CHAPTER-1

SELF- CONCEPT AND BRANDING

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

“Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times.”

- Niccolo Machiavelli

The IMF expects India to grow at 7.2 per cent in 2017 and 7.7 per cent in 2018 (Union Budget, 2017-18) making it one of the fastest emerging economies in the world, where the consumer economy has exhibited a growth rate of 5.7 percent annually between 2005 and 2015. On the basis of these estimates, it is suggested that the annual growth of the consumer market possibly will reach 6.7 percent between 2015 and 2020 and 7.1 percent between 2021 and 2025 (IBEF, 2017). This in turn would help in creating a consumer market worth about US $507.46 billion (₹ 34 lakh crore) for the ongoing financial year, which might expand to US $746 billion (₹ 50 lakh crore) by the financial year 2021 (Kimberly, Momin & Melissa Cyrill, 2016). Therefore, in lieu of the above facts, global corporations view India as one of the major market where future growth will turn up. As per the McKinsey Report (2007), ‘The rise of Indian Consumer Market', by the year 2025, the Indian consumer market is expected to grow four fold. The development in consumer market would be primarily motivated by a favourable population composition and mounting disposable incomes thus suggesting that if India continues to grow at the current pace, average household income will increase over the next two decades, making it the world’s third-largest consumer economy by 2025 (BCG, 2017).

Since India’s gross domestic product (GDP) is growing, as a result the number of rich and middle-income consumers have increased and between 2001 and 2010, the size of the rich consumer class has increased by 21.4 percent, while the middle class has grown by 12.9 percent (Shukla, 2010). The fascinating element of this ambiguity in India’s consumer market is the 253 million adolescent population (Census, 2011), categorized by
different languages, regions, religions, economic and social status, which are growing with the diverse market-habits, lifestyles, tastes and preferences.

**Figure 1.1a: India GDP Annual Growth Rate**

![India GDP Annual Growth Rate](image)

*Source: Trading Economics- MOSPI (2017)*

According to a report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG, 2017), India’s robust economic growth and rising household incomes would increase consumer spending to US$ 4 trillion by 2025 and in this the maximum spending is likely to occur in food, housing, consumer durables, transport and communication sectors. The report has further stated that India's share of global consumption would expand more than twice to 5.8 per cent by 2020 (IBEF, 2017).

**Figure 1.1b: India Consumer Spending**

![India Consumer Spending](image)

*Source: Trading Economics- MOSPI (2017)*
It is more so due to the fact that in India the market is characteristically consumer focused, with spending expected to more than double by 2025 due to a large consumer base backed by the huge populations especially adolescents who constitute more than one-fifth of the total population of India. They are existing in a new age under the multiple influences of family, school, market, and media. In particular, the adolescent living in urban and metro areas are being shaped by the influences of consumerism and market forces, and the ideology of individualism (Verma & Saraswathi, 2002). Since they have a considerable amount of spending power, therefore attracting marketers from across the world. This is exhibited from the fact that in 2007, India was ranked the 12th largest consumer market (McKinsey Global Institute, 2007) and by 2025 it is expected to be the third-largest consumer market (BCG, 2017). Therefore, its emergence as an economic power has urged the world to disentangle the mystery called India.

Thus, having a huge potential, it has emerged as one of the most capable and progressively growing economies in the world. More so, with the opening of the Indian markets to the world after a complete overhaul of the policies related to the entry of Multi National Corporations (MNCs), most of the global brands have entered into the Indian markets. Despite the fact that, a large number of such brands have entered Indian markets, all have not been able to crack the success mantra for a mysterious, complex and diversified market where the tastes and preferences of customers keep on varying after a few kilometres on either side of the market. Therefore, given the vast diversity of people and challenges, these firms need to adapt to the local market conditions in order to attract the customers towards their brands. However, it is pertinent to mention that the phenomenon of globalization of brands started as early as 90s, when India opted for partially free market-oriented economic policies (Rao, 1998; Bisaria, 2012) but there were many problems associated, which hampered the rapid growth of global brands. Therefore, in an attempt to facilitate the processes the recent policy changes in foreign direct investment (FDI) into the retail sector have ushered an increased presence of new global brands and created a renewed interest in the Indian market (Chari & Madhav Raghavan, 2012).
Further in this direction, the establishment of malls and multiplexes have changed the shopping habits and purchase behaviour of the Indian consumer. It is relevant to point out in this context that the adolescents today are “…the most brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generation in history” (Schor, 2004), as they have developed into brand conscious consumers and their purchase decisions tend to be influenced by the self-importance and pride they have on them. Thus, creating a complicated market for the marketers. It clearly suggests that the market in India has undergone a paradigm modification due to India’s rapid economic growth. Another key variable in this context has been the favourable demographics especially the adolescent segment thus making it viable for businesses to grow.

More so, moving into the third millennium, many developments and changes have taken place with reference to the industries and firms trying to keep pace with the changes and diverse needs of the people. Not only competitions have become intense but the markets are also being flooded with many products. Therefore, the challenge before the marketers is to understand the diversity of consumer behaviour among young generation who have the potential to dominate the brand market. Today the company’s image is built and made known by its customers. Thus, the success of the firm will be determined by how effective it has been in meeting the diverse consumer needs and wants by treating each customer as unique and offering products and services to suit his needs and creating a life time value and relationship with him (Nair, 2004).

It is also not wrong to say that Indian consumers have undergone numerous changes since the last sixty nine years of independence as their consumption patterns have phenomenally changed in recent years especially among the adolescent consumers. This is corroborated by the fact that due to an ever-increasing dispersion of internet and social media, the purchase behaviour of the adolescent consumers has transformed significantly. Such a change in the Indian market is drawing global attention not just because of its promise of sheer volumes but also because of the tectonic shift happening in the nature of demand. Rising incomes in the hands of young population, a growing economy, expansion in the availability of products and services and easy availability of credit are the other factors, which have given rise to new consumer segments and an increasing
acceptability of debt, whether it is mobile phones, credit cards, apparel or organized retail, people clearly seem to be spending more, particularly on discretionary items.

Further, urbanization is taking place at an extravagant pace which in turn is influencing lifestyle and buying behaviour of the consumers. Approximately, 19% of the total adolescent population has been presently residing in urban areas who are well-known for a high degree of value orientation. In such a scenario, India is considered as a profitable market even though the per capita income in India is low, but still it promises a huge market, even for costly products. One key factor contributing to this change is a new Indian consumer who is more discerning than ever, ready to place his money on brand, quality and convenience and eager to explore the organized retail market and interestingly according to the current estimates, over 50% of India’s population are under the age of 25 (Population of India, 2017) and furthermore the majority of them are educated too. This generation that grew up in the post liberalization era are more receptive and adaptive to lifestyle changes.

While referring to the present context, in an era of dynamic business environment, the markets are getting more and more crowded with companies competing with similar products and services (Tripathi, 2009). Unlimited numbers of brands of different products have entered the market, thereby, creating a complex challenge for the consumers. They have always been trying to not only acquire new customer base but also retain the existing ones by providing value and satisfying the exchange expectations. It is so due to the fact that the earlier researchers suggest that customer retention is highly associated with customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction not only retains the customer with the company but also affects revenue, earning per share and stock price (Williams & Naumann, 2011).

The marketers have realized that their effectiveness in meeting consumer needs directly influences the profitability. The better they understand the factors underlying consumer behaviour, the better they are able to develop effective marketing strategies to meet consumer needs (Assael, 2001) thus today’s consumers are identified to be the more materialistic, high on consumerism and believe in “Made in India” (Gopal & Srinivasan, 2006). In the Indian context, it promises a huge market base therefore marketers are keen
to know the specific needs, which the consumers are attempting to satisfy and how they translate into purchase. They need to understand how the information regarding various brands is accessed to differentiate between them.

Thus, it brings to the fore a fact that the marketing strategies related to consumer behaviour are made to face cut throat competition in global environment. Hence, the prediction of consumer behaviour is essential for the growth and prosperity of the businesses, as only those which prepare and execute consumer oriented marketing strategies, can survive in global competitive era. Therefore, it is concluded that in the present scenario, study of consumer behaviour has become quite essential, as all the activities of the business concerns start and end with consumers and their satisfaction.

1.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR:

Changing consumer behaviour has an adverse impact on the growth of business because it leads to heavy losses due to obsolete stock in the organization. The last twenty years have seen a transformation in terms of lifestyle preferences and buying trends among Indian consumers. Over the years, the trends which have established in the Indian market are celebrity influence, online shopping, freebies and popularity of eco-friendly products which have made the consumer behaviour quite complex and not logical. Another peculiar challenge unique to Indian market is the difference in the consumer personalities across borders and also between and within regions. Moreover, the tastes, behaviours and preferences of consumers keep on changing and therefore cannot be ignored. Research has shown that consumer behaviour is difficult to predict, even for experts in the field, therefore, the study of consumer behaviour is quite complex, because of many variables involved and their tendency to interact with & influence each other. More so in a country like India, there is an urgent need to formulate and successfully implement strategies related to consumer behaviour because there are fewer resources to meet the basic requirements of the business.

In India, consumers’ shopping behaviour is affected by demographic factors such as age and gender. The young are more willing to experiment with different brands and more recently, the children have become key decision-makers in household purchases (Kaur &
Singh, 2007). Since approximately 50% of Indians are below the age of 25 and over 65% below the age of 35 years (Population of India, 2017), thus creating a tremendous scope for brand penetration in India, thereby providing relevant insights into the consumers’ shopping behaviour.

In India, children today not only play an important role in shopping but also have responsibility as consumers in their own rights (Pecheux, 1999). The research suggests the following three roles of children related to consumption; as (1) buyers who have their own money to spend, (2) direct or indirect influencers of the purchase of a large amount of household items, and (3) a future market of a larger variety of products and services (McNeal, 1979).

Therefore in the emerging scenario, they are considered as a key variable in marketing where all the marketing practices revolve around them. It is quite important to understand the perceived personal relevance of a product, service, or brand from their perspective in order to understand their fluctuating behaviour. Earlier they used to purchase things to satisfy their basic needs but with growing economic power they now purchase things that satisfy their self, which fulfils the concept proposed by Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, (2009) that consumer behaviour is the, “study of how individuals, groups and organisations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas or experience to satisfy their needs and wants.” Thus, making it imperative for the marketers to study in detail the overall behaviour of the adolescent consumers.

Understanding adolescents consumer sense is a hard job for the marketers. Though they appear like adults, but not all their emotional, intellectual, social and physical capabilities are completely developed. Swift changes in their bodies make them sensitive to their appearance. Product choices and how they spend personal money are external things in their control and they like to experiment with this control. The importance of image, friends, and acceptance create a conflict between marketplace, best buy practices and buying an image. Change and conflict are dominant themes during the adolescence period. Therefore, marketers are required to be quick enough to recognize the changes and conflicts they face to grow up and have planned products and marketing strategies to attract them, as their main aim is to get children buy more (Pipiddis, 2004).
However, in this scenario, it is a challenge for the marketers to create those products or brands with which the adolescents can relate themselves. More so due to the fact that they are maturing fast and upgrading within product segments at a pace that consumer companies are struggling to keep up with.

1.3 SHIFTING PATTERN OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN INDIA:

Figure 1.3a: Factors affecting change in Consumer Behaviour in India

Source: Technova (2014)

The discussion above clearly points out that there is a drastic change in the consumer behaviour in India. With the changing pattern of consumer behaviour the consumer spending has been likely to increase to $4 trillion by 2025 (Report by BCG, 2017). As a result companies in India are modifying their strategies to retain their loyal consumer base, while attracting the emerging adolescent consumers, as they play a vital part in the market place and put forth immense influence over personal and family spending across a
variety of product categories (Gregan-Paxton & John, 1995). In recent years, India has witnessed a huge transformation in their lifestyle which has been influenced by various behavioural norms. The Indian consumer today wants to lead a life full of luxury and comfort and have affection for branded products; as a result the current generation does not mind paying extra for better quality branded products.

However, it is also pertinent to mention that the adolescent consumers in India have become more conscious buyers, looking at different options, engaging over social networking sites and understanding the worth of the products, they are now well informed and purchase products after doing their own research and are even seen exchanging information on product reviews before making a buying decision. This change has been affected by a variety of factors which are:

Price-value equation: Adolescents have matured into consumers and have now become more value conscious. They are demanding higher services and value for their money and infact are looking at high value for product that is able to meet their expectations. They usually like to purchase those products which they like (Levinson, 2001). With the ever increasing purchasing power, they are now driven by rationale mindset, thereby becoming less emotional and more logical in their approach for buying a product.

Experimenting with new products: Since adolescents are highly brand conscious, stylish and trendy therefore they are always ready to experiment with any new product launched in the market and thus sometimes prefer to go for impulse buying. Lin and Lin (2005) have indicated that personal characteristics such as gender, age and pocket money availability etc are associated with adolescents' impulsive buying tendency and even Rook and Gardner (1993) have suggested that certain mood states i.e. pleasure, excitement, and power to make decisions might bring out impulse purchase behaviour among adolescents.

Social Media: According to eMarketer (2013), India is expected to have 17.2% social networking penetration rate by 2017, taking its user base to 212 million. The quick development of social media over the years, mainly among the youth of the country, is also varying the way consumers are shopping these days. Even children are also impacted.
by media, marketing, advertising etc. They watch various advertisements and force their parents to buy, those brands or commodities which attract them.

Changing family structure: In recent years there has been drastic change in family’s structure and environment in which a child is brought up because of single parent households, dual income families, media, more disposable income due to which parents are willing to buy more for their children. Therefore, more and more parents today substitute material goods for the time spent with their children and so the children have higher say in household buying.

Internet buying: Internet transmission in the country has changed the buying behaviour of people. The urban community, as well as consumers from Tier II cities, are using e-commerce as a preferred mode of buying products. The adolescents today are tech savvy and considered as the first generation to use the internet freely (Simon, 2001). Further, consumers are using Internet as a research tool to make, informed decisions.

Pester Power: Today’s children have more decision making power within household than in previous generations, as they follow that children are vocal about what they want their parents to buy. “Pester Power” refers to children’s ability to nag their parents into purchasing items they may not otherwise buy.

Higher pocket money: Parents are strongly longing to prepare their children for adulthood or at least for self sufficiency. This desire takes the form of providing skills to the youngsters so that they may cope without the assistance of parents. Being a consumer is one of these skills. It seems clear that children have turned into consumers at an early age in our society through the desire and encouragement of parents, who also provide the youngsters with the necessary financial support in the form of pocket money. Most of the children get pocket money, as a result of which the children today have become a relatively big market. A survey conducted by ASSOCHAM has revealed that children in metro cities in India get pocket money more than ₹12000 per month thus, enhancing their spending capacity (as cited in Dholakia, 2011).

Thus, it clearly outlines a need to understand, formulate and successfully implement the changing concept related to consumer behaviour because there are few resources and
other constraints to meet the basic requirements of running business. Owing to its large population size and growing disposable incomes, India offers a profitable investment opportunity to the marketers across the world. Today’s marketing is consumer-oriented and therefore the global marketers need to understand this young Indian consumers if they want to successfully harness this opportunity. The changes in a country’s economic, social, legal, political and technological environments bring around significant changes in the psychographic profile of the consumers, further influencing their buying behaviour. India has seen rapid development in all these spheres during recent decades which has completely transformed the profile of Indian consumers.

The Indian consumer market, which is primarily dominated by young generation, is becoming increasingly sophisticated. A typical upper middle class young consumer is beginning to look beyond the utility aspect of a product to seek intangibles like brand and lifestyle statement associated with the product. This modern consumer wants his purchases to reflect his lifestyle or at least the one he aspires for. As a result of this brand consciousness, the food and beverage segment of the FMCG sector is already witnessing a significant shift in demand from loose to branded products. In addition, the Indian affluent class has always had a fondness for premium branded goods and this obsession continues even today. They do not feel shy to purchase products on credit and pay tomorrow for what they use or buy today. The Indian consumer market has never had it better.

Many researchers have suggested that in recent years there has been a quite change in consumption preferences of Indian consumers (Dwivedi 2009; KPMG 2009). Marketers have become keen to know what their customers buy, how they buy and why they buy but the question, which marketers show eagerness to know is the reasons why the consumer buy a particular product or a brand. Consumers usually buy things they have tried before and are satisfied with (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009). They use products as symbols, and buy them to express their identity and to show in what group they belong (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2007). Thus, Consumer behaviour changes eventually and is affected by the surroundings (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). These days people are not only using products and services that are facilitators in their day to day life, but also
because these products explain who they are as individuals (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2007), and extend their identity (Ahuvia, 2005). Individuals who are involved in a brand often feel the significance of expressing how they differ from those who are not involved (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). The marketing activity has involved the customers more in the process (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2006) and given them a greater probability to experience a brand (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Schmitt, 1999). Effective brand building requires making relevant and compelling connections to deeply rooted human emotions or deep cultural forces. This is in line with the comment of Levy (1959), who had asserted that people do not buy products just for what they do, but also for what the product means; thus, brands can be symbols whose meaning is used to create and define a consumer’s self-concept.

1.4 SELF-CONCEPT:

The “self” is an indispensable part of every human, a symbolic construct which reflects awareness of one’s own identity. Individuals mostly use the term “self” in everyday life to mean the person; him or herself. The majority people have a clear understanding of what this self means, yet it is often hard to communicate and explain the nature of one’s self to others (Baumeister, 1999). It is considered as one of the most admired components in psychology and is developed by individuals through interface with their environment and includes only those characteristics of the individual that he is aware of and over which he believes he exercises control. Therefore, it refers to all the facts that a person deliberately elaborates about in reference to his/her physical appearance, capabilities, associations with others and belief in particular situations and hence it can be concluded that “self” does not develop only from oneself but others also play an important role.

As the term self-concept is used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives themselves, therefore to be aware of oneself is to have a concept of oneself. In this context, Baumeister (1999) provides the understanding of the concept as the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is. Further, Swaminathan, Page and Gurhan–Canli (2007) have propounded it as an individual distinctive identity, which is based on the need for individual autonomy thus comprising of various characteristics. Hence, self-concept is in fact a
cognitive evaluation of the attributes about oneself (Hattie, 1992). As a consequence, self concept can be referred to as an amalgamation of morals and principles about oneself.

The representation of ‘self’ includes attitudes, perceptions, and feelings about what is the individual's character, and what should be the appropriate behaviour in the situation. Hence, the consumers frequently describe, sustain and enhance their self-concept (Zinkham & Hong, 1991). According to the self-congruity theory, consumers pick products that are congruent with their self-concepts, i.e. a collection of beliefs about themselves. They do so because they strive for consistency in beliefs and behaviours “As purchase and consumption are good vehicles for self-expression, consumers often buy products or brands that are perceived to be similar to their own self-concept” (Graeff, 1996). Hence, it can be deduced that products and self-concepts may influence each other reciprocally. Further, while elaborating on the concept it can be said that one attribute that distinguishes humans from other animals is the ability for reflexive thought, i.e. the capacity to reflect the way in which one thinks. Reflexive thought allows one to think about who and how of perceptions by others. Accordingly, one is constantly defining the self. Therefore, any person when asked to define who he is, he will provide an extensive list of characteristics and identities that represent how he perceives himself.

1.5 RELEVANCE OF SELF-CONCEPT IN MARKETING:

Thus with a greater shift in the marketing literature towards understanding the consumers, self concept has emerged as an important concept, due to the fact that it is considered as most significant and suitable to the study of consumer behaviour. The consumer behaviour literature supports the intention that individuals’ self-concept defines particular purchase behaviour patterns (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987). Whether purchasing a day to day product or purchasing a luxury products, individuals now frequently get their self involved in all kinds of purchasing. In their consumption behaviour, the customers attempt to construct their self-concepts, create their personal identity (Belk,1988; Richins,1994) and also extend their identity (Ahuvia, 2005). As a result, the researchers have realized the importance of consumer brand relationships and started exploring them so as to develop an understanding as to how they have developed such relationships.
It is so because, customers tend to buy things they have tried before and are satisfied with (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009).

Every time when individual purchases products, he tries to relate himself with the products and associate himself with the purchase process. However, it is pertinent to mention that they choose those products that are consistent with their self-concept (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982). This is in line with the findings of a study conducted on adolescents by Sharma and Singh (2015), which has suggested that the adolescents in the age group between 11-14 years consider them sporty and have shown their interest in sports brand whereas the age group between 15-17 years age have shown their interest not only in sports but also have more inclination towards fashion oriented brands. Hence, individual use products to create and communicate their self-concept not only to themselves but also to others (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983; Kleine. et. al., 1995, Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Sirgy, 1982).

People usually prefer those products, which they believe make them comparable to the kind of people that they generally think use that product and form a strong relationship between them and the brand, thereby suggesting that the consumption has both functional value and symbolic meanings (Lee & Hyman, 2008). Functional value includes product attributes and characteristics and symbolic includes the personality and lifestyle of consumers that they associate with the purchase process. Consumer these days usually buy those products or brands with which they can symbolically relate and satisfy their personality traits. Thus, it has been pointed out rightly that consumer choose products or brands which are perceptually reliable with their own self-concept (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982). Furthermore, the perceptions about self are closely related with the personality such that individuals are inclined to buy brands whose personalities match with individuals' own self-images (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

In view of the fact that every individual has a different self-concept therefore they act differently in different situation and relate their self-concept with the purchase they make thereby confirming the fact that they prefer those products or brands which are compatible with their self image. The significance of self-concept lies in the fact that what a consumer buys can be affected by the image that the consumer has of himself
(Zinkham & Hong, 1991), thereby, helping the consumers in explaining, maintaining and enhancing their self-concept and also facilitating positive behaviour towards the purchases made. In the words of Graeff (1996), “the more similar a consumer’s self image is to the brand’s image, the more favourable their evaluation of that brand should be”. Thus the relevance of self-concept in marketing can be gauged from the fact that through the purchase and use of brands, consumers explain, develop and sustain their self concept and also help the marketers to build up valuable methods of pleasing various intended markets by targeting different self-concepts.

Individuals directly relate their personality traits with their self and tend to purchase those brands whose personality attributes match with individual’s own self-concepts thereby suggesting that brands have images which are perceived by individuals as an extension of their own image. It further brings to the fore an understanding that the products having symbolic attributes are often considered more important by marketers than the actual physical attributes. In the words of Aaker (1991) feelings, ideas, and attitudes that consumers have about brands are essential to purchase behaviour. Thus, brands are believed to function as symbols which can be used by the consumer to express his or her self-concept e.g. the clothes one wears, the car one drives, etc. All these purchases are chosen because they reflect the individual’s self-concept. Therefore, self-concept is proposed to affect brand choice, as consumers choose the brand which best express one’s self concept.

1.6 BRAND USED AS A NARRATIVE TO EXPLAIN SELF-CONCEPT:

Brands are omnipresent in today’s society and have surrounded everyone in their lives (Kapferer, 2007; Klein, 2000). According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (AMA, 2010). However, the brands have become an essential part of life for today’s young children. They are seen as “hyper-consumers” (Chaplin & John, 2005b) in most of the markets and are explaining their individuality and their preferences regarding many products (John, 1999). Many researchers have determined a strong associations among adolescents and branding (Ross & Harradine, 2004) and found that
children recognised brand by their early age, so much so that children as young as two or three years of age easily recognize familiar packages in the store and familiar characters on products, such as toys and clothing (Haynes et al., 1993) and as they arrive at middle childhood, they start recognising multiple brands by their names in most child-oriented product categories, such as cereal, snacks, and toys (McNeal, 1979; Ward et al., 1977). They start identifying similarities and differences among brands, learning the structural aspects of how brands are positioned within a product category. They also learn about product categories themselves and develop a greater understanding of how product types are grouped together and distinguished from one another (John, 1999). By the time they reach early adolescence, they express strong preferences for some brand names over others based on a relatively sophisticated understanding of their brand concepts and images (Achenreiner & John, 2003).

Thus, brands create huge consumerism; and while referring to India it is mainly led by adolescents, as they constitute more than 40% of its total population. Indian kids have recently attracted considerable attention from both overseas and domestic marketers because the market for children’s products offers great potential and is growing at a very fast rate. According to existing industry data, the chocolate and confectionery market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 20.6% from 2016 to 2020 (India among world's fastest growing chocolate markets: Research, 2017), according to a report by market analyst, the kids apparel market was estimated to be of ₹ 50,120 crore in 2014 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10.7% to reach ₹ 1,38,540 crores in 2024 (Image Business of Fashion, 2016), and branded kids footwear market is expected to reach over ₹ 1800 crores by 2020 (Ken Research, 2016).

Such huge potential therefore needs a strategized effort to be effectively used by the marketers. In this regard, the earlier researchers in marketing literature suggest that the concept of self has been used to elucidate both product choice (Hamm & Cundiff, 1969; Landon, 1974; and Belch & Landon, 1977) and brand choice (Grubb & Hupp, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Co canougher & Bruce 1971; Grubb & Stern, 1971; and Ross, 1971). Several researchers have operationalized the impact that self image has upon brand choice by creating a measure of the congruency of the brand image with the consumer's
self image. Hence, individuals prefer brands whose image is most congruent to their own self images. The more similar a consumer's self-image is to the brand's image, the more favourable is evaluation of that brand" (Graeff, 1996). Therefore, by the time children reach late childhood (ages 10–11), they understand symbolic meanings and status accorded to certain types of possessions and products, as reported in studies of the development of consumption symbolism (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer 1982; Belk, Mayer, & Driscoll 1984) and brand images (Achenreiner & John, 2003; Chaplin & John, 2005). Thus, for adolescents, brands are an element of their own individuality (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004).

Today the consumers desire to purchase those branded product, which give them a feeling that they were made exclusively for them and match their personality characteristics and respond to their need. Moreover, the economic worth of brands is well-established in the business. While brands have become highly valuable assets, brand management has become a priority for most companies, thus brands serve several valuable functions. At their most basic level, they serve as markers for the offerings of a firm. For customers, they simplify choice, promise a particular quality level, reduce risk, and or engender trust. They are built on the product itself, the accompanying marketing activity, and the use by customers as well as others. Brands thus reflect the complete experience that customers have with the products. They also play an important role in determining the effectiveness of market thus, brands are an asset in the financial sense. The significant worth of a brand is not just its capability to articulate the self, but also its role in helping consumers to build their self-identities (McCracken, 1989). Thus, brands become linked to the self when they are able to help consumers achieve the self motivated goals.

Individuals engaged in consumption do not merely purchase certain products to satisfy basic needs. In fact, consumer buying habits are at a much deeper level. Owning a certain brand can help consumers to express and build their own self-concept. Specifically, consumers purchase only when they find a match between the brand and the self-concept. Hence, it can be said that the value of a brand also depends on its ability to help consumers to create self-concept. The customers evaluate brands and develop images of
brands. Different brands are associated with consumers which reflect different traits and values. Thus, brands take on unique, personal meanings to consumers, thereby making one understand that brand is something which resides in the mind of consumers and reflects the perceptions and even idiosyncrasies of consumers.

The attitudes towards a brand, brand preference and purchase intentions are based on the image of a brand as a whole, not only the typical user. Many recent researchers indicate that consumers create their self-identity and present themselves to others through their brand choices based on the congruency between brand-user associations and self-image associations (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). The meaning and value of a brand is not just its ability to express the self, but also its role in helping consumers to create and build their self-identities (McCracken, 1989). The higher levels of self-congruity appear to have a positive effect on brand attitude, product preference, purchase intention, actual behaviour, product evaluation or product attachment (Dolich, 1969; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004; Mugge & Govers, 2004; Kleine, Kleine & Allen, 1995). Since consumers play different roles, brands help them to portray the self-image as desired.

1.7 SELF- CONCEPT AND BRAND PERSONALITY:

Since the late 1950’s, brands have been conceptualised as having a personality (Martineau, 1958) thereby making them differentiable and then increasing personal meaning for the consumer (Fournier, 1998; Plummer, 1984). It is therefore pertinent to mention that personality is now being regarded as one of the core dimensions of the brand identity (Aaker, 1996). Since brand personality and human personality both are durable and stable (Tan, 2004), therefore they both might be used to explain and predict the actions of individuals (Fournier, 1998) however despite this fact, they are different because brands are inanimate objects which are associated with a personality through marketing communications, the image of a typical user of the brand, endorsement by celebrities, product attributes, symbols or any means of personification (Aaker, 1996; Levy, 1959). Moreover, personality traits of people are created and communicated to others through attitudes, behaviours or physical characteristics (Park, 1986). Therefore, brands having personalities or human characteristics have now been well established in the literature, as the brand personality is a vehicle of consumer self-expression and can
be instrumental in helping a consumer to express different aspects of his or her self (Aaker, 1997; Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Johar, Sengupta, & Aaker, 2005). Humanizing a brand empowers it to play a more central role in the consumer’s life, potentially enabling the consumer to project an aspect of his or her self that might be desirable for relationships he or she seeks (Aaker, 1997; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988) or even give a sense of comfort at having a brand that “fits” with his or her self-concept (Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1985; Swaminathan, Page, & Gu¨rhan-Canli, 2007).

This brand significance increases with age due to children starting to find the ones that “fit” better with their personality (Chaplin & John, 2005a). The importance that resides within a brand is an essential factor that influences the consumer’s purchase decision. Individuals mainly use brands as a tool to express themselves and reveal parts of their personality. A brand is therefore suited to be a symbol of the consumer’s personality, if he perceives a fit between his own self-concept and the brand’s personality or image. When a personality or a human appearance are related to the products, the symbolic representation is strengthened; as it assists the consumer to associate with the brand.

Consumers have been supposed to evaluate brands based upon their self-concept and what they desire to be. Thus, argument given by most brand theorists (Temporal, 2002; Keller, 2004; Percy & Elliott, 2007) points out that consumers own the brands; as a result, they look for self-identification with the brands. The personality of the brands symbolize the life stories, lifestyles and pursuits of the consumers. Therefore, the meaning of brand should be coded in the context of what is relevant to the consumer to enable decoding which symbolically represents the values and beliefs, activities and interests, attitudes, aspirations and personalities of the target consumers (Holt, 1997; Kates, 2002). The perceptions about self are closely related with the personality such that individuals are inclined to buy brands with congruent self-images (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

The self-concept of the consumer, influences his assessment of the brands and his purchases (Sirgy, 1982; Belk, 1988; Malhotra, 1988; Zinkham & Hong, 1991; Plummer, 2000 and Parker, 2009). As the individuals enter adolescence, not only do they understand themselves better but also start to understand the concept of brand (Chaplin &
John, 2005). The evaluation of brand is undertaken perceptually on the basis of how well it improves the self-image of the consumer. In consonance with this, the research also suggests that individuals select brands which enable them to improve their self-image and gain greater social acceptance (Belch, 1978). In the words of Keller and Richey, (2006) “Brand personality is seen as a way for consumers to express their actual or idealized self-image.”

Moreover supporting consumers to choose the product and brand, the matching process between self-concept and image of brand and product also determines how consumers assess the brand and product. A brand with a positive brand-image, suggests it to be having an established, strong, favourable and unique relation with the consumer’s personality. Such associations are mainly divided into two parts; as the image of users and the psychological benefits experienced by the users in buying this particular brand or product. Demographic and psychological profile of the typical user is usually a good source of information to make such comparisons and psychological benefits include increased recognition by the peer group and expression of how a person would like other people to see and think of him. When brand associations are related or connected to the self, these associations facilitate consumers to achieve certain goals. These goals include what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are scared of becoming. Therefore, individuals are motivated to create a favourable and consistent self-identity.

Moreover, self-concept is often viewed as component of personality as suggested by Pervin and John (2001). Marketers have acknowledged that customers self image is often more important than actual physical attributes and characteristics of a product or brand. Hence, they always try to create image of their brands in congruence with the self concept of the potential customers. From the above discussion, it can be clearly deduced that self-concepts and brand personality describe relationship between consumers and brands. The consumers look for the compatibility between the features of the brands and the personality they have. Thus pointing out the impact that brands have on the consumers, as they compare their image to that of brands symbolic attributes. They hold special meaning and attachment in making choices to consume a particular brand. Brands
are seen as important in creating an identity, a sense of accomplishment and recognition of consumers who articulate their own self, an ideal self, or specific aspect of self through the use of brands.

In consumer behaviour research, considerable attention has been given to the brand personality construct (Aaker, 1997; Johar et al., 2005). The researchers have suggested that brand personality is a vehicle of consumer self-expression and can be instrumental in helping consumers express their actual self, ideal self, or specific aspects of the self (Belk, 1988). However, it was only after the twentieth century that branding and brand association have become important for competitors. Brand traits figuratively have been considered as a device that facilitates consumer self-expression (Aaker, 1997; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Johar et al., 2005). The human traits bestowed to the brands, authorize them to contribute an essential role in the life of the consumer and expand their relationship with the brand (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). They assist the consumer to re-define his image and facilitate the consumer to recognize how well the brand’s image fits to the consumer’s self-concept (Aaker, 1999; Swaminathan et al., 2007).

Some researchers have investigated the influence of brand personality in enabling consumers to improve their self-image and encouraging self-expression (Malhotra, 1981; Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1993). Rajgopal (2008) has posited that brand personality traits provide a symbolic meaning to the product. Belk (1988) and Dolich (1969) have emphasized that consumers prefer brands, which symbolically represent their actual or desired personality traits. Therefore, the perception of a consumer regarding the brand is influenced by his/her own personality. Even before this, Park (1986) had suggested that perception of personality traits is inferred by the individual’s physical characteristics, attitudes, values and beliefs, behaviour, and demographics.

Thus, the association of the brand (whether direct or indirect) with the consumer helps in visualizing personality of the brands (Plummer, 1985). In this connection, Batra et al., (1993) have contended that the personality of the brand may be associated and developed through marketing efforts like building brand associations through product attributes, category associations, brand name, logo, advertising, pricing and use of appropriate channels of distribution; thus suggesting their centrality in shaping and defining
consumer identities and also expression of the self (Baudrillard, 1998; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Nevertheless, it can also be said that in recent years, the brand has proliferated to such an extent that it seems to have replaced the product itself (Salzer-Morling & Strannegard, 2004).

Consumers have created “self-brand connection” based on the congruency connecting the individual’s “self-image” and the “brand-image” (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). A recent study by Schembri, Merrilees, and Kristiansen (2010) has demonstrated how “consumers use specific brands as a narrative text to communicate who they are”. The power of the consumer-brand relationship has developed to such a degree that it is being reflected in the fact that now it is being investigated within the framework of interpersonal relationships (Sung & Choi, 2010).

In the process of consumer socialization, self-brand connections develop throughout infancy as a result of developmental changes. Major changes occur in the representation of self-concepts between early childhood and adolescence. As children grow older, they conceptualize the self in less real and more abstract terms and identify brand at an early age, as young as 3 or 4 years of age. John and Sujan (1990) in a study have found that children in the 4–7 years of age used perceptual cues (shape, package colour), whereas older children (8–10 years) used no observable conceptual cues (taste) as a basis for classifying products but in middle childhood (7–8 years of age) they were able to name multiple brand products and request products by brand name. Thus, their comparisons of the self-concept with brand take place on a concrete level that self-brand connections are straightforward in nature and might be made on the basis of simply being familiar with or owning a brand. Children in the higher age group of (10–12 years) begin keen appreciation for delicate meanings embedded in brand images converging with a trend toward defining the self in more abstract and complex terms. Brands gain recognition as useful devices for characterizing the self in terms of personality traits, user characteristics, and reference groups.

As children move into adolescence, they have developed strong self-brand connections due to their belief about brand in a very specific way - as having personalities and symbolizing group membership - that provides a natural link to their self-concepts. A
greater understanding of the self, combined with social pressures to “fit in” and signal
group membership, leads adolescents to be more vigilant about the social implications of
owning certain brand. As a result, they possess an even larger number of self-brand
connections, which may be even more complex in nature.

1.8 SELF-BRAND CONNECTION:
Consumers build self-brand concepts and present themselves to others through their
brand choices based on the congruency between brand-user associations and self-image
associations (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). They often choose self congruent products and
brands (Dolich, 1969; Chaplin & John, 2005; Hankinson, 2004). As they discover fit
between their self-concepts and brand images, they are able to make self-brand
connections. Self-brand connections are created when brands prompt strong and
constructive brand associations from the consumer’s perspective (Escalas & Bettman,
2003) which is used to satisfy psychological needs, reinforce identity and allow an
individual to connect to others (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Escalas, 2004). They
combine their self-identity with brand, in order to present themselves to others. Thus,
consumers do not need a specific brand to represent themselves, but a number of different
brands, revealing different identities. Further, it has been seen in many previous
researches that a strong self-brand connections has a potential lead towards favourable
brand attitudes (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005).

1.9 ATTITUDE AND ATTITUDE STRENGTH
Brand attitudes is explained as consumer’s overall evaluations of a brand, which is able
to form the source for purchase intentions as well as actual behaviour; whereas attitude
strength is the amount of degree to which an attitude resists to change and influence
consumer behaviour. Consumers’ attitudes and their strength toward brands can capture
the meaning they associate with brands (Low & Lamb, 2000). These attitudes can be
related to beliefs about product-related attributes and functional and experiential benefits
of the brand (Zeithaml, 1988). Such attitudes can serve as value expressive function by
allowing individuals to express their self-concepts (Keller, 1993). Attitude towards a
brand by a customer has been a critical domain for marketers. Over the years, researchers
have looked into different attributes about products and services that attract customers to choose one brand over the other (Reysen, 2005). Thus, brands serve as powerful repositories of meaning purposively and differentially in the substantiation, creation, and reproduction of products and services (Fournier, 1998).

Consumers’ brand attitude depends on the expectations of benefits from the apprehensive products and the way of providing the benefits to them (Mia, 1999). The foundation of brand image is the brand name itself (Chiranjeeb, 1997). Hence, from the point of view of the marketers, to build and divert the attitude of customers to specific brands, marketers have to be change-makers. They must devise mechanisms to change the way consumers behave and transpose consumers' attitude towards a brand. Thus, Banytė et al. (2007) have concluded that more a customer is involved and engaged in a brand, the greater is the likelihood, for them to shape an attitude towards a brand.

1.10 INVOLVEMENT

Product involvement is the centrality of the object to the person’s ego-structure (Day, 1970). It refers to the attributes linked to certain product relative to customer such as its importance, meanings, value, strength of relationship between customer and product and level of psychological and affective relationship between product and customer (Howard & Sheth, 1969; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Bowen & Chaffee, 1974).

Therefore individuals, who are involved in a brand often feel the importance of expressing how they differ from those who are not involved (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Further, Involvement is personal and connected to values and needs, but it also says something about an individual’s emotions and thoughts about a brand, a purchase situation or an advertisement. Thus, involvement level changes over time, and it depends on the situation (Zaichkowsky, 1985).

Further, Zaichkowsky (1985) has opined that involvement is something personal. This is connected to the individuals’ needs, values, and self-concept and it reflects the individuals’ thoughts and emotions about an object. The concept of involvement describes the individuals’ relation to the object, or how an individual responds to it. Therefore, the involvement depends on the individual, object and the situation, which
could change over time. This object under reference may be a product or a brand, an advertisement, or a purchase situation (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). Involved customers can be interested in having a positive relationship with a company (Varki & Wong, 2003; Hanzaee et al., 2011; Guthrie & Kim, 2008). Thus, it has a potential of creating long-term relationships for companies, if it is managed in the right way. This type of relationship demands highly-involved customers (Varki & Wong, 2003).

Such customers are not that willing to go from one brand to another (Smith & Carsky, 1996). They seek to find information and consider the purchase carefully before making a decision (Drossos & Fouskas, 2010); so as to get high value for their money (Smith & Carsky, 1996). In comparison to high-involved customers, low-involved customers are easy to influence and they seem to base their purchases in routines (Drossos & Fouskas, 2010). One outcome of such involved customer towards a product or a brand could lead towards positive attitude and positive buying intention (Chen & Leu, 2011). Hence, it can be concluded that product involvement represents a concern with a product that the consumer brings into a purchase decision (Pedersen & Nysveen, 2005).

**1.11 NEED FOR THE STUDY**

- Individuals use brands to create and communicate their self-concepts, thereby creating self-brand connections. Although this phenomenon is well documented in the adult consumers and many researchers have written about this phenomenon but very little research has been conducted on adolescents.

- The unleashing of a liberalised to a Globalised Indian economy has led to a higher standard of living in urban and sub-urban India; thereby increasing a greater purchasing power for households resulting in an increased demand for products especially among the adolescents. Marketers believe that this more materialistic adolescent segment, which is globally connected is abandoning the austere ways and restricted markets. They are demanding a more cosmopolitan society, thereby becoming a full-fledged member of the global economy. This generational shift in attitudes is all the more important because this group is growing so rapidly as about 50% of Indians are below the age of 25 (IBEF, 2017).
• Adolescents constitute an important consumer market, to be exploited by every industry that trades in material for identity: cosmetics, clothing, media, self-help, and paraphernalia of all sorts. Thus it is the need of the marketers to focus on such a huge and powerful marketing segment.

• Adolescent marketing has become very critical due to the sheer demographics and the buying power this amazing group has and can influence. The pester power this group has on the discretionary family income is also attracting market researchers to understand their attitudes and involvement leading to the self brand connections.

• Understanding their attitudes and involvement in developing Self-Brand Connections is vital for the marketing strategies from the business point of view. As “Lind storm” (2003) rightly said they are a marketers dream. Gaining them at this stage is very vital to the company 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.

• Both marketers and academic research acknowledge that adolescents constitute a big market segment and a powerful one. They are not only playing a significant role in family decision making; but are also gaining responsibility, as consumers in their own right. In addition to being important end consumers for products like chocolates, ice creams, clothing, toys and entertainment, adolescents are known to exert considerable influence on product consumption for almost all categories today.

• Despite previous research attempts, we have limited knowledge that how adolescents connect their self concept with brand. Adolescents as a critical segment have been neglected in branding literature also. Moreso, no prior work has been done in India in the context of establishing Self-brand connections among adolescents.
• For these reasons, it becomes important for the researcher to identify how the Indian adolescents can be targeted by the marketers in times where India has the largest population of adolescents in the world, being home to more than 243 million individuals aged 10-19 years (Unicef, 2012). Moreover by 2015, Adolescent Indians under 20 make up 55% of the population and wield proportionately higher spending power, hence there is a greater urgency to study this ever growing adolescent market behaviour in order to gain a competitive edge in building self brand concept within this astounding market segment.

1.12 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This research study is summed up and divided into six chapters, along with tables and annexure to support the analysis and the study. An overview of the contents of the chapters is given below:

Chapter I - Introduction: Self-Concept and Branding

This chapter briefly outlines the changing trends in the consumer behaviour of today’s adolescent consumers, who constitute a huge market segment in India. It further highlights the relationship between self-concept and branding and emphasises that how self-brand connection develops among consumer segment especially adolescents; thereby outlining the need for study.

Chapter II - Review of Literature

The review has been prepared by studying various research papers and articles from journals, published book, thesis, dissertations and other articles. It focuses on the four main constructs of the study i.e. self-brand connection, attitude, attitude strength and product involvement. The elaborative review has helped us in identifying the research gap in the study.

Chapter III – Self-Brand Connection among Adolescents

This chapter consists of detailed discussion on self-brand connection among adolescents. A detailed discussion has been deliberated upon adolescents and their emergence as
consumers in India. This chapter also highlights how they build their connection with brands they purchase.

**Chapter IV - Research Methodology**

This chapter discusses the nature of the study, formation of research hypotheses and objectives. It also explains the research methodology adopted in the study i.e. combination of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and further give details on research area, sampling, questionnaire designing, pilot survey, final data collection, tabulation and purification as well as reliability analysis and validation of data.

**Chapter V - Data Analysis and Findings**

This chapter elaborates the detailed analysis and interpretation of the results derived from the application of various relevant statistical tools and techniques to the data. The main tools used for the analysis are:

- Collage
- Cronbach’s alpha
- Regression
- Correlation
- ANOVA
- T-Test
- Barron and Kenny’s mediation effect
- Sobel test

**Chapter VI - Summary, Conclusions and Suggestions**

This chapter comprises of the detailed summary of the research findings and highlights the conclusion and suggestions emerging from the discussion.
CONCLUSION:

This chapter discusses in detail how consumer behaviour has become imperative for studying the adolescent consumers. Since there has been a drastic change in consumer behaviour especially among the adolescent consumers in India, therefore this chapter has highlighted the shifting behaviour pattern of consumers and how this has led to development of customer brand relationship among them. Moreover, this chapter has also discussed the development of self-concept and how brand has been used by marketers to explain self-concept among adolescents. Thus, suggesting the relationship between self-brand connection, attitude, attitude strength and product involvement in order to identify the need to carry out this study.
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