CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

The category ‘Tweenagers’ founded by marketers has taken a social and cultural dimensions vis-à-vis brands and consumption. The category generated and nourished by media is visible in the small city conditions of Kurukshetra and shares some characteristics with its counterparts in other big cities of India, even beyond its shores. The basic thread and the logic of existence comes out the same. The tweens explored in the middle class context of the study revealed the making and strengthening of it as a category of any consequence, especially in the realm of the economic. The role of parenting in shaping the desires, aspirations and the immediate world of tweenagers is crucial. It starts at home and continues through in other formal and informal institutions of learning. The family’s role in consumer socialisation has been crucial in initial stages before passing on its reins to the peer groups later. And especially, the mother plays all the more important role in consumer cult initiation. There are some important implications here regarding luminal consumption. And the luminal consumption is actually a co-consumption involving parents.

Parents of today are more informed than ever by virtue of being Gen X parents who are quite different from the Boomer generation- in styles of parenting, consumption practices, motives and uses of consumption. In this study, it was revealed that parents already knew about children’s brands before any actual opening of children branded outlets. The parents eventually communicated their tastes about brands to their tweens, contributing 63% of the total sample, though not many of them discuss brands outside their own family. The branded clothes induce a sense of social approval. Parents do feel the social pressures of buying branded clothes for their children. Children also feel the same. The pressure among tweens for branded clothes is to feel
appreciated within their peer group. Though, they don’t sense any negative pressure from the peer group. Further there are many reasons for buying branded clothes, ranging from comfort to fashion, from prestige to fashion and so on- prestige being the most important factor. The motivating force behind brand consumption is encashed by mass branded fashion companies by not only manufacturing products that are fashionable and full of style but also what looks more fashionable in some contexts- in other words, they manufacture fashionable products as well as fashion itself. Parents, the co-consumers *par excellence*, do feel that branded clothes make their kids smarter and look beautiful (84%). Thus, they invest in their kids and also buy some appreciation from them in return. Expenditure on the kids is always an investment in the form of creating a positive image for the whole family. The same belief that branded clothes make one more beautiful is shared by the tweeneragers as discussed by them in focus group. The parents of tweens want their kids to be a sort of prodigy. For this, they arrange hobby classes, some tuitions or coaching practices so as to chisel them. Preferring brands for their kids should be viewed from this perspective. A whole culture of parenting is woven around this anxiety which knowingly or unknowingly promotes material consumption or brand consumption.

The fashion store Lilliput was found to be quite popular amongst kids in Kurukshetra. The store’s location has an advantage of branding. Lilliput fashion store, and similarly, the Catmoss fashion store are located in a Multiplex situated in posh area. They employ branding strategies which are revealed through inspection of visual merchandising coupled with ethnographic descriptions. The branding is communicated to the target segments through its tangible aspects. The tangible aspects which constitute store atmospherics like music, lighting, interior decoration, facilities at the store, merchandise display, quality, retail ads, sale team at the store etc. affect the branding process and perception of the store. Both tweenagers and the parents were found to be positively influenced with the visual merchandising at the store.
The tweenagers are self conscious about fashion and know how to communicate with it. The identity of tweenagers is connected with brands. They wish to appear attractive- a desire having its own implications so deftly channelized by fashion companies to ‘empower’ children. In the process, there are chances that tweenagers as a category is exploited economically as well as emotionally by catching them young through subtle cues of marketing communication and its way of life suggested through it.

To sum up, branding culture in tweenagers is on the rise with the rise of the information society (the rise of media power). Tweenagers have become more and more precise in communicating themselves through the process of branding and it is becoming central to their identity. The brand knowledge is certainly there in Kurukshetra tweenagers but brand loyalty is not there. Certainly it may go up given the increasing brand literacy among tweenagers. The brands are here to stay in the world of tweenagers with an ever increasing mass following.