

ABSTRACT

In this globalized world, more and more companies are entering new markets or planning to enter. One of the key problems faced by the companies, when they enter new markets, is the different culture of the prospective consumers. More than any other factor, it is the culture which shapes the attitude, belief and lifestyle and, thus, becomes a guiding factor for the consumers in choosing the product. Marketers are generally focusing on two phenomena (i) Identifying groups of consumers with similar taste and preferences and (ii) Identifying the different patterns of behaviour portrayed by different consumers. When the behaviour of one consumer is compared with the behaviour of another consumer from a different culture, it is termed as cross-cultural marketing. Cross-cultural studies are relevant while comparing people of two different nations. However, India has many sub-cultures, religions and sub-nations due to its diversity. Moreover, India is geographically separated as two major regions and Indian culture can be broadly divided into North Indian culture and South Indian culture. There are many visible contrasts between the North and South India i.e. physical appearance, eating habits, rituals, festivals, clothing and language etc. The present study is an attempt to explore the cultural similarities and differences between North and South India based on Hofstede cultural dimensions. The study also seeks to investigate the differences between the North and south India regarding pre-purchase behaviour, purchase behaviour and post-purchase behaviour and to identify the factors and their impact on apparel purchase.

The researcher has used the exploratory research design for the study. The questionnaire was designed in four parts that were associated with cultural dimension, consumer behaviour, acculturation and respondents' demographics for the purpose of analysis. Part A consisted of cultural dimension scale. The scale was adopted from Donthu & Yoo (1998) and suitably modified for the study. Part B was divided into four sections. First section gathered the information about the preference of the apparel and second section asked the respondents to rank the various dresses according to the preferences. Third section consisted of a

consumer behaviour scale which was developed from an extensive review of literature. Fourth section was designed to elicit the information about the monthly purchase of the respondents' family on apparels. Part C was designed to study the attitude of the respondents regarding the acculturation. Part D gathered information about the demographic profile of the respondents like age, gender, education level, income level, family members and mother tongue etc. Questionnaire was pre-tested to determine whether or not it accomplishes the objectives. The samples of 709 respondents were collected from universities and colleges in each state which formed the sample frame for this study. Universities/colleges were selected randomly and respondents were selected conveniently. One university/college was selected from each state. The study is also supported by review of vast literature, Hofstede cultural dimension being the theme of the study. The collected data was analyzed with the help of SPSS software. Bar diagrams, statistical tools, factor analysis, multiple regression and hypothesis testing etc. were used to derive meaningful information.

The result of the study shows that there are differences as well as similarities between the North and South Indians. North India emerged as a culture which is high on Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity and Collectivism as compared to South India. Not much difference was found between the apparel purchase behaviour between North India and South India as both the cultures have significantly adopted western clothing. North Indian males preferred *kurta pyjama*, whereas, South Indian males preferred *dhoti*. North Indians females preferred *salwar kurta*, whereas, South Indian females preferred *sari*. As North Indian culture is high on Uncertainty Avoidance, North Indians showed the pre-purchase behaviour of searching for more information before deciding on purchase. No difference was found in the complaining behaviour of North Indians and South Indians. For acculturation behaviour, it was found that South Indians are more like a closed community, whereas, North Indians loved to try new cuisine and mix with people of different cultures.

The major conclusions of the study are as following:

North India emerged as a high Power Distance oriented society. It means that power is unequally distributed and the tendency to accept and expect unequal distribution of power is more in North India as compared to South India. North India also emerged as a society high on Uncertainty Avoidance .It means that North Indians try to reduce the occurrence of uncertain and unusual events.

South Indian culture emerged as more Individualistic culture. It means that South Indians are concerned more towards their immediate family members and friends compared to North Indians. South India also emerged more femininity oriented culture as the females play active role in decision making and they have shed the traditional roles.

There is not huge difference between North and South regarding apparel wear/purchase as both the cultures has adopted western wear as their preferred clothing. *Sari* which is used as a traditional as well as formal wear is more preferred in South India as compared to North India while *kurta* and *churidaar pyjama* are preferred in North India. The most preferred traditional male apparel is *kurta pyjama* in North India, whereas, in South India, *lungi* is most preferred.

North Indians try to search information from every possible source and feel more certain if they have some prior knowledge about the product/brand signifying that consumers of North India plan their purchases in advance.

North Indians purchase branded products which they are able to identify with their personality and they seek variety and novelty in their purchases. Above findings indicate that North Indians, although high on collectivism, they love to buy branded products to express their personality and seek novelty in their purchase when it comes to purchase behaviour. This tendency is typical of individual trait.

North Indians likes to try different cuisines other than their culture, they love to visit different parts of the country, they also try to mix with the people of other culture, whereas, South Indians love to read the books in their native languages

and prefer vacationing near their home town. It clearly shows that North Indians are able to adapt to different cultures easily and South Indians are more closed in nature.

Major factors influencing the apparel purchase were identified for this study by using multiple regression. Factors which influence apparel purchase in North India are “Brand Conscious”, “Information seeking” and “Care and Service quality”. Factors which influence apparel purchase in South India are “Power Distance”, “Quality Conscious”, “Brand Conscious” and “Materialistic and Self Centered”.

