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PERSONALITY TRAITS AND GLOBAL BRAND ATTRIBUTES: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CONSUMER ATTITUDE

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Abstract

This study probes the impact of big five personality traits on consumer attitude towards global brands and the impact of attitude on global brand attributes and the mediational impact of consumer attitude in an emerging market like India. To examine the hypotheses, the structural equation modeling was employed. The investigation revealed extraversion and openness to experience to positively influence consumer attitude while the relationship was found negative for neuroticism. As hypothesized, consumer attitude exercised positive influence over global brand attributes. The mediating effect of consumer attitude was confirmed by the association between extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience with global brand attributes.

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1. Introduction

In today's globalized markets, consumers have access to international brands. Consumers purchase global brands as it is linked with perceptions of better quality, greater admiration and attractive global myths (**Kapferer and Bastein, 2012**). Marketers are therefore interested in understanding the factors that drive consumers' purchase of global brands, especially the positive association between personality characteristics of individuals and purchase of global brands (**Steenkamp et al., 2003**). Previous studies carried out in the context of global brands, have focused on understanding the acceptance of international and national identities (**Pharr, 2005**), while there is very scant research on personality traits shaping the global brand attitude. In emerging countries, consumers prefer global brands, as these are considered to be to be trendy, of better quality and providing greater status in comparison to local brands (**Zhou et al., 2008**). The present study examines the impact of personality characteristics on global brand attributes in an emerging market setting like India.

2. Review of Literature

Personality is defined as an assortment of distinctive human psychological characteristics, that expedite fairly steady and continuing responses to environmental challenges. Out of various frameworks to measure personality, the Big Five framework, based on five traits of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness, is considered reliable, with wide acceptance in marketing studies (**Donnellan et al., 2006**). Extraversion is an individual's level of toleration and bearing of sensorial stimulus from individuals and circumstances and it is described by adjectives such as conversational, lively,

energetic, uninhibited and affable. Extraversion has been found to be strongly associated with positive feelings that drive consumption activities (**Mooradian and Olver, 1997**). Agreeableness is defined as a person's concern for societal accord and it is described by adjectives such as compassionate, sympathetic, trusting, helpful and grateful. It has been found that a substantial positive association exists between agreeableness and shopping tendency for global brands exists (**Roy et al., 2016**). Conscientiousness involves a well-organized striving for goals and stern obedience of beliefs and ideas and it is described by traits such as systematic, trustworthy, responsible, and competence. A notable association between highly conscientious individuals and a trusted brand has been found to exist (**Yu et al., 2021**). Neuroticism is the tendency to experience psychological suffering through apprehension, anger, sadness or other adverse impacts. It has been reported that a negative link between neuroticism and consumption behaviour exists (**Mooradian and Olver, 1997**). Openness to experience is the level to which an individual accepts novel experiences and it is insightful, creative, and inquisitive. It has been found that there exists positive linkage between openness to experience and global identity (**Westjohn et al., 2012**). Global brands are accessible to individuals of multiple countries and have the exact brand name, with common and centrally synchronized marketing approaches. Global brands carry an impression of superiority, prestige and esteem in comparison to local brands (**Batra et al., 2000**). In the present study, we define consumer attitude towards global brand as an individual's evaluation of global brand, either favourable or unfavourable. There are various attributes for evaluating brands. The present study focuses on perceived brand quality, brand prestige, brand

preference and brand image, as global brand attributes. Perceived brand quality is an individual's assessment of superiority of the brands. Studies of global brands conducted in various nations have concluded that consumers consider western brands to be of better quality than their local brands (**Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995**). Similar findings have been found for Indian consumers (**Kinra, 2006**). Consumers are also inclined towards global brands as greater prestige is associated with its consumption (**Baek et al., (2010)**. **Steenkamp et al., (2003)** found positive impact of brand globalness on brand's perceived prestige. Brand preference reflects the degree to which a consumer favours the assigned service given by a company of liking, in comparison to competing brands available in market. Brand preference has been found to be positively impacted by perceived brand globalness (**Halkias et al., 2016**). Brand image is how the consumer perceives the product. It connects the traits of a certain brand to an individual's memory and forms an overall brand imprint (**Kang and James, 2004**). In emerging countries, consumers have favorable attitude towards global brands as consumers use global brands to enhance their image (**Bhardwaj et al., 2010**).

3. Statement of the Problem

Though it has been established that personality traits impact national and international identities**,** there exists scant research, that has explored the role of personality traits in influencing consumer attitude and global brand attributes. Owing to the increasing interest in comprehending the factors, which drive consumer global brand preferences, it becomes essential to comprehend the capacity of personality traits in shaping consumers' global brand preferences and the mechanism through which the effect takes place. Few researches have empirically observed the impact of personality characteristics on global brand attributes in an emerging market setting. Addressing this gap, the study proposes to examine the augmented framework on a sample of Indian consumers, using global apparel brands, as the context for the study.

4. Need of the Study

The research aims to determine the role and mechanism of personality traits in the creation of global brand attributes, especially in the context of an emerging market setting like India. McKinsey and Company (2016) have reported that India is the fastest growing nation for fashion in the category of emerging nations. Thus our research becomes even more significant to global brand managers and marketers in India and other emerging economies, especially those associated with global apparel brands.

5. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the current research were to examine the impact of big five personality traits on consumer attitude towards global brands, to investigate the impact of consumer attitude towards global brand attributes and to probe the mediating influence of consumer attitude on the association between personality traits and global brand attributes.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

H1a: Extraversion positively influences consumer attitude towards global brands.

H1b: Agreeableness positively influences consumer attitude towards global brands.

H1c: Conscientiousness positively influences consumer attitude towards global brands.

H1d: Neuroticism negatively influences consumer attitude towards global brands.

H1e: Openness to experience positively influences consumer attitude towards global brands.

H2a: Consumer attitude towards global brands positively influences perceived brand quality.

H2b: Consumer attitude towards global brands positively influences brand prestige.

H2c: Consumer attitude towards global brands positively influences brand preference.

H2d: Consumer attitude towards global brands will positively influence brand image.

H3: Consumer attitude towards global brands mediates the association between personality traits [extraversion **(H3a)**; agreeableness **(H3b)**, conscientiousness **(H3c)**, neuroticism **(H3d)** and openness to experience **(H3e)**] and global brands' perceived brand quality, brand prestige, brand preference and brand image.

7. Research Methodology

7.1. Sample Selection

This research chose apparel brands as the research context since the study was related to global brands like Levi's, Pepe Jeans, Zara and United Colors of Benetton, based on convenient sampling method. The study employed mall-intercept technique to collect data from various cities like Amritsar, Bangalore, Darjeeling, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Shillong. The process of data collection procedure yielded 455 valid responses.

7.2. Sources of Data

To examine the research hypotheses, a self-administered structured questionnaire was employed for data collection (Figure-1). All constructs were measured through statements adapted from earlier research on a seven-point Likert Scale, demonstrating the level of agreement or disagreement. The five dimensions of Big Five Personality were operationalized, by using the scales developed by **Donnellan et al., (2006)**. Modified scales of **Batra et al., (2000)** and **Bhardwaj et al., (2010)** were employed as a measure of consumer attitude towards global brands. Brand prestige was assessed by statements, modified from **Han and Terpstra (1988)** and **Baek et al., (2010)**. The measurement items of brand preference, perceived brand quality, and brand image, were derived from **Steenkamp et al., (2003)**, **Cobb-Walgren et al., (1995)**, and **Kang and James (2004)** respectively.

7.3. Period of the Study

The study was conducted over the period of December 2019 to February 2021.

7.4. Tools used in the Study

The study used **Anderson and Gerbing's (1988)** two-step process, to test the proposed framework. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed, to measure constructs' reliability and validity. In the second step, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the proposed hypotheses. The bootstrapping technique was employed to test the mediating hypotheses (**Byrne, 2010**). To establish the presence of mediation, indirect path was examined through two-tailed significance, with 95% confidence interval.

8. Data Analysis

8.1. Measurement Model Analysis

Overall model statistics revealed that the χ^2/df was 2.235. The model fit indices (CFI=.928, TLI=0.918, GFI=0.852, NFI=0.877, RMSEA=0.052) were satisfactory **(Table-1)**. **Table-3** shows that all constructs, investigated

in our study, reported a respectable degree of reliability, ranging from 0.824 to 0.921, which was above the threshold limit of 0.70 (**Hair et al., 1998**). For evaluation of construct validity, both convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. The composite reliability of all the variables were above the threshold limit of 0.7 and ranged from 0.830 to 0.909 (**Table-3**). Further, the average variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs were above the recommended level of 0.50 (**Table-3**), which proved the convergent validity. The results also indicated that the standardized factor loadings of the indicators onto their respective constructs were above the acceptable limit of 0.50 and they were found significant at 5 per cent level of significance which further established the convergent validity (**Table-3**). Discriminant validity was proved when AVE of a latent variable was greater than the marginal shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV) between the constructs (**Fornell and Larcker, 1981**). Results indicated the criterion for discriminant validity to exist (**Table-3**).

8.2. Structural Model

Overall model statistics indicated that the χ^2/df was 2.524. The model fit indices (CFI=0.910, TLI=0.860, GFI=0.899, NFI=0.860, RMSEA=0.058) were satisfactory (**Table -2**). In support of H1a, the results indicated that extraversion positively influenced global brand consumer attitude (p<0.05). H1b and H1c were rejected as no significant association was found between agreeableness and consumer attitude, conscientiousness and consumer attitude respectively (p>0.05). The neuroticism negatively influenced global brand consumer attitude (p<0.05 and $\beta = -0.082$). In support of H1e, the results indicated that openness to experience positively influenced consumer

attitude towards global brands (p<0.01) (**Table-4**). There was positive association between consumer attitude and their perceived brand quality (p<0.001). As hypothesized, the association between consumer attitude and brand prestige, consumer attitude and brand preference and consumer attitude and brand image, was found significant (p<0.001) (**Table-4**).

8.3. Mediation Analysis

As predicted in H3a, consumer attitude was found to fully mediate the association between extraversion and perceived brand quality, brand prestige, brand preference, and brand image. As predicted by H3d, consumer attitude was found to fully mediate the association between neuroticism and perceived brand quality, brand prestige, brand preference and brand image. Similarly, H3e was found to fully mediate the association between openness to experience and perceived brand quality, brand prestige, brand preference and brand image. H3b and H3c were rejected as no mediation effect of consumer attitude was found for paths, involving agreeableness and conscientiousness (**Table-5**).

9. Findings of the Study

There was positive association between extraversion and openness to experience and consumer attitude towards global brands. Neuroticism was found to negatively impact consumer attitude towards global brands. The association of agreeableness and conscientiousness with consumer attitude towards global brands, was found to be insignificant. Consumer attitude towards global brands was found to positively influence perceived brand quality, brand prestige, brand image and brand preference. A full mediating impact of consumer attitude on paths involving extraversion, openness to experience and neuroticism was found while it was found

insignificant on paths involving conscientiousness and agreeableness.

10. Suggestions

To attract extraverts, managers should pay increased attention to generating hedonistic values through introduction of special sale price, new styles and experiences. To further capitalize on the segment of consumers, who are high on openness to experience, global brand managers are advised to establish and communicate products, that are more contemporary, trending and intellectual. To cater to the needs of the neurotic consumers, more attention should be given by global brand managers on building brand trust through measures such as corporate social responsibility and customer experience. Thus, marketers and managers should focus on providing products, that cater to the needs of various consumer personality segments, as it strengthens brand attributes and creates loyal consumers for their brands.

11. Conclusion

The present research empirically tested the influence of personality characteristics on consumer global brand attitude and found that extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience, significantly influenced consumer attitude towards global brands, which further led to the development of global brand attributes. Consumer attitudes were also found to mediate the association between significant personality characteristics (extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience) and global brand attributes.

12. Limitations of the Study

The present study did not consider local brand settings. Further, demographic elements such as age, income, gender, and non-metro status of the area, that could modify the relative effect of personality traits on consumer attitude towards global brand, were not examined.

13. Scope for Further Research

Firstly, the study was carried out on the sample of Indian consumers, which might have limited the generalizability of our results. Our augmented model could be tested in more advanced nations so as to amplify the impact of the study. Second, our research was conducted on apparel brands. Future researchers could test the model on other product categories (e.g., food) which are more culturally relevant.

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Figure-1: Conceptual Framework showing the Hypothesized Relationships.
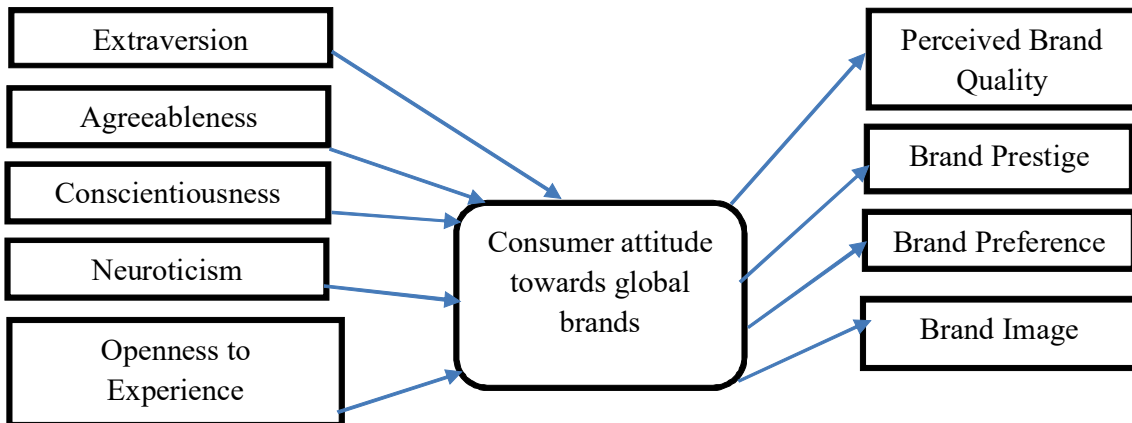
Source: Conceptual framework developed by authors

Table-1: Results of the Goodness of Fit Indicators of the Measurement Framework

Model fit Indices	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA
Model	2.235	0.928	0.918	0.852	0.877	0.052

Source: Primary data calculated using AMOS

Table-2: Results of Goodness of Fit of the Structural Framework

Model fit Indices	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA
Model	2.524	0.910	0.860	0.899	0.860	0.058

Source: Primary data calculated using AMOS

Table-3: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Personality Traits and Global Brand Attributes

Constructs	Item label	Factor Loadings	Cronbach α	C.R.	AVE	MSV	ASV
Extraversion	EXT1	0.818	0.891	0.892	0.693	0.032	0.012
	EXT2	0.805					
	EXT3	0.854					
	EXT4	0.803					
Agreeableness	AGR1	0.907	0.921	0.909	0.717	0.012	0.004
	AGR2	0.954					
	AGR3	0.732					
	AGR4	0.734					
Conscientiousness	CONS1	0.636	0.850	0.830	0.554	0.035	0.013
	CONS2	0.827					
	CONS3	0.634					
	CONS4	0.852					
Neuroticism	NEUR1	0.704	0.877	0.878	0.644	0.027	0.010
	NEUR2	0.837					
	NEUR3	0.848					
	NEUR4	0.814					
Openness to Experience	OPEN1	0.821	0.872	0.873	0.632	0.035	0.013
	OPEN2	0.807					
	OPEN3	0.807					
	OPEN4	0.747					
Consumer Attitude towards global brands	ATGB1	0.801	0.893	0.894	0.679	0.508	0.171
	ATGB2	0.832					
	ATGB3	0.837					
	ATGB4	0.826					
Perceived Brand Quality	PBQ1	0.806	0.856	0.857	0.666	0.508	0.208
	PBQ2	0.852					
	PBQ3	0.789					
Brand Prestige	BP1	0.845	0.861	0.863	0.678	0.453	0.147
	BP2	0.880					
	BP3	0.739					
Brand Preference	BPR1	0.691	0.833	0.836	0.561	0.494	0.178
	BPR2	0.817					
	BPR3	0.711					
	BPR4	0.770					
Brand Image	BI1	0.778	0.824	0.831	0.553	0.494	0.189
	BI2	0.816					
	BI3	0.642					
	BI4	0.726					

Source: Primary data calculated using AMOS

Table-4: Results of Hypotheses Assessment

Path Relationship	Estimates (β)	S.E.	t-values	p	Results
Extraversion→ ATGB	0.084	0.038	2.203	0.028	Supported
Agreeableness → ATGB	0.041	0.050	0.816	0.414	Not Supported
Conscientiousness → ATGB	-0.013	0.037	-0.346	0.729	Not Supported
Neuroticism → ATGB	-0.082	0.040	-2.070	0.038	Supported
Openness to experience→ ATGB	0.108	0.042	0.594	0.009	Supported
ATGB→ Perceived Brand Quality	0.722	0.050	14.521	***	Supported
ATGB → Brand Prestige	0.592	0.052	11.277	***	Supported
ATGB → Brand Preference	0.561	0.050	11.258	***	Supported
ATGB → Brand Image	0.548	0.046	11.998	***	Supported

Source: Primary data calculated using AMOS

Table-5: Results of Mediation Effect of Consumer Attitude

Direct Path	Indirect Path via mediators	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	p value	Mediation
Ext→ PBQ	Ext → ATGB→ PBQ	-0.041	0.092	0.051	0.029	Full
Ext→ BP	Ext → ATGB→ BP	0.047	0.069	0.116	0.028	Full
Ext→ BPR	Ext → ATGB→ BPR	0.079	0.078	0.157	0.028	Full
Ext→ BI	Ext → ATGB→ BI	0.035	0.077	0.112	0.028	Full
Agr → PBQ	Agr → ATGB → PBQ	0.028	0.033	0.061	0.387	No
Agr→ BP	Agr → ATGB → BP	0.025	0.025	0.050	0.376	No
Agr→ BPR	Agr → ATGB→ BPR	0.038	0.028	0.066	0.380	No
Agr→ BI	Agr → ATGB→ BI	0.030	0.027	0.057	0.383	No
Cons → PBQ	Cons → ATGB → PBQ	0.092	-0.015	0.077	0.747	No
Cons → BP	Cons →ATGB → BP	0.085	-0.011	0.074	0.749	No
Cons → BPR	Cons→ ATGB → BPR	0.079	-0.013	0.066	0.757	No
Cons → BI	Cons→ ATGB → BI	0.195	-.013	0.182	0.383	No
Neu → PBQ	Neu→ ATGB → PBQ	0.058	-0.089	-0.031	0.042	Full
Neu→ BP	Neu→ ATGB → BP	0.048	-0.066	-0.018	0.749	Full
Neu→ BPR	Neu→ ATGB → BPR	-0.066	-0.075	-0.141	0.038	Full
Neu→ BI	Neu→ ATGB → BI	-0.025	-0.074	-0.099	0.037	Full
Open. → PBQ	Open.→ATGB → PBQ	0.001	0.112	0.113	0.014	Full
Open. → BP	Open.→ ATGB → BP	0.011	0.083	0.094	0.014	Full
Open. → BPR	Open.→ATGB → BPR	0.013	0.094	0.107	0.014	Full
Open. → BI	Open → ATGB → BI	0.022	0.093	0.115	0.016	Full

Source: Primary data calculated using AMOS