the relationship between SBC and product involvement. Moreover, the demographic profile of adolescent consumer also suggest that age and gender of the consumers plays a vital role in creating strong brand attitude and product involvement among them. Thus, encouraging the marketers to frame such strategies so as to cater to the needs of this crucial segment.

- Both marketers and academic researchers recognise the fact that adolescents segment constitute a huge market base. They are not only playing a significant role in family decision making but are also acquiring responsibility as consumers in their own right. They have a huge spending power. A survey conducted by ASSOCHAM on “Current Pocket Money Trends in Urban India” on respondents in the 12-20 years age group in five metros, it shockingly, revealed that children were getting pocket money upwards of Rs.12,000 in India (Dholakia, 2011).Therefore, it created a need to be familiar with and recognize this influential consumer segment. Hence, the above research work identifies that income of the family has a great impact on SBC.

- Adolescents as a crucial segment have been neglected in branding literature also. No prior work has been done in India in the context of establishing self-brand connections among adolescents. Therefore, the above research work has contributed in establishing the concept of SBC among adolescents in India who is being home to more than 243 million individuals aged 10-19 years (UNICEF, 2012).

### 6.6 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study have highlighted that adolescents are indisputably the most promising consumer segment and have established themselves as a powerful one with a clear cut visualization and preferences for the branded products. Therefore, the results of the study have revealed certain facts which can be used by the companies to get an edge over the competitors.
Since the results have clearly revealed that adolescents in the age group of 11-14 years have shown their self-brand connection with sports brand whereas 15-17 years have shown their self-brand connection for luxury or fashion oriented brands thus clearly indicating that segmentation and targeting of the market can be done on these product basis by the marketers to gain competitive edge over the others.

Secondly, this generation is quite tech savvy and the results of the experimental study especially collage exhibit that they spend most of their time on smart phones, tab and laptops thus they are everywhere on social media. Since their strong online social media presence has positioned them as a thoughtful leader in the industry; as a result marketers need to explore adolescents favourite social media channel so as to target them at this tender age. Thus necessitate marketers to stay on top of how social media platforms are doing among adolescents and have to keep them more involved and update every six months as social media moves at the speed of light and not at the speed of a marathon. Thus, marketers have to keep their marketing strategies as flowing as feasible.

This study has emphasised that among demographic factor, age and income are the two crucial factors which have a considerable influence on SBC among adolescents. The researches in the past have shown that they have a lot of money at their disposable thus to cater to the aspirational and demanding kids; marketers/companies in India can attract them by offering loyalty cards in their name with redeemable points so as to hold them young. Moreover the results of the study also suggests that age and gender are the factors which causes differences in their attitude towards brand they purchase as well as their level of involvement in purchasing those brands therefore marketers can segregate the brand market on the basis of these two demographic factors.

Today kids have more autonomy and decision-making power within the family than in previous generations, so it follows that kids are vocal about what they want their parents to buy and have greater involvement in purchases made by their parents. “Pester power” refers to children’s ability to nag their parents into purchasing items
they may not otherwise buy. Marketing to children is all about creating pester power, because advertisers know that it is a powerful force to be used.

- The results of the experimental study has clearly pointed out that adolescents are inspired by those celebrities who have achieved success in life and have gained a position of their own. Hence marketers / brand managers have to be relatively conscious in terms of choosing the right brand ambassador for their product.

- Marketers with the help of well-paid researchers and psychologists, advertisers must access to in-depth knowledge about children’s developmental, emotional and social needs at different ages. Using research that analyzes children’s behaviour, fantasy lives, artwork, even their dreams, companies can develop sophisticated marketing strategies to reach young people.

- The adolescent segment in India have erratic and ever changing mind set. Therefore, marketers must understand their shopping behaviour and make persistent marketing efforts to make them involve not only in making or influencing purchase decision of their parents but also making them involved in outright purchasing of the product as once they establish connection with the brand; their involvement in purchasing the product also gets increase. Therefore marketers should make constant efforts through promotional offers which directly stimulates adolescent consumers to visit that store with their parents. Moreover, marketers should also look into the budgetary constraints so as to come up with low range of products to cater large segment of adolescent consumers.

- In addition, the findings suggest that adolescent consumers have a higher tendency to give a personal meaning to a branded product they purchase. It means that the marketers must add a personal meaning to the brand they are dealing with.

6.7 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

This research study has laid down the base for further extended research as the adolescent segment is a huge segment which is rising and has started showing its existence worldwide and in Indian markets too.
• Though the present research has focused on SBC to study the relationship between self-concept and brand but a supplementary research can be done to study which self of the consumer explicitly describe his/her connection with the brands he/she purchases. Thus, researchers can further explore on different types of self i.e. real self, ideal self or social self in order to have more clarity of Self-Brand Connection among adolescents.

• The data has been collected from J&K, Delhi and Punjab, therefore, it is suggested that that future researchers may collect data from those places which are considered as shopping hubs of the urban adolescents, in order to have more clear perception of SBC among adolescent consumers.

• The pocket money of adolescents in metropolitan cities is quite higher as compared to other cities as cited by a survey conducted by ASSOCHAM in 2011 (Dholakia, 2011). This increase has created a great opportunity for the marketers to explore more about this crucial marketing segment which considers shopping as their main activity.

• As the consumer market becomes characterized by increasing globalization therefore a study related to how cross culture difference leads to SBC which in fact develops positive brand attitude thus leading to product involvement can be conducted on adolescent consumers.

• Brand specific or Product specific study can be conducted to understand the relationship between SBC, Attitude, Attitude Strength and Product Involvement.

• Brand relationship and influence of early relationship to those that are developed later in one’s life and how this relationship leads to development of positive brand attitude can be considered for future research.

• Prior studies have shown that Brand Involvement influences Brand loyalty among consumers therefore a more research can be done to see how SBC and Product Involvement leads to Brand Loyalty among adolescents as brand relationship and influence of early relationship develops later in life. Other specifically relational
constructs such as brand commitment, and attachment should be the subject of such future lines of research.

6.8 LIMITATIONS:

- The Data was collected from adolescent respondents residing in J&K, Delhi and Jammu for that reason results couldn’t be generalized. Hence, data collection from other regions of India could give us a more refined and better information as the consumer market characterized by increasing globalization necessities a cross-cultural analysis of adolescent consumers.

- Use of qualitative analysis along with quantitative for studying other constructs like Attitude, Attitude Strength and Involvement might give us more effective way of analyzing adolescents relationship among these constructs.

- The respondents of this study belongs to a tender age group who have a erratic mind and every now and then their mind set changes and thus has an impact on the responses they gave.
REFERENCES:


