CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH STRATEGY

3.1 Introduction

The consumption linked response study of tweenagers fashion public to branded apparels in cultural perspective has a theoretical bias favoring an alternative conceptual model of mass communication which has been put forward by eminent cultural studies scientist Stuart Hall. The researcher finds support to see, to look beyond conventional-traditional conceptualization of Mass Communication phenomenon i.e. sender / message/receiver cage which has linearity limitations that bound to leave many other real life situations unattended. Stuart Hall gave a breakthrough to communication studies linking it with cultural studies aptly worth to be followed. His assertions are given thus:

“Traditionally, mass communication research has conceptualised the process of communication in terms of a circulation circuit or loop. This model has been critised for its linearity- sender/ message/receiver…” Further, he advised to extend the cover of communication field up to production and consumption based linkage. He states- “But it is also possible(and useful) to think of this process in terms of a structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments - production, circulation, distribution / consumption, reproduction…”

This perspective of the study of production and circulation (communication) of branded apparels as cultural items reaching to fashion public for consumption matches their recommendations of Stuart Hall as another area of communication study qualified for fashion communication. Of course, the innovation and its diffusion was attended by Rogers (1995) and has
been considered as a special variety of communication per se which entrusted as the study in communication in relation to culture of a community/society as problematic of production, conveying and acceptance of novelty instrumental and symbolic, both.

The paradigm war in research methodology has resulted into a situation where universal suitability of one particular paradigm or a method cannot be established. Debates surround qualitative and quantitative paradigms in research. Qualitative studies have gained acceptance recently with new and insightful methods like discourse analysis, semiotics, focus groups, critical studies, arts appreciation, ethnography, visual anthropology etc. emerging out of it. And especially the use of one method seems insufficient in the present scenario where the investigation of ‘truth’ in contemporary context is becoming increasingly difficult due to contested claims about truth and the debate surrounding the multitude of truths and vantage points from which a ‘truth’ or ‘truths’ are approached.

3.2 Mixed methods as strategy

The current research tradition involves more than one method of studying a particular phenomenon. Because of the troubled ontological position of the ‘truth’ in Post modernity or Late modernity as Giddens call it. The study uses both –qualitative and quantitative methods to allow even ‘fine prints’ of the research problem to be addressed and not left out in the structures of quantitative design. Similarly, quantitative method is used to lend ‘concrete’ support to the seemingly subjective account generated by qualitative designs. Mixed methods research can be defined thus: ‘...the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004: 17)
Mixed method as the name indicates entails the mixing of methods as earlier discussed also. But how and when it is mixed is a crucial question. There many stages and levels of research at which this mixing can take place. Objectives, methods, and data interpretation can be different levels. The present study has mixed method at the level of research method itself. The 2 different methods are allowed to operate for the data collection. The data collected is analysed by and interpreted in a combined way so as to unify the results obtained from different methods.

Further, as noted by Greene et al. (1989), Out of five major purposes or rationales for conducting mixed methods research: (a) triangulation (i.e., seeking convergence and corroboration of results from different methods and designs studying the same phenomenon); (b) complementarity (i.e., seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method).

### 3.3 Reservation regarding mixed method research

Although there have been reservations on the use of Mixed Methods comprising of methods from across different paradigms i.e. quantitative and qualitative. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) note such reservation and impossibility of reconciliation between them where they quote Guba(1990) , a qualitative purist- “accommodation between paradigms is impossible . . . we are led to vastly diverse, disparate, and totally antithetical ends”. But the purpose of using mixed methods is not to bring a commotion and chaos due to their ‘unholy marriage’ but to ‘to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Mixed method is a comparatively new paradigm and is trying to evolve its own strategies. As Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004 accept ‘Much work
remains to be undertaken in the area of mixed methods research regarding its philosophical positions, designs, data analysis, validity, strategies, mixing and integration procedures, and rationales, among other things”.

3.4 **Quantitative vs qualitative methodological perspectives**

The positivism as exemplified through quantitative research traditions has its own discontents in spite of its claim to be the most scientific and therefore more desirable and objective research. Imported from the research traditions in material and living sciences the positivist approach got a phillip from European enlightenment movement 18th century and is the dominant paradigm of research today worldwide. There is increasing realization of the view that quantitative paradigm is insufficient to explain epistemological positions in a postmodernist or late modern society. Qualititative research or Interpretivist research has moved onto the research scenario offering a new paradigm with a whole new set of research methods and tools. The availability, nature and form of truth and knowledge in both paradigms are conceived differently which brings them at loggerheads with each other in social science research scenario.

3.5 **Methods in current research**

The 3 methods that are employed in the study are- Schedules, Focus Groups and Ethnographic Description.

3.5.1 **Survey Schedule**

A schedule was prepared to know the ideas of parents of tweenagers regarding consumption of branded clothes, fashion and childhood rearing practices. The schedule was administered in front of the branded showrooms at Kessel Mall in Kurukshtera. 100 parents were selected for survey to have a
general idea regarding branded fashion for their tweenagers. Respondents were asked about their socio-economic background and situations.

3.5.2 Ethnography

The brand communication strategies were figured out by studying the embodiment of tangible branding strategies through ethnographic detailing and ‘thick description’ of visual merchandising. The branding strategies were limited to the tangible branding components such as store atmospherics, personnel etc. The method was considered appropriate for ‘reading’ of branding strategies because strategies that are reflected are more true than told by the strategists.

3.5.3 Focus groups

The current study employs the technique of Focus group with tweenagers. Three groups for the purpose were formed at three different places in Kurukshetra Town- the east end, the west end and the middle of Kurukshetra. The group members were purposively selected and knew each other before. The discussion was semi structured and various visual cues and themes were provided by the researcher himself. There were 7 members in Group A and B each and 8 members in Group C. In group A there were 4 females and 3 males, in group B, there were 4 male and 3 females. While in group C there were 4 males and 4 females. There were equal numbers of males and females in the three groups. In all there were 22 members across 3 groups.

3.5.4 Universe, sample and sample size

Kurukshetra town fashion apparel consumers- the tweenagers aged between 7-11 years and tweenagers parents constitute the universe. The sample of parents for administering the schedule was taken from outside the two branded fashion stores- Lilliput and Catmoss. Parents who came out of the two
stores after visiting it were interviewed. The sample of 100 parents of Tweenagers is taken as they are co-consumers in case of tweens’ consumption of branded fashion. They are not the main site of investigation but a supplementary / complementary site.

3.5.5 Data Analysis

The quantitative aspect of the study involved data processing and treating it with descriptive statistics. While focus group data was noded and each node was further discussed in detail. The ethnographic data processing involved generating an account reading strategies.

3.6 The Field of inquiry

The encompassing environment and situation where the field of this enquiry locates is described here.

3.6.1 India Environment

Indian society is a socio-economically and culturally diverse and tradition bound society populated by 1.21 billion people and residing in 1/16th of total world land area. Six major religious segments speaking nearly 800 languages and dialects are prevalent in India. Indian political community now has a constitution that enshrines civic and human rights, egalitarian and welfarist ideological concerns. A planning commission and a national development council are entrusted with the task of formulating development plans and programs including progress for disadvantaged groups. Directive principles as laid down in the constitution direct the governments to undertake welfare, correctional and developmental measures to fulfill social objectives. The social welfare service is a well-attended sector of national life with huge budget provisions. The social welfare ministries, boards, corporations or commissions at central and state level are institutionalized to help and
empower disadvantaged groups through specific schemes. The history of postcolonial India is a mix of success and failure of plans and programmes mainly because of her low motivated bureaucracy symptomized by corruption and delayed implementation. A renowned social scientist Gunnar Myrdal, long back in late 1960s characterized India as a ‘soft-state’ for the state expected least sacrifices from its people. And we are witnessing again a fresh wave of ‘rising frustrations’ (the decade 1960s was designated so) for corruption and alienated political class or such.

Indian economy is a mixed economy, mutually accommodating both public and private sectors. A policy diversion in this regard is very well visible. Public Private Partnership (PPP) is an official policy trusting on and allowing the private agencies to enter into the area like educational, health, and governance. Social NGO’s flood is a prominently felt phenomenon along with their structures, systems of finance and objectives and spirit, replacing the role of governments. It is to be added that unemployment has witnessed an appreciable decline, Indian economy has progressed steadily since 2000 with a higher rate of growth in terms of GDP and per capita income, now standing at Rs. 59000/- approximately. But, simultaneously, economic inequalities are enlarging.

3.6.2 Haryana

The town Kurukshetra has been chosen from 81 urban locations in Haryana. Haryana is a tradition bound agriculturally prosperous and emerging trade and industry hub. The per capita income of Haryana is 59000 per annum and that enable Haryana stand at 1\textsuperscript{st} position among 25 states of Indian Union. Haryana is now marching towards modernization but with many paradoxes in social and cultural arena whereas Haryana’s literacy rate is 67\% however with less participation of women in Education. Patriarchy is an important and effective institution that help survive joint families and kinship network. Of
course, youth population is significantly exposed to mass communication media and urban lifestyle that generates social tension and social deviance consequentially.

The major industries are automobiles, software and banking and agriculture. Haryana society has serious skewed sex ratio, unfavourable to women.

The state language of Haryana is Hindi. People speak Haryanvi - a dialect of Hindi. However, Sikh population is 2% and speak Punjabi. Haryana’s progress on educational front is significant as the state established 6 state universities and dozens of private universities besides a good network of school under state education board management.

3.6.3 The Kurukshetra Town

Kurukshetra is middle sized religious and historical urban settlement divided into old and new parts. The new settlement is Urban Estate under Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA) sectors. Kurukshetra, known for Mahabharta site, is located near GT road between Delhi and Chandigarh. Kurukshetra city is surrounded by rich agriculture area. But no industry is allowed to be established. Approx. 96% population are Hindus, 4% Sikhs and a minor proportions of Muslims. The cast composition is diversified with upper, middle and lower castes. The major castes are Baniyas, Punjabis, Rors, Sainis, Brahmins. Jats are also present. Trade is in the hands of Punjabis and Baniyas mainly. Trade is organized through traditional shops, stores, showrooms etc. Kurukshetra is an ancient educational center with a state university, 6 management and technical education institutes where thousands of students are studying.