Impact of Cultural Dimensions on Apparel Purchase
Behaviour “Comparison of North and
South Indian States”

Atul Kumar¹, M. Ravichandran² and Vikas Nath³

¹Bharati Vidyapeeth University Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi
A-4, Paschim Vihar, Rohtak Road, New Delhi (India) – 110063.
²SRM University, NCR Campus, Delhi Meerut Road, Pin code - 201204.
³University of Madras, University Building, Chepauk Campus,
Triplicane, Chennai, TN 600005.

Abstract

Purpose: The present paper is a modest attempt to compares the impact of culture on apparel purchase in North India and South India.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This paper adopts Hofstede cultural dimensions to explain the difference in the apparel purchase between the two regions viz. North India and South India. A questionnaire survey was conducted on sample size of 700 respondents from northern and southern states of India. Data was then analyzed using Factor analysis, Multiple regressions, Anova.

Originality/Value: Today’s marketer is confronted not only with the challenge of identifying the segments but also has to counter the impact of globalization which has removed all boundaries. India is one of the most culturally diverse nations of the world. The traditional method of using whole country as the culti unit is not applicable in case of India. India can be divided into numerous cultures and traditions. One of the basis of segmentation in India is North India and South India. The key challenge for marketer here is to address the need of different regions with same strategies or create tailor made strategies for the respective regions. The study of cross culture has gained significant importance and no company can afford to ignore the
concept while expanding their operations into new culture/country. Few studies have focused on the implication of cultural differences in the purchase behavior for apparel in India. The result will be most valuable in assisting the managers of the MNCs who wish to expand into Indian markets or the local players of India who want to expand at the national level

**Keyword**: Marketing, Globalization, Cross Culture, Regional Market, Consumer Behavior.

1. **Introduction**

Today’s marketers are confronted with markets which are multicultural and people of different cultures can be found out at one market place (Luna & Gupta, 2001). Gone are the days when the marketers use to identify customers based on different segments like geographical segments where most of the people use to show similar needs and requirements. According to Dougrous & Craig (1997) root cause for this phenomenon can be attributed to mass movement from the developing nations towards the developed nations and transnational communication media like satellite television. Both the factors are creating a world of mixed culture.

India which is one of the most culturally diverse nation of the world is a home to hundreds of languages, cultures and traditions. Two distinct cultural groups of India are North Indians and South Indians. It is rationale to study the culture difference between North India and South India o

2. **Review of Literature**

According to hofstede “ symbols are words, gestures, pictures, objects that carry complex meaning. That can be words in a language, dress code, hairstyle and symbols” (Hofstede, 2000,p.10).

Although hindi is the national language of India but hindi speaking Indians are mostly situated in North India. It is believed that languages of North Indian states belong to Indo Aryan race and those from South India belong to Dravidian Race.Hindi was introduced as a national language to bridge the widening gap between North India and South India and to enforce the feeling of nationality. Almost all the state have their languages and the difference may be visible in accent if not in the core of the language. Infact language have helped in creating the state borders in india (Ullrich, 1982). For North indians there is not much distinction between the national language and the regional language but for South Indians there is a clear distinction between the national and regional language. Divide between Noth India and South india is clearly visible from the medium of linguistic diversity.

Dravidians who mostly reside in South india are smaller in average height and have dark skin as comapred to the people in North India (Euromonitor, 2006). Also
there is a difference in the ways sari is drapped by the females of North India and South India. Similarly there is quite a difference in males also of North India and South India. North Indian males wear dhotis (a fabric which they pleat and tuck under their legs and hitch at the back) while the males in southern India simply wear the dhotis like skirts (Manoj, 2001). However this distinction is restricted to rural or lower class as the middle class Indians have acquired more of the western way of clothing which is homogenous across India.

3. Research Methodology
The first priority was to decide relevant unit of analysis and the cultural groups to be studied. The definition given by (Naroll, 1970) for cultural unit was used as a starting point for deciding the unit of analysis. Cultural unit has been defined as “people who are demotic speaker of a common district language and belong to the same state or contact group”. Thus the two main criteria used were “language” and the “degree of social interation and communication”. (Featherstone, 1990) defined cultural unit in terms of racial, ethnic, demographic or socio economic characteristics of specific interest that provide a common bonding between its members and create a core of shared “memories, myths, values and symbols woven together and sustained in popular consciousness”. The following method was used for sampling for the purpose of data collection.

3.1 Sampling
Total sample of 2207 was collected from the entire India covering all the Indian states. Out of 2207, 547 questionnaires were discarded for response error. Sample size was calculated for infinite population using significance level of 5%, tolerable error of 5% for a five point likert scale using the formula “n=(Zs/e)^2”. This formula gave the sample size of 690. Further there are 28 states and 7 union territories in India. Due to paucity of resources and time only states were covered and union territories were left. In order to have sizeable and proportionate of state the sample size was increased to 711. Thus the sample represents true population of India. Further from each state the data was collected from Universities which formed the sample frame for this study. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire having 4 parts covering 102 questions for cultural dimensions, consumer behaviour, acculturation, apparel preference and demographics. Analysis was done using factor analysis and multiple regression. The scale constructed had shown a high level of internal consistency (cronbach alpha of .77), all items were well above .60 which is commonly accepted threshold (De Vellis, 1991; Spector, 1992 and Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). It was found that all individual scale items had statistically significant (at p<0.05) items to total correlation. Hence all items are deemed reliable. To order to determine the validity of construct, factor analysis was used. To find out whether an item is a part of factor (Nunnally, 1978), factor loading of at least .33 was used at a cut off point. The data was split according to the residence of the respondent (North, South) and then factor analysis was applied in order to extract separate factors for North and South India. the
factors so obtained were then regressed by taking the amount spent on purchasing as dependent variable and the regressed factors as independent variable. In order to determine the main factors influencing the amount spent in purchasing forward regression was applied. To determine the effectiveness of regression model ANOVA test was applied.

3.2 Analysis and findings
For the purpose of this study, 54 statements were asked to the respondents from different states in North India and South India and data reduction by factor analysis with varimax rotation was applied to extract 18 factors for North and South respectively. The statements were based on Hofstede cultural dimensions of Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity Vs Femminity, Individualism Vs Collectivism. If a separate set and statement were developed to determine the purchase behaviour consumers towards apparels and a separate construct of a set of statements was developed to understand the effect of accultration on buying behaviour. After regressing the factors extracted it was found that for North India the consumers were “Quality conscious”, “Materialistic and Status conscious” followed by “Masculine and Power Influence” that effected the amount spent on apparel purchase. On the contrary factors like “Quality Conscious and Traditional” along with “Emotional and Conformative” purchase affected the amount spent on apparel purchase. Factor Loadings and regression equation with regressed factors can be seen in table 1. Further, regression analysis shows that in North factors like “materialistic and status conscious” and “Masculine and Power influence” has a positive impact on purchase behaviour over “Quality consciousness” whereas in south factor like “Emotional and Conformative” has a positive impact as compared to “Quality conscious and traditional”.

4. Regression Equation for North India
Amount spent on purchasing (Y)=9324.8-1052.178(factor 6)+818.526(factor 8)+750.153(factor 10) \( (R^2=0.65 \text{ and } R=0.80) \) (1)
Regression Equation for South India
Amount spent on purchasing (Y)=7634.28+1164.72(factor 14)-1116.38(factor 10) \( (R^2=0.61 \text{ and } R=.37) \) (2)
Factor 10: “Quality conscious and traditional”, Factor 14: “Emotional and confirmative”.

\text{Atul Kumar et al}
Table 1: Factor Loadings of Regressed Factors after Forward Regression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South India</th>
<th>Factor 10 (Quality conscious and traditional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I purchase only quality products (.451)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel very comfortable speaking in my native language (.675)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most of the books I read are in my native language (.612)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 14 (Emotional and confirmative)</td>
<td>Parents should behave emotionally with their children (.778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t buy new brands until these are recommended to me (.334)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North India</th>
<th>Factor 6 (Quality Conscious)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the quality of the product is not up to the mark, I will not go for repeat purchase (.781)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the quality of the product is not up to the mark, I will not recommend the purchase to my reference group (.733)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 8 (Materialistic and Status conscious)</td>
<td>I buy only branded products as these assure quality and this reduces my uncertainty (.712)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I purchase only quality products (.662)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I purchase materialistic product so that I can project status (.386)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I purchase branded products which I am able to identify with my personality (.567)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 10 (Masculine and power influence)</td>
<td>The head of the family should decide the purchase need (.428)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t buy new brands until these are recommended to me (.601)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase decision should be made by the male member only (.343)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion
From this study, it can thus be concluded that factors influencing purchase of apparel in north and south India are different. The impact of power distance and Masculinity is more dominant in North India as compared to South India. On the other hand, South Indians are more traditional and emotional in their purchase behaviour, thus apparel manufacturers need to emphasize more on status symbol in north and more on tradition in South India.

6. Bibliography


