CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the result and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not a mere decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society’s unreality. In all its particular manifestations — news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment— the spectacle represents the dominant model of life.’

Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*

Child power is an emergent phenomenon in India especially in the post-liberalisation period which became much visible around 1990 in the developing societies like India. The power form surfaced thus is not political but social. The child population in India ranging between 0-14 years constitutes approx. 35 % in 2001; in 0-4 years category it is 10.47 %, in 5-9 year category it is 12.46 %, and in 10 to 14 years bracket it is 12.14 %. However, the tweens in the age group between 7-11 years have not been treated in population documents but it is estimated here that 12.50 % in 2006 (based on Premi 2006). It is rightly observed in the context of consumer power with children. ‘Tweenagers’ are an influential consumer lot with a great deal of serious business at stake in the tweenage market’ (Sarah : 2011) quotes Schor (2004:13). This current generation of tweens is the most ‘brand-oriented, consumer-involved, and materialist generation in history.’ (Ibid). However, the tweens’ position as the consumer of branded fashion commodity in the market is dependent on their parents. Of course, the present age parents category is quite receptive towards the demands of children under their control. This is evident from the fact that majority of TV channels are dovetailing their

*Le spectacle, compris dans sa totalité, est à la fois le résultat et le projet du mode de production existant. Il n’est pas un supplément au monde réel, sa décoration surajoutée. Il est le cœur de l’irréalité de la société réelle. Sous toute ses formes particulières, information ou propagande, publicité ou consommation directe de divertissements, le spectacle constitue le modèle présent de la vie socialement dominante.*
programme schedule according to the time tables of children. The pediatric drugs, food supplements are selling like a hot cake in the market. Apparels, especially branded ones, is rather a newer area of consumption where parent – children bet on such clothes and divert family funds liberally towards purchase. Overall, industrialization, urbanization, globalization and educational expansion are the forces which sparked off this new consumership with great potentials in the market. Further, ‘tween’ is a term that has come to represent those aged 8 to 14, a group that exists almost exclusively as a lucrative market for advertisers looking for wide-scale profit’ (Danielle Hulan 2007). The age bracket of tweens age category is not universally acknowledged.

Partly tweenagers and mainly teens are an easy, big pray for the marketers due to their unstable, fickle and momentous instincts combined with an extravagant nature. Its ideal-types, cultural and sub-cultural configurations have already been documented too well in depth by the developmental psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and marketers alike. Though teenage has been abundantly represented in various art forms like paintings, cinema, music etc., tween identity and scholarship is contrastingly less tangible and scarce, mainly due to the late emergence of tweens as special. Tweenage is not just another marketing classification but a twenty-first century socio-cultural phenomenon in itself.

There seems to be two reasons for this rise of tweenagers as a potent and significant cultural and consumer category. The first reason is that children now mature, speaking biologically as well as sociologically, at an increasingly younger age, thus becoming more prone to receiving and utilizing complex and subtle marketing messages. Tweens, it was noted in the American context as well as elsewhere, begin reaching puberty as early as at the age of 8 or 9, instead of during teenage (Simon 2001). They even seem to be determining their pace of maturation. It is almost a situation where childhood has become
undesirable and a to-be-cast-away-soon thing. The media play a primarily important role in hastening their childhood and ending their period of ‘innocence’. The media seem to have brutally bulldozed the Great wall separating an adult’s world from a youngster’s world. At home, TV, internet and other media generously offer their content to adult and the children alike, affecting the cognitive and biological pace of the development of children, almost fast-forwarding childhood to adult age.

**Tweens, Identity and clothing**

Since tweens share age boundaries with adolescents it is natural for them to grapple with the problem of identity formation and crisis, just like the latter do. Identity crisis was earlier considered to be related solely with teenage, but now it is very much visible in tweens. In adolescence, clothing and hairstyle are the chief markers of one’s personality and help teenagers gain entry in a peer group or their appreciation. ‘It is also a mode of communication through which people express their personal identity, relationship with others, and varying circumstances of life’ (Sancheta (2009) quote Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, & Michelman, 2005). Shiling (2003) says “the position of the body within contemporary popular culture reflects the unprecedented individualization of the body. Growing numbers of people are increasingly concerned with the health, shape and appearance of their own bodies as expression of individual identities…” Clothing forms an important vocabulary and strategy for them, which they use to posit themselves according to their reference model who might be a pop singer or a fashion icon or a mythical hero etc. The language of clothing is mastered by them at an early age and they become dexterous in using them to chisel their social appearance. Roland Barthes equates clothing with language- *langue* and *parole* (as distinguished by Saussure) and suggests a kind of semiotics at play in the act of choosing a particular dress. So, tweens are acquainted with social functions and language
of clothing; their choice of clothes rests on the perceived semiotics of clothes, not merely on subjective attraction. Clothing then becomes a vehicle of communicating status and individuality, apart from the group affiliations. Thus, questions of identity and image are addressed as early as during tweenage itself, aided through products branded on a mass scale, like prêt-à-porter clothing.

The second reason for the prominence of tweenagers on the market scene is new age parenting and the resultant discourse upon child-rearing practices neatly punctuated with consumerist assumptions. As a society moves from the *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, the nuclear family becomes the dominant family structure bringing the child to the center stage of the family. Within the nuclear setting, children are bestowed upon more and more attention from their parents and the parents gave them more than that. The media enriches the product vocabulary of the child and the products demanded have to be made available at any cost in the new parentage paradigm. Otherwise, parents fear being written off from the list of ideal parents. This becomes increasingly true in the Indian case of emerging market society where the middle class has become a resilient consumer class, with its own peculiar tastes and social values. These are some factors responsible for the rise of tweens as a special consumer category.

**Tweens’ branded fashion industry**

Not surprisingly, branded fashion has been very popular among tweens. Branded fashion in kids clothing has become a large industry worldwide. According to the Global Industry Analysts Inc.’s report, the global children’s wear industry is worth US $ 156.8 billion. The future growth of the industry, according to the report, hinges upon factors like ‘brand-related investment, design elements, and ethical developments.’ The report also acknowledges that
increasing fashion consciousness among children due to media and parenting pattern will further boost the growth story of branded apparels. According to a report on kids’ apparel industry by Assocham (The Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India), increased media exposure, double-income parents and peer pressure are making children becoming more fashion and brand conscious.

The market for kidswear is classified as follows:

- Infants (0 - 6 months)
- Toddlers (7 months - 2 years)
- Kids (3 - 8 Years)
- Pre-teens (9 - 12 Years)

This opportunity is well understood by kids fashion companies and they have already invested in brand promotions and visibility heavily. Indian kids clothing industry is pegged at INR 38,000 crore by the estimates of Assocham and it is further expected to evolve into an impressive INR 80,000 crore with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 20%. That means kids’ stuff is a serious business even if we go by numbers and money involved. Out of this total 38,000 crore, 5000 crore can alone be reserved for branded clothes- a quota constantly increasing at the rate of 25% compared to the growth rate of 10% in non-branded kids clothing stuff. The distribution is reflected in the pie graph given below-
Children as a group of consumers constitute an important category. They are also called as primary market or influence. They are three markets in one-the present market (for their current product requirements), the future market for all goods, and the influential market which induces their parents to spend on different products (Neal: 1987). Their power lies in pestering. They influence purchasing a range of products at home. Although they are financially and socially dependent on their parents, they indirectly control the flow of goods for consumption in a family to a fairly good extent. From an Indian perspective this segment specially becomes important as those below the age of 15 years constitute 30% of our population (Census 2011). India’s younger population is the bright side of brands’ growth story. The children clothes consumption, at least in Indian context, was a story entirely different from that of brands and fashion angels. Brands were virtually absent in the kids apparel market and most of the shopping was done from traditional shops with no idea or concept of visual merchandising. The vocabulary of design and types of clothing was very limited both in girls’ and boys’ clothings. Frock, pants,
salwar-kameez, knickers, shirts were staple of kids fashion. The concept of fashion was limited to attractive designs and colours within a particular range of clothes, sans trickling down to children’s clothing. At least, this was the case before 1991 - the year in which India’s economy was liberalized. Liquidity and disposable income increased across all the sections of the society, especially among the middle class or the urban petty-bourgeois sections.

![Indian Market Size Categorisation](image)

Source: Fibre2fashion.com

**Fig. 2 Indian Market Size and Categories**

1.1 **Rationale of the study**

The study being undertaken attempts to comprehend the consumption patterns of tweens. As we discussed earlier, the consumption of branded apparels is a phenomenon which is recent in India, especially in children’s market context. It is closely associated with the economic boom (1991) and the real estate boom (around 2003-4). Earlier, the Baby Boomers (immediate post-Independence generation) had not even heard of kids branded clothes in India.
Even the middle class Gen X did not consume the branded kids’ apparel and, eventually, it was only Gen Y which had the opportunity with, finally, the Gen Z seems to be the real ‘beneficiary’ of branded clothes.

For the purpose of this study, tweenagers from middle class were studied- a logically valid selection for enquiry. The middle class is a worldwide phenomenon and flourishes in all types of economy- developing or developed and in all types of political systems- democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, aristocracy. Possessing high survival instincts like cockroaches across times and spaces, the middle class, also known by synonyms like bourgeoisie and *la petite bourgeoisie*, has its own social and cultural moorings, moving ahead with its own logic of consumption, philosophy and ethics. Pavan K Varma’s classic *The Great Indian Middle Class* describes the middle class as having traits of balance, prudence and stability, its ideological frame consisting of ‘ethics, social sensitivity, self-restraint and idealism’ (Varma 2007). Sometimes middle class is accused of being hypocritical- an accusation of some substance as the middle class which rears its icon Mahatama Gandhi for his austere lifestyle never quite follows him in restraining its joy for material possessions (ibid). This contradiction brings us to the problematic of materialistic determination of ideology as suggested by Karl Marx, according to whom ‘the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life’ (Marx 1859). The sea-changes introduced through liberalization of economy in the early 1990s, therefore, changed the ideology of the middle class and gave it a unique class character.

The present study focuses upon tweens and the related phenomenon of changing nature of parenting within the new Indian middle class setting. Parenting in the middle class is an intense activity as opposed to the other classes on either extreme i.e. the rich elites and the poor, ‘the wretched of the earth’ (to borrow Fanon’s designation for the poor). Children are often on their
own in the rich and poor classes as childhood is treated through the subjective positions of the class nurturing it. The middle class upbringing is almost panoptical (in the sense of Foucault’s understanding of Bentham’s concept), under perpetual supervision and guidance. To the middle class, going through childhood is a leisure activity free from the corruption and hardships of the adult life. Parents spend considerable amount of money on clothes, giving their most to their children, and through this process they themselves undergo a sentimentally elevated but disavowed egotistic consumption. Their conception of childhood is squarely different from the socialist project of childhood as reflected in erstwhile USSR’s communist government’s ‘cretch childhood’. Child-care under ‘Really Existing Socialism† was ‘sanitized’ from bourgeois childhood by giving it a more impersonal and collectivized touch (of course, under the aegis of state-run institutions). Contrastingly, the brand industry focused upon the Indian middle class as the chief substrata for its growth. With the middle class handling child-care as an intense and high emotionally charged project, it has led to a situation where tweens are witnessing a hitherto unseen parental practice which ultimately loses its middle class character itself, thus becoming a ‘leisure class’ (to use Thorstein Veblen’s term) enterprise. Parents can do miracles to fulfill their wishes- by providing their children things which they never got for themselves, parents are virtually trying to compensate for their own relatively underprivileged childhood. This guilt feeling further drives consumption to a new height. Aspirations regarding the children have risen immensely- both in the field of academics and outside academics of their children.

The middle class hitherto shy of breaking away from the traditional career choices for their siblings is now open to the uncertain, glamorous and even ‘corrupting and not-fit-for-girls’ cinema and media industry. TV reality

† The term ‘Really Existing Socialism’ was used to refer to socialism under USSR, both by the regime’s critics and its officials.
shows have become a platform for the aspiring middle class to seek attention for their kids. The branded clothes for kids are the newly founded romance of middle class. It can also be viewed as an attempt to create a new identity for themselves. The above discussion shows the emerging class character of Indian middle class and its affair with the branding. The Indian middle class here signifies *bourgeoisification*, imitating higher class values and mannerisms so as to gain respect and identity equal to that of privileged class. Elite class is the privileged class here. Middle class is an interesting site to study the brand phenomenon and therefore the study undertakes middle class as the background of the study.

This study enquires about the consumption of branded clothes by the tweenager fashion public. Fashion and beauty has been at the center of fairy tales nourishing middle class children. Every mother likes to see her girl child as a fairy and her male child a prince, in opposition to a lower class attitude or even a ruling or aristocratic class attitude. Amongst lower classes, the dream seems quite distant to be realized, and amongst aristocratic classes the dream is already being realized. The middle class lives with a desire to make their kids appear the most beautiful. The beauty pageants in India and elsewhere are dominated by the participation from the middle class. Fashion in earlier times was used more as a status marker than for aesthetic appeals (though fashion practiced by aristocracy in France and as elsewhere was of aesthetic value). Fashion can be categorized into two-

1. High Fashion or Elite fashion or Haute Couture

2. Low Fashion or Pret a porter or Bourgeois

The difference between the two types of fashion lies in Walter Benjamin’s thesis in his essay entitled ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’. The art work if replicated and made available to
mass at the same time in large numbers, as is possible now with the help of technology, it is likely to lose its auratic value safe only in the limited and exclusive production of art work. The branded clothes available in the mass market represent branded prêt-à-porter fashion or mass fashion. This research work concerns itself to this type of fashion and not the elite fashion available through designer labels. Although high fashion is also available in tweens fashion market, it had to be excluded as high fashion is largely absent from the middle class fashion consumption. It is intended here to explore fashion consciousness and its nature among tweens and their parents. Parents are an important agency of socialization during childhood and their dialogue and their influence in the family is quite enormous. So, parents were also studied to get a pulse on their opinions about fashion available through branded clothes and other consumption practices which are intertwined with other practices like new parenting and economic and financial situation of the family.

Now, we come to the other aspect of the study which concerns the realm of production- the production of signs, symbols and stories around the brand and fashion by the brand strategists. Branding is ‘the mechanism that creates and sustains ‘consumption myths and consumption rituals, involving products and services endowed with symbolic meanings’ (Lannon. J.:1994). Branding process includes charting out a strategy ‘that makes a name or a product not only familiar but also increases its chances of purchases and ultimately creates a sort of addiction of that product’ (ibid). The recognisability of the product is the brand value and is traded like a tangible object in case of company mergers and acquisitions. The brand strategies in case of children products hold special importance as they are future markets to be caught young. Children though know the social value of a brand and the language of brands. Branding according to Moriarty and Franzen consists of 3 components-
1. Physical
2. Mental
3. Socio-cultural

Physical components of the brands have been explored here in the study which includes physical store environment or visual merchandising. Strategies as reflected through visual merchandising which affect branding are explored in the study. Since children are very much influenced by the physical components of branding, they constitute a very important component strategically. The backdrop of the present study is an important variable as it provides a town setting. The brand phenomenon is present in its developed avatar in metro cities of India but in tier 2 and tier 3 city it has begun to show enthusiastic results regarding brand affiliations and preferences of fashion clothing brands among tweens. The town conditions offer a different bed for the promotion of brands.

Summarizing, overall framework of this study has also been derived from the observations made by Wells, Burnett(2006: 145) while they sorted out the cultural and social influences on consumer decisions and these were thus-

1. Culture and Subculture
2. Corporate culture
3. Social classes
4. Reference Groups
5. Family
6. Age
7. Sexual orientation
8. Education
9. Occupation
10. Income
11. Psychological Influences
12. Lifestyle
13. Value system
14. Innovation and adoption process

Further the researcher put the fashion in socio-psycho-cultural area and subjected it to the diffusion process as Wells and Burnett (2006:2) suggested – “fashion is a collective activity…a form of dress or a way of using it is not fashion or in fashion until it has been adopted by a large proportion of people in a study.” The researcher treated brand as an innovation and diffusion as communication. The large proportion of tweens consuming mass fashion are fashion publics which consume fashion and not the clothing.

Given below are the types of clothing available with the fashion retailers. Here is a collage of female tweens fashion dresses.

**Fig. 3  Collage of children Fashion dress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Halter Top</th>
<th>Stretch Pants</th>
<th>Denim Peasant Top</th>
<th>Trousers</th>
<th>Camisole tops</th>
<th>Gowns</th>
<th>Spaghetti tops, Crystal denims</th>
<th>Italian cuts, Capris</th>
<th>Yoga pants</th>
<th>Tunic Leggings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halter</td>
<td>Halter</td>
<td>Halter</td>
<td>Trouser</td>
<td>Peasant top</td>
<td>Spagetti</td>
<td>Spaghetti top</td>
<td>Yoga pants</td>
<td>Tunic Leggings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camisole</td>
<td>Capri</td>
<td>Halter</td>
<td>Halter</td>
<td>Halter</td>
<td>Spagetti</td>
<td>Spaghetti top</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[Images of various fashion items]
There are many national and international brands that are operating in India.

Table 1
List of national and international brands in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>List of Branded Indian Prêt-à-porter</th>
<th>List of Foreign Branded Prêt-à-porter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Li’l Tomatoes</td>
<td>Benetton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Gini Johny</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Liliput (KKR)</td>
<td>Pepe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Disney</td>
<td>Tommy Hilfiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Reebok kids</td>
<td>Barbie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Weekender kids</td>
<td>Mona Lisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Planet Kids</td>
<td>Mother care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Catmoss</td>
<td>Espirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Lee Kids</td>
<td>Bossini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Ruff Kids</td>
<td>Kans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Zapp</td>
<td>Adam Kids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diffusion Strategies

Given children’s peculiarly big share in a large consumer market (in terms of size and volume), it becomes mandatory for the business corporations to devise new strategies to deal with the little consumer who might flout the notion of a consumer as assumed in some economic theories. The communication and merchandising strategy should then be able to address them in a proper and efficient manner. Consequently, there are standardized
practices in the product diffusion or the fashion clothing diffusion as is the case in our study. The corporates may indulge in heavy advertising or resort to event management in order to gain visibility in children’s fashion apparel market as represented by children’s exclusive retail spaces. The visual merchandising that is based on the children’s psychology and vision is carefully arranged. The point of purchasing materials, dummies, lightings, ‘iconography, services and names…. solidify child’s identification with the store or department’ suggesting the ‘pediocular seeing with children’s eyes- has increasingly become the basis for commercial knowledge and action’ (Cook 2008). All marketing strategy is to create brand loyalty for the brand. All diffusion practices and attempts are directed to elicit favourable and sustaining responses from the child consumers.

### 1.2 The Objectives

Following objectives were formed to know the branded fashion consumption and brand strategies.

- To know the nature, purpose and mechanics of liminal consumption of branded clothes in case of tweenagers.

- To understand the branded consumption from the fashion consuming tweenagers.

- To know the role of parents in brand socialization of tweenagers.

- To know the branding strategies of fashion clothing companies as reflected by the tangible branding.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

The tweens have become an important marketing category in branded apparels. They consume them for fashion and status signifying cultural
implications and they respond positively to the branding strategies especially through visual merchandising. Very few studies have been undertaken to understand the role of brand in tweens and the branding strategies in cultural communication perspective. It will be a significant study in understanding the brand consumption phenomenon in a tier 3 city. The research proposes to study the brand culture among tweenagers and the role of parents and other agencies in spreading consumer culture vis-à-vis brands and branded fashion. It also proposes to study the physical aspects of branding strategies employed at the branded prêt a porter stores for children. The study would be both qualitative and quantitative, utilizing for the first time in the field techniques of visual anthropology and semiotics apart from the focus groups and schedule.

1.4 Research Questions

Following have been the research questions to be inquired into in this project of branded apparel choice as the response of tweenage fashion public and branding strategies of prêt a porter fashion companies.

- What is the nature of branded fashion apparels discourse supported by branded fashion companies?
- What are the branding strategies of branded fashion corporates to reach out to the fashion public i.e. tweenagers and their parents?
- What are the consumption needs and patterns of branded apparel choices of tweenagers of Kurukshetra town?
- What is the role of parents and children as co-consumers in the context of fashion apparel choices?
1.5 Concepts of the study

In this study, following concepts are proposed to be utilized in analyzing the problem of diffusion and consumption of branded fashion apparels among tweenagers. The concepts are thus:

**Brands**

Kapferer (1997) mentioned that “the brand is a sign -therefore external, whose function is to disclose the hidden qualities of the product which are inaccessible to contact” (p. 28).

**Branding**

It is a mechanism that creates and sustains ‘consumption myths and consumption rituals, involving products and services endowed with symbolic meanings’

**Brands communication**

Brand communication has been defined Rita Cliffton and John Simmons (2004:111) thus: “How best can the brand be communicated to its intended audience this includes advertising, promotion, packaging and so on.” This notion of brand communication has been incorporated in this study. This hybridised concept that is brand communication has been suggested to be used to look into the commercial corporate behavior to maximize their profit vide premium price in competitive environment if they combine brand with communication strategy (ibid.)

**Brand Strategy**

A ‘term used to describe a communicative act which has been planned to some extent beforehand, which is deliberated and which has a clear purpose’

**Apparels**

Marie J. Lachance, Pierre Beaudoin and Jean Robitaille describe in their article ‘Adolescents’ Brand Sensitivity in Apparels’, the influence of three socialization agents constituting the concept of apparels in this way: ‘Apparel is assumed to include clothing, shoes of any type, and accessories such as caps, handbags and rucksacks.’ All the fashion paraphernalia is referred here as apparel because all these clothing pieces are worn in a complementary way.

**Branded apparels**

These are apparels which are pushed by corporates as signifying corporate identity through socially codified clothing styles. Brand reflects the standardized product universally available to the fashion public or the consumers thereof to take advantage of maximum profit. It means selling a standardized concept along with matches corresponding to the taste of audiences, through on a ‘top-down approach’. In our case, fashion outlets for children are run by different corporate entrepreneur giants like Ginny and Johny, Lilliput etc. where branded products are displayed and sold to the customers.

**Fashion**

Fashion is considered as a socialized and collective activity, and a sort of a social movement. Fashion is a matter of sociology of art. ‘It is a belief born out of the socially constructed idea of fashion which means a great deal more than mere clothing.’ Actually fashion is not a material product ‘but a symbolic product which has no contents, substance in itself”, yet many authors focus upon clothing while studying fashion. The word ‘fashion’ is generally used to
connote peculiar styles of dressing and appearances’, which reflects ‘intellectual and social life in general.’

Fashion has a broad range of meanings and definitions. Sometimes it is used to indicate a particular ‘dress’ one is wearing or the ‘manner’ of wearing it or ‘a particular shape’ of the dress. It is also used to mean ‘the latest and most admired style’ (Barnard 2000:2). Fashion is thus defined as ‘meaningful and communicative body adornments and dress’ (Barnard 2004:4). Clothing and dress are the raw materials from which fashion is formed. Fashion as a belief is manifested through clothing. Whatever definition of fashion we adopt, it is in the end defined through a particular style coveted by a large number of followers. This sense of fashion is absorbed in our study.

**Tweenagers**

A media-constructed age category that describes an expanding and increasingly powerful social group. (Boden: 2006). They are children aged 7-11 who are more worldly-wise, fashion-conscious and media-aware than children of this age used to be (Quinion: 2001). Tweenagers, as a concept elaborated by Rice (2002), denotes those children coming from ‘small families with dual earners ensuring households with sizeable disposable incomes… they have a high awareness of labels, media and technology.’ Rice (2002) provides the demographic details and socio-economic genesis of the category thus: ‘They have lived through a decade of economic boom and are now therefore fairly affluent, they are often from small families with dual earners ensuring households with sizable disposable incomes, they are able to draw upon strategies such as ‘pester power’ to get their own way, and they have a high awareness of labels, media and technology’.
Tweens generally, have some common features summarized as under-

1. Tweens are a bio-social category in between kids and teenagers.
2. Tweens constitute emotional rather reasoned category.
3. Tweens are early learners of culture and therefore subject of socialization.
4. Tweens are special category under care and control of adult/parents.
5. Tweens are school going category.
6. Tweens are functionally dependent on their parents.

**Tweenager Fashion Public**

The word ‘public (s)’ is referred to a category with special interests located somewhere socially, used in place of consumer categories and in place of an audience group which is addressed by a company, a political party or a campaign. However, general public is an amorphous category with very vaguely defined goals. So, any product can have its own public. Fashion public can also be understood in the same way the tweens’ group shows its interest in fashion brands. William Well et al (2006:477) define public thus: ‘By publics, we mean all the groups of people with which a company or organization interacts: employees, media, community groups, and so forth.’

The tweenage fashion public corresponds to a separate category of children in late childhood (7-11 years) called as tweens who are consumers of branded apparels in the sense that they wear the apparels by their choice informed by various factors like media. Basically, they are tweenage fashion clothing consumers. They may not be purchasers of the products but are involved in the process of choosing one over the other. Tweenage fashion public is constituted by the fashion conscious children under the age category referred above which is again, in turn, generated by fashion designers and fashion merchandisers.
Consumption

Robert Dunn in the book *Identifying Consumption* defines consumption as ‘encompassing a vast range of human practices and mental and feeling states (shopping, buying, acquiring, using, possessing, displaying, maintaining, collecting, wasting, desiring, daydreaming, fantasizing), all of which involve complex relations and attachments to an infinite variety of objects and experiences.’

Fashion Consumption

Fashion consumption means using a commodity, in this case clothes, either for utilitarian or symbolic purposes which is not necessarily purchased. This type of consumption is evident in the case of children who do not usually buy themselves the commodities but rather influence the purchase of commodities with various objectives- utilitarian or social- as described earlier. In the children consumption literature the ‘child consumer’ thus is made well before it is born in contemporary times.’ (Thomas Cook: 2008). The discussion of consumption in the context of children entails the concept of co-consumption as propagated by Cook: ‘[b]y attending to children and by including them directly and unexceptionally into the mix of thinking about consumption one comes away with a sense that much of consumption occurs as co-consumption… significant others maintain a kind of presence in the practices of looking, desiring, considering and reflecting upon purchases’ (Cook: 2008). Thus consumption is not entirely an individualistic action but a mediated one.

Culture communication

Man is a symbol sensitive entity who produces meaning in the symbols. Fashion is one variety of symbol systems in which culture values, meanings
and symbols are raised by creative agencies which are transmittable between entities through some channels and processes of communication. The communication process regarding fashion diffusion involves predominantly non-verbal and visual communication. However, integrated marketing communication approach would also be dealt in the project of fashion communication.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study in fashion communication and consumption focusing on tweens has following significance from theoretical and practical view:

1. To theoretically contribute to the study of expressive social movements, spontaneous and unorganized as the fashion movement is.

2. To show some cultural departures in town conditions ranging from traditional to modern.

3. As a practical problem, to highlight some paradoxes appearing as a result of rising incomes and an almost paradoxical retention of religious and ascetic orientation of people.

4. Corporate-driven, culturally branded fashion may create a change in modes of living and choices. The corporates may benefit from this study as they can learn the consumption behavior of newly emerging segments of population as tweenagers or preteens.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the study

This project of fashion communication confines itself to some situations. These are as follows-
The study limits itself to the mass branded fashion apparel analysis. The other patterns of apparels like high fashion in the same age group i.e. 7-11 years has not been entertained.

There are two approaches of fashion diffusion- One is top-down and another is bottom-up. Here, however, top down approach is taken up. Vertical and horizontal diffusion of branded fashion has also been dealt.

Tweenagers and parents are analysed here in compository. The execution of schedule, focus group and ethnography as tools of data collection and data processing were a challenging task to integrate into results.

Enquiry is based on the town conditions locating between the village and the city as there are some special and distinct socio-economic and psychological features which shape taste ranges and affordability along with cultural permissivity and non-permissivity in consumption behaviour.

The study is limited to the branding process as reflected by the apparel/fashion outlets in Kurukshetra- a middle sized town. The situation could have been different in some bigger cities or metro cities.

Since the study pertains to Kurukshetra urban area and not outside that is also a limit and the study does not cover the extended consumership of branded fashion in surrounding rural communities.

The researcher found the respondents were not quite willing to co-operate citing the reasons of other preoccupation.

The findings of the study cannot be generalized to a grade extend due to the qualitative nature of the study.