CHAPTER-3

SELF-BRAND CONNECTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS

They can be seen in malls, armed with money and mobiles. They're India's latest trend – the subcontinent's first generation of actual adolescents.

The story of the growing Asian Consumer is incomplete without a complete understanding of India. With its young, tech-savvy people, enhanced culture and swift growth, India is creating a consumer market intensely tied into mobility and connectivity. As per the report by Goldman Sachs (2016), it has been concluded that expenditure in neighbours like China is motivated by an emerging urban middle class whereas in India, it can be understood by the utmost opportunities in the much larger Urban Mass. This suggests that the Indian consumer today is completely different as compared to two decades back. It is so due to the fact that he is more materialistic, realistic and demographically younger, which is exhibited from the fact that since the world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, India alone is home to 356 million in this age bracket (UNFPA, 2014). It is now accepted as a country of young generation as 50% of Indians being under 25 years of age (Population of India, 2017) and under 18 years constitute 40% of the total population (Census, 2011).

Thus, the consumer profile has undergone an absolute makeover and the factors like rising disposable incomes of the family, more exposure to the global world and increase in young population have further contributed to this change. This fact has been corroborated by the BCG report, which has clearly stated that the consumers’ purchasing power has significantly increased, both, in terms of salary and pocket money. Therefore, with rising incomes among the Indian middle class, their exposure to market has gained momentum, as the overall consumer spending in India is likely to expand to $4 trillion by 2025 (BCG, 2017).
The facts above point towards a tremendous revolution in the shopping behaviour amongst Indian consumers especially the adolescent consumers, whose purchasing power has increased extensively. An ASSOCHAM survey has revealed that the average monthly allowance of urban children in the age group of 10-17 years has gone up from Rs 300 in 1998 to Rs 1,300 in 2008 (as cited in Ghosh, 2008). In 2011, again a survey was conducted by ASSOCHAM on “Current Pocket Money Trends in Urban India” on respondents in the 12-20 years age group in five metros which has shockingly revealed that children were getting pocket money upwards of Rs.12,000 per month in India, many times more than what children were getting six years ago (as cited in Dholakia, 2011). Further another study conducted by IMRB (2014) has pointed out that contented and persuaded Indian consumers enjoy spending on personal needs and entertainment and even they avoid cutting lifestyle spending in contrast with the traditional Indian mindset of cautious spending and guilt associated with spending. Further, the spending pattern has been identified in another survey conducted by ASSOCHAM according to which it has been brought to the fore that kids were spending 55% money on electronic gadgets, 25 per cent spent on movies and malls, and about 20 per cent on eating out( as cited in Kannan, 2016). However, they now lay more emphasis on the quality and value of the product they purchase rather than the prices they pay for it. Therefore, consumers have gradually become more knowledgeable, as they shop to make sure that they obtain the best value from their purchases. Beyond doubt, India occupies a significant place in the marketing world and further the adolescents have been identified as the major budding market segment by the marketers. Simultaneously, it is also to point out that, many multinational marketers have failed to analyze this key segment and explore their potential. Therefore, there is need to be familiar with and recognize this influential consumer segment.

3.1 MEANING OF ADOLESCENTS:

The term adolescence is derived from the Latin word adolescere, "to grow up." The Random House Dictionary defines adolescence as "the process or condition of growing up; the growing age of human beings; the period which extends from childhood to manhood or womanhood; ordinarily considered as extending from fourteen to twenty-five
in males, and from twelve to twenty-one in females.” As a notion, adolescence has evolved in its natal, societal, and psychological implications, but its most substantial progress has occurred in adult perceptions of the norms and behaviour of young people.

Several researchers have defined the term adolescent in different ways. In the words of Gentry and Campbell (2002) adolescent is used to define a human whose age is between 10 to 18 years while Goldberg, Gorn, Peracchio and Bamossy,(2003) have focused on 9-14 age group and Le Bigot (2004) consider the adolescents in 11-24 age group whereas WHO defines adolescents as those who are aged between 10-19 years (WHO, 2017). Thus, the facts above suggest that adolescents as a group are the most dynamic segment marked with changes not only at an individual level but also at social level. Therefore, they are considered to be an interesting group to study. Due to such transitional phase, they look like adults, but not all their emotional, mental, social and physical capabilities are fully developed, therefore, they are considered as a vague category, who are no longer referred to kids and at the same time have not yet reached adulthood, cumulatively they are characterized by four basic phenomena: the beginning of puberty, cognitive development, social development, and the construction of identity.

Therefore, adolescence begins with puberty and ends with the attainment of maturity. However, it is also to point out that they are mature enough to form their personal identity and emotional autonomy and start thinking logically and attain decision making skills. They shift from parents to peer orientation culminating with an increased capacity for intimacy with peers and adults. Hence, adolescence as a phase is marked as a period in which children experience stressful life events in terms of physical, social, and psychological transitions (Derbaix & Leheut, 2008). The tables (3.1a-3.1b) describe the specificities of adolescents and different definitions of adolescents as outlined by various authors.
Table 3.1a: Specificities of Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>CHARACTERSTICS OF ADOLESCENTS</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity And social approval</td>
<td>The adolescent detaches himself from the family core to search for reference points among his peers, who become a very significant socialization agent.</td>
<td>Ward (1974), Moschis and Moore (1979)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity crisis</td>
<td>In adolescence, the individual enters the stage. The maturity of individual identity is inseparable from the parallel development of a social identity, and individual identity has to be established throughout social interactions.</td>
<td>Erikson (1968), Auty and Elliott (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Adolescence is a period favourable to the development of preferences in terms of brands and products</td>
<td>Holbrook &amp; Schindler (1994), Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The adolescent evaluates products on the basis of multiple attributes (functional, perceptual and social)</td>
<td>John (1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derbaix and Leheut (2008)
Table 3.1b: Age as an indicator of Adolescence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCIPLINE</th>
<th>DEFINITION OF ADOLESCENCE</th>
<th>SOURCES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>The adolescent is considered as a minor in the legal sense. He is therefore legally incapable although case law tends to reduce this incapability with age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Adolescence is not based solely on an of other elements such as the onset of puberty, status, autonomy, tasks to be carried out and competences to be acquired.</td>
<td>Cloutier (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Adolescence is period that separates childhood from adulthood. “Rites of passage” mark the transition from one age group to the next.</td>
<td>Erikson (1968)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>There are two currents: the commencement of adolescence is placed either around 12 years of age or at the start of secondary education. However, marketing studies carried out on adolescents show that there is no consensus on the beginning or end of adolescence.</td>
<td>Chaplin and John (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 11-16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Roedder John (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Palan and Wilkes (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13-18</td>
<td></td>
<td>D’Astous, Maltais and Roberge (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 10-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>WHO(2017), UNICEF (2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derbaix and Leheut (2008)
3.2 ADOLESCENTS IN INDIA:

India is an exclusive country comprising of diversified cultures that’s why there is no one ..........India, but a group of small clusters tied together because of the traditional values. Therefore, studying human beings especially adolescents in a country like India is a challenge because of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, as it marks the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood and sets the stage for adult life. The nature and quality of young people’s future lives, as well as a country’s future social and economic development, depend largely on how well adolescents navigate this transition. Furthermore, adolescents are not a homogeneous group; their situations and needs vary by age, sex, socio-cultural context, including marital status, level of educational attainment, employment status, rural–urban residence, migration status, sexual activity, living arrangements, religion, and household economic status.

In India, innumerable social, economic, and developmental factors have weakened the ability of adolescents to lead full and productive lives. Therefore, this segment is of particular concern for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India (GOI). Though they have adopted the WHO definition of adolescents, whereas various others agencies of the government continue to use different definitions and age groups. The lack of consensus on the age group and therefore, the lack of characterisation of the vulnerabilities of adolescents has made it difficult to form policies; provide legal protection; and create health, education and social welfare services for the adolescent population. It is well recognized that India’s ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the population stabilisation goals largely depend upon the investment made on its young people.

In India, every 5th person is an adolescent (10-19 years), as per census 2011. Adolescents aged 10–19 years constitute about one-fourth of India’s population and young people aged 10–24 years about one-third of the population, thus, forming a huge consumer base, therefore, India is referred to as a country of young generation. This large cohort of young people represents a great demographic profile with a potential to contribute to India’s economic growth and development. While referring to the statistics, the total adolescent population of India is 253 million approximately. Among them 204.2 million
(i.e. 80.7%) reside in rural area and 48.576 or 49 million (i.e. 19.2%) reside in urban area, as per the data provided by census (2011) thereby suggesting an immense potential of the segment. A study by the US Department of Commerce suggests that India has 20 million people with annual incomes greater than US$13,000; 80 million with incomes in excess of US$3,500; and 100 million people whose incomes are higher than US$2,800. With rising incomes and more money in the hands of the Indian consumer, in a short time the country’s economy has moved from being socialist driven to consumption driven (Biyani & Baishya, 2007). The Indian consumer market, motivated by increasing disposable incomes i.e. with the average household income expected to triple to USD 18,500 in 2020 from USD 6,400 in 2010 and a favourable demographic shift towards a majority working population (age group of 15-59 years — expected to be 64% of total population by 2021) is evolving rapidly and providing new opportunities for consumer companies (FICCI, 2016). In congruence with this fact, the consumer tastes and preferences have also seen a similarly dramatic shift, resulting from changing demographic profiles, increasing income levels, urbanization, technology, globalization, and a free flow of ideas from within and outside the country (Bijapurkar, 2007).

The facts above clearly point towards the fact that catering to the needs of this emerging group is critically challenging; however at the same time it is essential also. Further in order to realise their potential to the fullest, young people must be strong, knowledgeable and equipped with information skills and confidence that would enable them to add to their communities and the country’s socio-economic growth.

3.3 THE ADOLESCENT MARKET:

Many researchers all over the world have carried out research work on children and adolescents and examined their consumer behaviour since as early as 1950s. Further recognition of children as a consumer segment followed in the 1960s, as researchers comprehended their scope of assessment to include children’s understanding of marketing and retail functions (McNeal, 1964), influence on parents in purchasing decisions (Berey & Pollay, 1968) and relative influence of parents and peers on consumption patterns (Cateora, 1963). The marketers concentration in youth marketing most likely boomed with the book “Children as consumers: insights and implications”
written by Dr. James U. McNeal in 1987, due to the fact that it was the first time that adolescents were considered as a legitimate market of consumers (Siegel, Coffey & Livingston, 2001).

In the pursuit to analyse this segment of adolescents when they are neither treated as children nor they are physically developed to fit the adult section, some of the researchers have defined adolescence as the age when kids begin shopping for them and buy those products which they like (Levinson, 2001). This is due to the fact that swift changes occurring in their bodies make them sensitive to their appearance and moving out of parental influence may lead to the prerequisite of emotional anchors and brands could be a route to this, making them more open to such new relationships (Ji, 2008; Montgomery, 2005). Hence, they pay special attention to anything that activates and supports their self-image, in particular products and brands (Derbaix & Leheut, 2008). As a result, separate segmentation for them has become essential, featuring their styles and requirement. The researchers have opined that young children have increasing capability to collect more information regarding brands and also have a capacity to use this information in their buying process (Mohtar & Abbas, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative for the marketers to recognize the changes and conflicts in adolescents growing up and accordingly plan products and marketing strategies to attract them. Their aim is twin pronged to get them as a customer not only to buy more for an ample profit but also to retain them as future consumers.

In domestic as well as global markets, the adolescent market has become a key consumer segment (Kotler & Keller, 2011). The present generation of adolescents are quite diverse from the earlier ones, as they are highly brand conscious and more anxious about the brand name, (Koester & May, 1985; Daters, 1990) style, and the most recent trends in market. In line with this, the marketers have succeeded in developing prestigious brand images that seem to have a high appeal for many consumers (Klein, 2000) in their early age. This cohort of young purchasers has brand awareness because they have complete information about brand and preferences. However, Leonhard and Kerwin (1997) and Zinn (1994) have concluded that children and adolescents are faithful to brands such as Gap, Nike, and Abercrombie & Fitch as they recognize these brands since their earlier
ages. For these reasons, companies and advertisers’ interest towards this segment has considerably increased, and new and more sophisticated methods are being developed in order to reach them (Tufe, 2005).

Researchers have indicated that brand awareness plays a pivotal role in order to attract them towards market. Ross and Harradine (2004) have suggested that earlier a child establishes awareness of a brand, the stronger brand associations are likely to be; when they become independent consumers. Increased awareness of brands leads to greater brand associations among them. This fact has also been confirmed by Achenreiner and John (2003) who have suggested that children across varied age groups relate differently to the meaning of a brand name. Thus, brand name is a key driving factor that influences adolescents buying behaviour, thereby helping a marketer to take advantage of long term payoffs in brand loyalty, as adolescent today become the buyers of tomorrow. In addition, some other factors affecting adolescent consumers purchasing patterns are demography, personality, psychological and peer influence etc. It has already been proven that brand names are a key element facilitating product differentiation and demand (Bao, Shao & Rivers, 2008), as it may take a consumer thirty seconds to comprehend an advertisement or possibly hours to understand a sales call, but an effective brand name can be noticed, and its meaning registered in memory, in just a matter of seconds (Keller, 2003) therefore it leads to the creation of a brand name that is noticed and remembered from a very young age. Marketers feel that this is the age when they should start making product choices and spend their personal money as and when they desire.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in adolescent consumer spending. In monetary terms the adolescent power in the market place in the world was to the tune of USD 819 bn in 2012 (Sommer, 2012), True to this fact, they have been described by (Lindstorm, 2003) as the richest generation, whose spending approximately doubles every 10 years over the last three decades. Therefore, it is pertinent to comment that this is a generation with economic power unlike anyone before them (Solomon & Roboly, 2004). This clearly points towards the fact that adolescent market is rising at a high pace in the world. Thereby, creating many opportunities for marketers, but there are many challenges also involved in the marketing process (Chaet, 2012).
The spending power of this generation is huge and increasingly growing as per “Targeting the Youth Market” (Datamonitor, 2000). The research firm Datamonitor has mentioned four reasons why youth spending power in Europe and America is increasing, which are summed up as:

1) Increase in divorce rates allow children to exploit guilty parents off, one against the other, gaining extra benefits from them.

2) These days couple prefer to have career first and children second. This means their earnings are higher when they have kids.

3) More dual-income families mean more disposable money.

4) Working parents are spending more time working far from their children. To ease their guilt and balance their absence, they often increase pocket money levels.

Since the spending power of this age group kids has exhibited a continued growth, the marketers, manufacturers and advertisers have become progressively more apprehensive in planning effective methods of reaching them. In order to achieve this objective, there is an urgent need to understand them as consumers from: what they believe, what they want, how they behave, how they make decisions and use information.

This understanding of adolescent behaviour has helped the marketers to analyze their spending patterns and come out with long-term winning strategies. It has often been seen that adolescent consumers spend most of their money in buying branded products and have become a growing force in almost all global markets, increasing not only in number, but more importantly in spending power also. Therefore, most companies have tried to harness this financial power of the adolescent market, however very few have therefore succeeded in reaping the rewards of adolescents brand loyalty. It is pertinent to mention that the immense potential of this segment has made it even more important for marketers to arrive at the correct methodology at the earliest to conquer them.

In this context the marketers need to identify their purchasing behaviour and also study the factors influencing such decisions. This vulnerable generation has been raised in a commodity culture from the cradle; where reliable delicate self-images and their need to
belong to groups are perfect qualities for marketers to exploit (Quart, 2003). Accordingly, this generation is termed as the richest generation in history, categorized by having surplus pocket money and control over parental purchases. Furthermore, this age group is the most brand sensitive and knowledgeable, as they relate themselves with the brands they purchase and assume the role of consumer decision makers at a young age. As and when they grow older, they develop more sophisticated decision-making skills and abilities along with a greater awareness of different information sources which they deploy in a more flexible manner depending on need (Moore & Stephens, 1975; Moschis & Moore, 1979). They utilize attribute information in evaluating products and adapt their decision strategies to the nature of the choice environment they face. Thus, it evidently suggests that they are very brand competent and getting hold of them as consumers is imperative to companies, since it is likely that they will trust their brands when they are adults (Smallshaw, 2001).

Adolescents are largely oriented towards fashion and their physical appearance. They have been accepted as placing more importance on appearance than any other age group (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1998) and are affected by socialization and self-perception within the group. This fact has been mentioned by Zollo (1995), who has stated that adolescents are trendsetters who extend fashion and culture for the population at large. Adolescents from the age of 13 to 19 - currently spend $150 billion per year globally. They also influence an additional $150 billion per year globally with “pester power” in addition also they indirectly influence another $300 billion per year, for example, in situations in which a parent makes a purchase taking into account kids’ tastes. Thus the segment represents a total purchasing/influencing power of $600 billion this year (Bhattacharya & Saha, 2015). Their spending is equally derived from their own funds which they earn from their pocket money or part time jobs and parental allowances (Kim, 1993; Stipp, 1993). The keenness with which this segment undertakes its role is manifested in their active participation in purchasing their own clothing, food, cars, and entertainment (Kim, 1993; Peters, 1989; Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Further it has been seen that today’s adolescents are highly pampered by their parents and are expected to participate in family shopping to an exceptional degree compared to the generation in past. It is due to the fact that they belong to single parents or dual career parents, therefore
they keep them involved in all the purchase decisions taken by them and are influenced by media, friends and family, which in turn have an impact on their psychological, emotional and personal development. They not only make decisions independently, but also influence decisions of their parents thereby suggesting that the generation is determined, supporting, authoritative, and acquainted with technology than previous generations (Chaet, 2012)

Since they are empowered with technology and are more associated with the world, they can be considered as global citizens (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003; Siegel, Timothy & Livingston, 2004). This is the first generation to have grown up with online chat and multiplayer online games as part of their milieu but they also use the Internet not only to find out new things, to make new friends from all over the world, to compete with them for mastery of their virtual worlds, and to co-create new communities and planets. They are influenced by media and are the first generation to use the internet freely (Simon, 2001), which has an immense impact on their behaviour. They are also masters of multitasking and are able to do their homework, talk on the phone with friends, watch TV, surf the Net, chat online, and listen to music all at the same time. As a result the adolescents are being considered as the change agents in every society, powerful and influential as ever in almost all areas with a far greater exposure to technology.

Such highlighted exposure to the marketing world has instigated them to form mental pictures of corporate logos and mascots around the age of two, and as a result they can be influenced by different brands before they are even able to have a conversation (Lindstrom, 2004) leading to creation of a strong picture of brands in their mind set. Thus, giving an opportunity to the marketers in designing influential brands, which lay a strong impact in their minds that the determined appeal stays for whole life (Quart, 2003). In line with this, the adolescents have become a productive market for advertisers and marketers. Today they exist as a new demographic created for the sole purpose of selling products and promoting brand loyalty.

McNeal (1992) had rightly pointed out that adolescents are particularly significant to marketers since they can be viewed as “three markets in one”. They can be considered as primary market, influence market and future market. In addition, each of these major
types of market can be segmented accordingly to other different variables such as age, gender and life-style. This is so due to the fact that adolescents are a primary market in their own right. They are present day buyers and consumers, they have their own money, desires and willingness to spend their money in what they want to. Secondly, they are an influence market because they have an effect on their parents’ purchase decisions. They have a direct influence when they expressly ask for a branded product or a place where to go eating; but they also have an indirect influence since parents, when make purchases, take into consideration their kids preferences. Finally, they are a future market. Of the three dimensions of this market, this has the greatest potential as the branding opinions shaped at an early age can severely impact upon adolescents consumer choices when they grow old and, as a result, can impact on a company’s future earnings.

Young people comprised of both children and adolescents, are richer and better up to date than they have ever been therefore , it is indispensable for the marketers to keep in mind that all the adolescents are certainly not alike and it would be a great blunder to consider them as a whole. There are remarkable differences from age to age and also from boys to girls. In order not to miss any critical cognitive and behavioural factors that has an impact on the results of marketing efforts all over the world, it has been suggested to look at this market segment from different perspectives (Siegel et al., 2001).

3.4 EMERGENCE OF ADOLESCENT MARKET IN INDIA:

“They are a generation caught on rapid forward, in a fearsome urgency to rise up. Richer than ever, they’re also a retailer’s dream, with a apparently avid desire for the latest in everything”. Kantrowitz and Wingert, (1999)

The last twenty five years have seen a variation in terms of lifestyle preferences and buying trends among Indian consumers. The Indian economy especially urban India after 1991, embraced consumerism and there was an increased desire for branded products. This brand desire was fuelled by the electronic media, which resulted in drastic change in the lifestyle of the consumers. Due to this, not only adults but young generation also became conscious of not only the national or international brands but also the lifestyle attributes connected to the brand. Thus the marketers had succeeded in developing
prestigious brand images presenting great appeal to many consumers (Klein, 2000). This clearly suggests an incredible transformation of an Indian consumer, who few decades ago, saved most of his income, purchased the bare necessities and rarely indulged himself in shopping but today, they being equipped with higher income, credit cards, exposure to the shopping culture of the west, and a desire to improve their standard of living are spending like never before.

Among the Indian consumers, the adolescents constitute a major consumer market with both direct and indirect purchase influence on purchasing day to day items or luxury items. They even persuade household spending of small and big purchases. This large segment represents a great demographic dividend with the potential to contribute to India’s economic growth and development. In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in adolescent consumer spending. Taking into consideration all the consumer segments, it has been found that adolescents are not only a significant part of the rapidly increasing markets worldwide, but they are also significant trendsetters for others in the community to follow. In both respects they constitute a very important segment for marketers in India. In addition, the sheer number of adolescents in India, 253 million between 10 – 19 years (UNICEF INDIA, 2011), is a reason enough for this demographic to be studied very closely.

With the advent of cultural shifts and emergence of westernization in India, the consumer segment has undergone massive changes. The increase in standard of living and purchasing power have empowered them with more money and they have got more spending power and the average real household disposable income has compounded with an annual growth rate of 5.3% from 2005-2025 (McKinsey, 2007). Besides, India is also expected to see an overall projected salary increase of 10.8% as per TOWER WATSON (2015-16), Asia–Pacific Salary Budget planning Report thereby, escalating and adding to their purchase capability.

The literature suggests that the Indian adolescents’ share of expenditure in the Indian market is worth $2.8 billion (Rana, 2007); and one of the factors contributing in this share has been change in the market structure with the advent of globalization. Young Indian consumers today have more choices than ever before. They are more
technologically aware, self motivated and are in general more conscious and have the power to influence the market through their decisions when confronted with choices in the market. They are radical agents of change who influence the society and culture (Leslie, Sparling & Owen, 2001; Grant & Waite, 2003) and are ready to experiment and are aware of their experiences (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). They form a powerful spending group and are a specialized market segment (Grant & Waite, 2003). Rising disposable incomes, willingness to spend and greater exposure to media make this class a spending machine. In addition, with 55 per cent of India's population below the age of 25, the role of youth is likely to assume greater significance, be it the electronic gadgets like laptops, mobile phones, i Pads or latest fashion clothes or accessories or the newest thing in the market - the adolescents are always keen to buy them. As per a study conducted by Sharma and Singh (2015) majority of them have mentioned brands like Nike, Puma, Reebok, Madame, U.S Polo, CK, Addidas, Fastrack, Amway etc. as their favourite brands. They have identified themselves as realistic in their approach and getting fascinated to the brands that are authentic, honest, cool, keep their message short and clear. Further the authors have pointed out that the adolescents in the age group of 11-14 years consider themselves as ‘cool ’and ‘trendy’, whereas, their counterpart i.e. 15-18 years consider themselves as more ‘friendly’ and ‘honest.’

Marketing to adolescents has always been a challenging task because this age group is a collection of contradictions and expressions, a fickle lot with evolving tastes and preferences influenced easily by friends, popular culture, and brands. It has been observed that adolescents like to talk about themselves and are fond of making friends and socialize with them through social networking sites. They enjoy shopping and like to freak out with friends at some food points. They take pleasure in travelling and love nature. They like to play different sports, are fashion oriented and are also conscious about their looks.

The research conducted by Sharma and Singh (2015) on adolescents in the age group of 11-18 years has suggested that they have diversified choices, it may be attributed to the fact that this group has a high level of brand consciousness and have developed self brand connection with those brands which suit their personality. As per the conclusions, they
were not particular about any one brand, but 90%, mentioned brands of shoes, clothes and accessories, rest 10% mentioned names of other product category brands. Thus, it can be concluded that the adolescents in the above categories of age group have a well developed perception about their self and are also able to explain it. They look for those brands which suit their personality and also connect with a particular brand only when it satisfies their psychological needs.

Adolescents in India deserve marketers’ special attention, as they have a high purchasing power and are considered as trendsetters, who have a high influence on family purchase decisions. They are a growing market and are future consumers who enjoy shopping and are socially driven. Hence, Indian adolescents are most challenging, fascinating and swiftly varying age segment who constitute an important customer group because of their discretionary spending power.

It is important for the marketers to understand the needs and wants behind their buying patterns, as they are more brand conscious today than ever before. The products which are purchased by adolescents in fact reveal their priorities and lifestyles. They are not only big media users, but they’re big media fans, and their eager media consumption helps to nationalize their experience, connecting them through common images and expressions. Today, adolescents are engaging in a greater variety of activities, have more responsibilities and pursue activities of their own for reasons of self improvement or social benefit. Probably no other segment of population is as involved or motivated by life style trends as adolescents. They keep family values first but listen to their friends for the latest source of information. Celebrity is integral part of their culture. Most of them believe themselves to be brand loyal and have an emotional association with products and brands. This generation has a lot of appreciation for recent fashion, art, cultural and environmental efforts (Carter, 2011) and therefore are all set to take up new trends and fashions.
The main characteristics of today’s adolescents are summed up as below:

3.4.1 Characteristics of Adolescents:

Aspirational.

This generation is quite aspirational as they look for opportunities, privileges, risk etc.

Anxious

They describe themselves as daring, risk takers and are keen to try new and different things.

Socially connected

This age group loves to spend time with their friends. They relate themselves more with their friends and feel connected with them. They choose their friends based on common interest and enjoy spending time with them. They enjoy more with their friends than their family because of the reason that they can easily share their thoughts and feeling with them without out any fear of being judged. This generation is quite diverse, educated, and caring.

Love freedom

They generally feel that they should have freedom and independence in everything they do.

Music is a key constituent of their world.

Music is a universal language for them. They are big lovers of music and also consider music as an ice breaker for them.

Hyper - Connected:

This generation is well-informed and comfortable with technology. They consider themselves as a Hi- tech group. Technology not only fills their need for instant access to information, it helps them to stay connected, filling their need for a sense of belongingness and recognition. They have gained expertise in handling technology and
are very comfortable with the Internet, using online services for sending email, chatting, shopping, downloading music etc.

**Fond of sports:**

They are conscious about their looks and health. To remain fit they involve themselves in a variety of athletic activities and sports. They love to play diverse sports. Physical activity helps them to stay physically and emotionally balanced as well as provides entertainment, social interaction, and a means to exercise their competitive natures. They have a close affinity with sports brands.

**Media lovers:**

This generation is keen to watch television and listening to music in addition are quite conscious about the events around them. Since the Indian adolescents have always been different from their counterparts abroad, branding to them is not an easier task. As a result, many marketers are aiming to gain a head start on branding, in the hopes of creating future loyal customers (Torres, 2001; Ji, 2002).

It is however to point out that as there are not many adolescent specific brands in India, as a result majority of the strategies have been adopted from foreign countries, to address the escalating Indian adolescent customers in Indian

**3.5 BUILDING CONNECTION WITH THE BRANDS:**

*Between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine, the line is difficult to draw.* James (1890)

A powerful brand acts as an ambassador, when companies make a way into new markets or offer new products. It also shapes corporate strategy, helping to define the initiatives which fit within the brand concept and which do not. That’s why the companies that once measured their worth strictly in terms of tangibles such as factories, inventory and cash have realized that a vibrant brand, with its implicit promise of quality, is an equally important asset for any organisation (Business week, 2001). Brands as assets, are one of the most valuable wealth of the companies and act as a main link between a producer and
a customer which give an identity to the community. Thereby, suggesting that the customers consider brands in the selection process of a product when they have an intention to purchase. Thus, it can be inferenced that the brand is important, as it helps the organization to influence the consumer behaviour and buy the product that encourages them to repeat the purchase process. Therefore, the companies are making efforts to find out the ways to create strong connection between the brands and customers especially among adolescents. In the academic research also, it has been argued that owning the right branded products can be highly important for the adolescent consumers (Jezkova Isaksen & Roper, 2012).

However, Branding is no longer an adult affair. From the time kids are born they are in fact surrounded by several brands, from Pampers, to J&J baby products etc. (Ji, 2002). Even at six months of age, when babies start imitating simple sounds like “ma-ma”, they are also able to form mental images of corporate logos. At the age of two they can build up connection with certain brands, such as cereals, body products, diapers etc, which may last a lifetime impact on them (McNeal, 1992). Thus, children show self-brand connection at an early age and use brand names and logos to define who they are (Chaplin & John, 2005). When they grow older, they become more aware of different brands they not only use brands, such as McDonalds' food, pizza hut, jenny and johny, ben 10 kits ,barbie dolls etc, through the purchases of their parents, but they also begin to buy products using their own income (McNeal, 1999) which they get in the form of pocket money from their parents. On the whole, children consume a broad range of brands and these first experiences certainly influence their choices when they become adults (Siegel et al., 2001).

The brand helps in forming adolescents’ perceptions of products as well as being a focal point for meaning and value that products have for different individuals, as has also been suggested by McCracken (1986). Thus, they are looking for products that fit into their self-concept. However, it is well recognized in self-theories that individuals perceive themselves from different perspectives and with multiple selves (Markus & Kunda, 1986). Thus, self-concept is understood to consist of several distinct facets (e.g., the actual self, the desired self, the ought self, and more).
Accepting, oneself is perhaps the most powerful notions of consumer behaviour. Consumers sometimes incorporate possessions in their self as a means to construct identity (Belk, 1988). Thus, they create attributions about who they are and who others are based on what they consume. The conceptualization of self-brand connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Fournier, 1998; Park et al., 2010) has been first and foremost a universal association between the self and the brand. When consumers incorporate a brand into their identity, the brand is categorized as part of the self, such that brand associations are linked to mental representations of the self, and consumers develop a sense of oneness with the brand (Chaplin & John, 2005; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Park et al., 2010). Consumers are known to fit brand associations, through personality traits and user characteristics, and incorporate them into their self-concepts. The degree to which the consumer has incorporated the brand into the self-concept is referred to as self-brand connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

The creation of a strong and meaningful self-brand connection is more likely to occur when the consumers’ personal experience with the brand is closely attached to the image of the brand, and the brand satisfies a recognised psychological need. It was suggested by Cross, Bacon and Morris (2000); that individual differences do exists as to how consumer-brand connections may develop. Brand connection is not associated to any one unique object, but rather to special bonds and feelings of oneness with the brand and what it symbolizes. Several studies of different researchers have confirmed that consumers use brands to identify who they are and what they desire to become (Belk, 1988; Dolich, 1969; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In fact, consumers can relate to different range of brands to communicate different aspects of their selves (Aaker, 1999). Therefore, Self brand connections are based on supposed likeness between the actual self and the brand image (Malär et al., 2011). If the consumer perceives a brand to be part of his/her self-concept, the interactions with the brand is subject to the influences of self motives. In fact, research on self-brand connections has demonstrated that consumers incorporate brands into their self-concept due to self-motivations (Escalas & Bettman, 2009).

Schor (2004) has referred to adolescents as “…the usually brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialistic generation in history”. As this segment has emerged as the
most brand oriented consumers, they connote themselves with different brand attributes such as recognition and status, family traditions, quality of the products, group influence, national heritage, self identity, and values. As a result, they regard brands as an important tool for creating individual identity, a sense of achievement and individuality for consumers (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004; O’Cass & Frost, 2002). Hence, Self-Brand Connection refers to an extent to which brand expresses important aspects of the consumer’s self identity, ethics, and goals.

The adolescents have been recognised as the most recent and most exposed target for marketers who are working to create brand loyalty through intelligent marketing and progressively more interactive branding strategies. It is so due to the fact that in present times, building a strong brand connectivity among consumers is one of the top priority of marketing executives, as the marketing environment is changing fast, and consumers have become knowledgeable and have an easy access to all the brands whether national or international and more so the traditional marketing strategies are no more effective. Therefore, Keller (2003) and Tan and Ming (2003) have also concluded that marketers now a days have to tussle with difficult issues about branding and their brands. What a brand means to a consumer is based in part on the narratives he/she has constructed that incorporates the brand (Shank & Abelson, 1995).

When consumers use brands in order to differentiate themselves, a link bridges the brand and the self such that the consumers occasionally incorporate the brand image in mental representation of the self (Escalas & Bettman, 2009). Consumers’ use of brands is influenced by their perceptions of themselves and their reference groups to which they belong (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) and also those they aspire to be like (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005). Further the consumers’ branding decisions also include those they do not want to be associated with (White & Dahl, 2006, 2007) thereby suggesting a holistic perspective which the brands provide to the community. A deeper insight of how consumers feel, believe and act offers valuable guidance to deal with these brand related challenges and to improve the performance of brand-building marketing programs (Keller, 2003). When adolescent consumers consume and experience brands, either bought by themselves or by their parents, they also become conscious that there are other
product brands that they are likely to consume when they become adults, such as electronics, automobiles, restaurant services, banks, and airlines etc. Thus the adolescents accumulate perceptions by observing and word of mouth regarding these brands. This is the reason that they are considered as a “future market” for every manufacturer of consumer goods and services (McNeal, 1999).

In particular, brands are vital for today’s generation. Earlier the brands were believed to be a sort of “mark of quality” and the product’s functionality was the most important aspect to them but in the present time, their focus is more on the brand itself and less on other qualities of the product (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003). There are two kinds of benefits that can be derived from a product i.e. functional benefits and other one is symbolic benefits. Functional benefits are concerned with the actual benefits that a person acquired by using the product whereas symbolic relates to fulfilling one’s core need for social approval, personal expression and self esteem (Keller, 1993) which they obtain through consumption of brands.

These days marketers, in order to develop their brands’ competitiveness, try to distinguish their brands through something more. They consider brand as separate from the functional product. The product is though seen as providing core functional benefits, while the brand itself is responsible for creating “the magnetic superhuman-like aura around the actual product” (Tan & Ming, 2003). Brands are not born with symbolic meanings and values but acquire them later in their life. It is the emotional connotation that brands have in the consumers’ life that they agree to pay premium price for having them (Roper & Shah, 2007). In the present time, consumers consume products and brands not only due to the functional benefits but more importantly for symbolic properties (Levy, 1959). Thus, they buy things not only for what different products can do for them but in many cases they are more interested in the association of these things with their self.

For consumers, the symbolic role of brands is vast and hence they use brands as a mechanism to communicate a message to others (Harper, Dewar, & Diack, 2003). The brand itself is a symbol of varied lifestyles, norms and values and contributes to an individual’s identity (Martensen, 2007). People acquire material possessions as a way
through which they can establish their identity (Belk, 1988) and make an effort to defend, improvise, modify and enlarge their individuality by purchasing and consuming those brands and products which they believe to be in congruence with their own self-image and strive to stay away from brands and products which they believe are not according to them. Thus, products are proficient enough to disclose a little about the person who uses them (Martensen, 2007).

It is well established that certain products are consumed because of the image they reveal, rather than their functional benefits (Achenreiner & John, 2003; McCracken, 1988) for example Rolex watches, denote a wealthy and successful owner (Achenreiner & John, 2003). Similarly, adolescents consume whatever finest brand is available in the market. Their choices of brands are rather unique and love to have luxurious brands which were earlier preferred by the affluent parents or youngsters. They talk about brands like Armani, Rado, Gucci, Audi, Lambhogini, BMW, Blackberry, Prada, Locaste, UCB, Ferrari, Puma, and Nike etc as they want to symbolize themselves as rich and classy (Sharma & Singh, 2015). The “sense of belonging” has been also considered very vital for them, therefore they use the symbolic content of products and brands preferred to reflect their association or connection to a particular social group (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). On the other hand, they might discard certain products and brands on the basis of their symbolic meanings if these are considered incongruent with the consumption choices of significant referents (Elliott, 1999). It is worth noticing that even if brands are vital for image building, they are in a certain way a “double-edged sword”, an eight-year-old ones, think vital to wear the right brand, as they link their sense of the self to their particular brand choices (Lindstrom & Seybold,2003). However, it is pertinent to mention that the image of the product does not only depend on the physical characteristics, but it also derives from other associations, such as “stereotypes of the generalized or typical user” (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004).

The ability to understand the symbolism of consumption is fully developed by the age of 11 or 12 (Achenreiner & John, 2003; Belk, Mayer, & Driscoll, 1984) and at this age, children can form impressions of the owners of such products based upon the image and significance of the product’s brand name (Achenreiner & John, 2003). Thus, the
adolescents at the age of 11 start developing perceptions about their self and as they gain maturity they are able to elucidate them. They look for those brands which suit their personality and make connections with a particular brand only when it satisfies their psychological needs (Sharma & Singh, 2015).

However, it has been seen that the use of brands by children changes during their growth, from functional reasons when they are younger to more contemplative and symbolic interpretations when they grow up (Dittmar, 1992; Gentry, Baker & Kraft, 1995). They can try to “preserve, enhance, alter, or extend their identity” by consuming those branded products which they believe are made for them.

Marketing to this huge consumer segment presents numerous challenges. There is an ever-increasing competition and now for something completely different, a number of market researchers and consulting firms have started focusing on how best to target them. A number of companies are looking to become “lifestyle” brands for adolescents ever. This enables manufacturers to be present not only in the toy aisle but in multiple sections of major shopping stores or malls. In their pursuit to expand beyond the toy aisle, however, companies targeting adolescents are conscious enough to provide those branded products which are relevant to the targeted segment, rather than simply tempting them to consume whatever is available.

Therefore, companies need to recognize their responsibility not to overflow the market with products that do not have a place in the life of an adolescent consumer, while building a strong brand across product categories. Since adolescents are very brand conscious therefore they try to imitate others but have not yet developed a personal style of their own though they have been exposed at an early age to marketing messages and thus are very knowledgeable about brands. They feel attached with brands and choose a brand above all others because they feel that brand is distinctly better at delivering key rational and emotional benefits. According to Millward Brown’s BrandZ study, very young children do not really bond with particular brands. This is one reason why companies are so keen to brand for adolescents, reach them and keep reaching out to them, as they may potentially be lifelong customers. Thus due to their multitasking and
multimedia nature, adolescents are an integrated marketers dream; as the ultimate goal of all the marketers is to instil lifetime brand loyalty in them (Bryner, 2001).

According to Siegel et.al (2004), whenever a new product is launched in the market it must have the following five characteristics: the product must be entertaining; adolescents must have the feeling that product is just for them; it must appease their parents; it must provoke a feeling of authority, success or autonomy; and it must appeal to as many of the senses as possible. There are numerous companies which are developing products and lifestyle brands targeting to adolescents. They like the brands which are colourful, attractive, but the industry has been rather slow to shift its attention to adolescents, and it appears that there are many opportunities to take hold of this quieter, underserved market, who share higher level of relationship with brands as compared to the older groups.

Despite the facts stated above, it is also to point out that marketing to the age group between 10-19 years has always been a challenge because this age group is full of contradictions, they are inconsistent and their tastes and preferences change very soon. They are highly influenced through social networks, have tremendous knowledge and information and are also less reflexive and less impressionable by simple images of who they should aspire to be.

It is intuitively exciting and usually acknowledged that adolescents use products and brands to create and represent desired self-images and to present these images to others or even to themselves, that is one of the reason why consumers value psychological and symbolic brand benefits, as it help them to construct their self-identity and present themselves to others as they want to be. As a result, today’s brands must go beyond face value and tap into consumers’ deepest subconscious emotions to win the marketplace. When kids grow older, they have more experience with brands and more exposure to branding campaigns, thereby providing strong cues about the brand’s personality, user group, or personal qualities. These cues offer time to the child’s natural inclinations to think about brands more conceptually, thereby producing a brand representation that is more favourable to the matching process with personal traits from one’s self-concept.
CONCLUSION:

This chapter gives a brief description of adolescents consumers as they have been acknowledged, as the major budding consumer segment by the marketers in India. Thus giving an insight into adolescents markets and their emergence as a powerful consumer segment in India. It is important for the marketers to understand their frequently changing taste and preference for branded products. The chapter further emphasises how adolescents as consumers’ build strong connectivity with the brands they purchase.
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