

## **The Impact of Culture on Brand Personifications and Consumer's Purchase Intentions of the Brand**

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### **Abstract**

A study of the Pan-European countries reveals differences in consumer behavior due to cultural differences among nations. India is similar to pan-European countries with myriad cultures and sub-cultures co-existing. One would like to know whether cultural differences exist amongst various ethnic populations in India and whether that influences consumer behavior. In particular, the study will ascertain the differences between female consumers of India and those who buy cosmetics products for themselves. Further, it would infer whether brand personifications of different culturally diverse Indian consumers vary from one part of the country to the other. Lastly, it will explore how the culture and sub-cultures of India are rooted in Hinduism or other religious practices in the country. Do Hindus from different parts of the country have brand personifications similar to the ones portrayed in cosmetics advertising? For this purpose, Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, their relationship to brand personifications of Indian consumers, and their influence on consumers' purchase intentions will be studied. This will help formulate brand positioning strategies for cosmetic brands in India due to cultural differences, family life cycle stages, Religious beliefs, language differences, Individual differences, and Differences in food consumption habits. The scope of the study is to find out how the role of culture, brand personifications, brand usage, brand awareness, attitudes to advertising, and attitudes to branding, along with demographic variables, affect the purchase intentions of Indian female consumers for cosmetics. Operationalize Hofstede's six cultural dimensions and how they are related to brand personifications of Indian female consumers. Contrast differences in purchase intentions of female consumers in India based on the abovementioned characteristics and similar demographic variables

**Keywords:** Brand personification; Cosmetics products; Culture; Hofstede dimensions; Indian consumer behavior; Purchase intention

## INTRODUCTION

In the study of brands, it is easy to realize that consumers project their personalities onto brands and develop relationships with the brand due to the formation of attachments or bonds. In this realm of thinking, consumers assign brand personality based on cultural values. Culture gives rise to unique personalities which are different from individual differences. Consumers attribute different personifications to brands that fit with their cultural values and not the values of the producer of the brands. Usually, multinational corporations want a single brand identity for their brands in different countries; however, consumers interpret them differently in different cultures. Consumers in different countries ascribe different personalities to brands, even if the international brands have a unique and uniform theme. Further, brand identity and advertising themes vary across nations, and consumers interpret them differently. Brand personifications determine the success of the brand positioning. Brands have unique and distinct personalities in different societies. Culture and its impact on the relationship between brand personifications and purchase intentions is the central theme of this paper. We have also extended this framework to capture control variables in the effectiveness of advertising by capturing the attitude to advertising, attitude to branding, product usage, and purchase intention of brands.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Aaker (1997) developed the 'Brand Personality Scale' model based on the Big Five model of human personality. The scales were designed to act as a source for constructing definite personality profiles of brands. Various personality scales have been developed, primarily ad-hoc scales deduced from psychological studies. The applications involved problems of validity in marketing. The Aaker model offered five-dimensional (Anees et al., 2014) solutions to problems using a theoretical framework of different personalities. Consumers are changing dynamically, and the social world needs love, intimacy, and closeness to their image. Companies are striving to devise distinctive personalities for their products and services. They infused their products and services with different attributes, creating a desired brand image in customers' minds. Brand personality is essential in brand image formation and helps build brand equity. Keller's (1993) brand equity model emphasizes personifications that make the right brand experiences for customers to develop positive emotions toward them. Substantial brand equity helps build a competitive edge, leading to better customer purchase intentions. Brand personality ensures consistent brand image formation over time and allows consumers to express their personalities (Aaker, 1997). Consumers use brand personality dimensions as determinants of value added to the brand (Biel, 1993; Keller, 1993).

The four steps of understanding Keller's brand equity model elaborate the customer's journey in understanding a brand that is often subconscious. Initially, the 'brand salience' or awareness builds essential identity by making it stand out and noticeable to the public. The second stage is based on a brand's meaning that caters to customers' brand image about the brand. It is closely related to the brand's performance and imagery. The brand ventures into the third step of 'brand response,' which is directed toward the customer's response to the brand regarding their feelings and judgments. The final stage of 'brand resonance' is based on the most desirable level of a brand that reaches the customers' most profound psychological bond with the brand. Building a desirable brand personality will help develop favorable attitudinal and behavioral brand outcomes. (Su & Tong, 2016). Brand personalities are created by consistently maintaining a good brand image perception in the customers' minds. The brand's personality can strengthen emotional ties and inculcate positive relations with trust and loyalty (Xiao Tong, 2017).

Culture significantly influences consumer behavior, defining society's values and beliefs (Assael, 1995). Culture is complex as it includes knowledge, religion, art, law, morals, customs, habits, and capabilities acquired by society members (Hawkins et al., 2010). Culture is often stated as a symbol reflected in products and services consumers purchase. Marketers express this concern as symbols that introduce products with positive cultural values. (Fahimeh et al., 2016).

Cultural values are learned in three ways: formal, informal, and technical. It establishes cultural norms such that values are permanent and dynamic; some values are shared and distinguishable. Instrumental values are related to the state of behavior (personifications), and terminal values are based on end-state existence (Rokeach, 1978). The groups of values influence customers in choosing a particular brand or product. The customer's attitude towards the product influences the brand choice criteria. (Laudon et al. 1993). The brand choice criteria are based on prominent attributes of products in contrast to that of the

brand choice, which is based on brand attributes rather than product attributes. The brand positioning is such that it can transfer advertising as a means of communicating a brand's superiority to potential buyers. One approach to understanding cultural values is Kahle's (1983) List of Values (Mehmetoglu et al., 2010). The LOV by Kahle includes nine terminal values based on merging the 18 terminal values of Rokeach's list and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The nine values are warm relationships with others, self-respect, sense of achievement, fun, enjoyment in life, self-fulfillment, being well respected, security, sense of belongingness, and excitement. The three main domains in the values are internal (self-respect, self-fulfillment, and sense of achievement), interpersonal (fun, enjoyment, and excitement), and external (warm relationship with others, being well respected, security, and belongingness).

Brand image determines mental representations of emotional and cognitive interpretations with individual attributes. Every brand seems to have an identity and nature, i.e., brand personality. Keller (1993) postulates that brands serve as a symbolic or self-expressive function. Researchers also attribute brand personalities as similar to images and reputations of a brand, while this view is supported by Upsaw (1995). An external personality is given to the characteristics of a brand and functions as the causal connection between the brand and the consumer, either now or in the future. The more riveting and engrossing is a brand rooted in emotional ties, and the consumer communicates with the brand. The 18 instrumental values Rokeach mentions are the possible personifications that help consumers achieve their terminal values or goals.

In sync with Macrcac's (1996) idea, consumer communication depends on brand personality profiles. Furthermore, Batra (1999) defines brand personality as the internal link to the customer's perception of the brand to capture the external brand image. It includes but is not bound to all of the relationships among the brand, especially the brand identity and the lifestyle and characteristics of the consumers. All such relationships create the entire image of a brand. Langmeyer (1994) concludes that a brand's personality is built by its characteristics and response processes in the market surrounded by a person's personality based on their genetic endowment and interpretations. Their research shows that the image of a product or service can be measured independently. Aaker (1997) considered that brand personality represents the human characteristics associated with a brand. For example, Absolut Vodka was described as a cool, hip, contemporary 25-year-old man.

The personality traits associated with a brand, such as those associated with an individual, tend to be relatively enduring and distinct. Among all brand research, little has been done based on the Chinese market or the Indian market, and far less is found on consumers' perceptions about their preferences, attitudes, loyalty, and buying intention. Aaker (1997) insisted that brand personality is a heuristic cue that might influence consumer attitudes. The brand personality framework and scales developed by Aaker (1997) have critical applications for researchers by examining brand personality perceptions across cultures. Nonetheless, the scale might not be appropriate for measuring brand personality in different cultural contexts. Aaker (1997) developed a 42-item Brand Personality Scale (BPS) to structure and measure the brand personality of any brand across five key dimensions. The research focuses on dimensions in examining the salience of brand personality profiles for each brand as perceived by consumers. Brand personality dimensions and a framework created by Aaker (1997) were tested across many product categories (such as shoes, clothing, cars, fragrances, soft drinks, credit cards, and so on) in different countries. It was found that only when consumers perceive a brand to have a descriptive personality influence their brand preferences. The idea is that consumers become "attached" to a brand based on personality and intangibles, whereby feelings influence brand preferences and loyalty. Bamini et al. (2008) suggest that further investigation is needed in different brands and product levels to confirm and understand the influence of culture on buyer personifications. Therefore, this study significantly contributes to the literature by determining the effectiveness of Aaker's personality dimension in an Asian country context.

Culture comprises many components: language, religion, values, socio-economic status, family lifecycle stages, eating habits, and other standards (Hill, 2002). These parameters influence how individuals perceive different things, resulting in one of the main functions of a culture, namely the structure in which people perceive and evaluate different things (Hall, 1989). Applied to marketing, this means that brands benefit the people of a particular culture and enable them to receive brands congruent with the cultural perceptions. One of the tools used most frequently in culture studies is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. While there have been questions as to the reliability and validity of Hofstede's indices (e.g., Spector et al., 2001; Van de Vijver, 2002; Bearden et al., 2006) as well as their applicability to individual-level analysis, the absence of an alternative scale as

comprehensive as Hofstede's indices, left us with little choice but to use Hofstede's indicators. Moreover, to ensure comparability, it was deemed necessary to use some of the relevant indicators from the Hofstede model, modified to Indian conditions.

**Collectivism/individualism** Hofstede (1980) describes this dimension as one of the core values defining the form and harmony in which individuals live with society. Collectivist societies have a very narrow social network, reflected in the way of life that large families and the individual's responsibility towards the groups characterizes their purchase. By contrast, individualistic societies give priority to the rights of the individual. This has a direct effect on brand management (Hofstede, 1994). The more significant pressure to conform in collectivistic countries can affect consumer behavior. On the other hand, the members of individualistic cultures are characterized by their pursuit of self-realization and individual freedom. They are less likely to be pressured to buy brands that do not offer their self-expression. This is not to say there is no pressure to conform in an individualistic society and vice versa. There is more latitude for consumers to act independently of others. Current thinking sees individualism and collectivism as bipolar but rather as dimensions that can quite easily exist alongside one another (Malhotra, 2001; (Thomas Foscht and Cesar Maloles III, 2008 )

A brand experience includes subjective sensations, feelings, and evaluations as internally processed responses to brand-related stimuli like brand design, visual identity, packaging, communications, and other environmental cues (Brakus et al., 2009). Therefore, a brand experience can occur at the level of a product, service, store, or marketing campaign. Brakus et al., building upon Schmitt's work (1999), identified five sensory experiences (i.e., think, feel, sense, relate, and act) and proposed four et al. dimensions of brand experiences: affective, behavioral, sensory, and intellectual experiences. These experiences inspire emotional bonds and lasting impressions in consumers, leading to the success of branding efforts. As more consumers prefer Omni-channel shopping by using multiple channels (e.g., physical stores, websites, social media platforms, and mobile apps) for a single transaction (Parise et al., 2016), the extent to which the brand provides real-time, personalized, and emotional content through myriad touch points determines their brand experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Parise et al., 2016; Sullivan, 2019).

#### **Research problem:**

Cultural differences exist between diverse ethnic populations in India, influencing end consumers' buying behavior and attitudes toward cosmetics. The study attempts to cull out the impact of culture on the relationship between brand personifications and attitudinal reactions (brand usage) to the purchase intentions of cosmetics by Indian women consumers. The study forms various brand personifications in the Indian context and relates them to cultural dimensions with a regression model. This impacts the relationship between brand personifications and attitudinal reactions to advertising and branding. Hence, the study tries to understand the formation of various brand personification dimensions in the Indian context and relate them to cultural dimensions using a regression model. We will also extend this framework to capture the effectiveness of advertising by capturing the attitude to advertising, attitude to brands, and purchase intention of brands based on Hofstede's six cultural dimensions. Also, this research looks into how religious beliefs, family life cycle stages, food eating habits, and languages spoken at home lead to cultural differences that affect the behavior of end consumers.

#### **Objectives of the research:**

The study aims to understand the impact of culture on brand personifications and consumer's purchase intentions of a brand based on the following objectives:

- To explain the differences in brand personifications amongst cosmetic buying consumers of India based on the study of cultures, sub-cultures, religions, languages spoken at home, monthly household incomes, eating habits, family life cycle stages, and age groups
- To ascertain whether brand personifications, attitudinal reactions to branding, and advertising of different culturally diverse consumers in different parts of India (North versus South) affect purchase intentions by applying and analyzing Hofstede's cultural dimensions to find cultural differences amongst female consumers of India buying cosmetic products

- Contrast differences between female consumers of North India and South India on cultural differences, differences in personifications, brand usage, brand awareness, brand attitudes, and demographics
- To explore brand positioning outcomes of cosmetic brands in the purview of cultures, sub-cultures of India, and the presence of various religious groups

### MODEL DEVELOPMENT

#### **The Conceptual Framework and control variables (See Figure 1):**

The conceptual model developed in this research paper is given in Figure 1. A path model is used to study the impact of brand personifications and brand usage characteristics on advertising and branding effectiveness and purchase intentions. The driver variables in the model are the six dimensions of Hofstede variables., and the demographic variables consisting of Family life cycle stages, Religious beliefs, language differences, eating habits, and demographic differences based on age, education, occupation, and income are studied. An important area of the research focuses on applying statistical methodology-based regression models and discriminant analysis models, and the path model is constructed based on factors of cultural variables and inputting cultural factors into the regression model. A comparison will be drawn to understand the workings of cultural models in the Indian context and contrast the differences between North Indian and South Indian customers who buy cosmetics. The primary objective of the research is to develop brand personifications and attitudinal reaction scales appropriate to this study and study the causal impact of cultural dimensions on brand performance and purchase intentions (behavior). Most cultural studies talk about correlations between the dimensions and cultural statements. This paper has developed a causal model to study culture's direct and indirect impact on consumer behavior. Further, it will be verified whether brand personification scales developed in the US context apply to Indian conditions with certain modifications. This research paper uses the Big Five personality constructs derived from Aaker's (1997) personification paper, and the 18 brand personifications list used in the study is based on Indian experiences and researchers' knowledge from past research. We have also studied the relationships between cultural dimensions and personifications in the international context and prepared a hypotheses table (See Table number A) showing these relationships. The research has identified some directional responses in the tables from international experiences, and I look forward to this research to throw those relationships into the Indian context. The survey method is adopted to collect the information needed to study the differences between North and South India. Further, we have referred to other countries' personifications to state the relevant personifications to India.

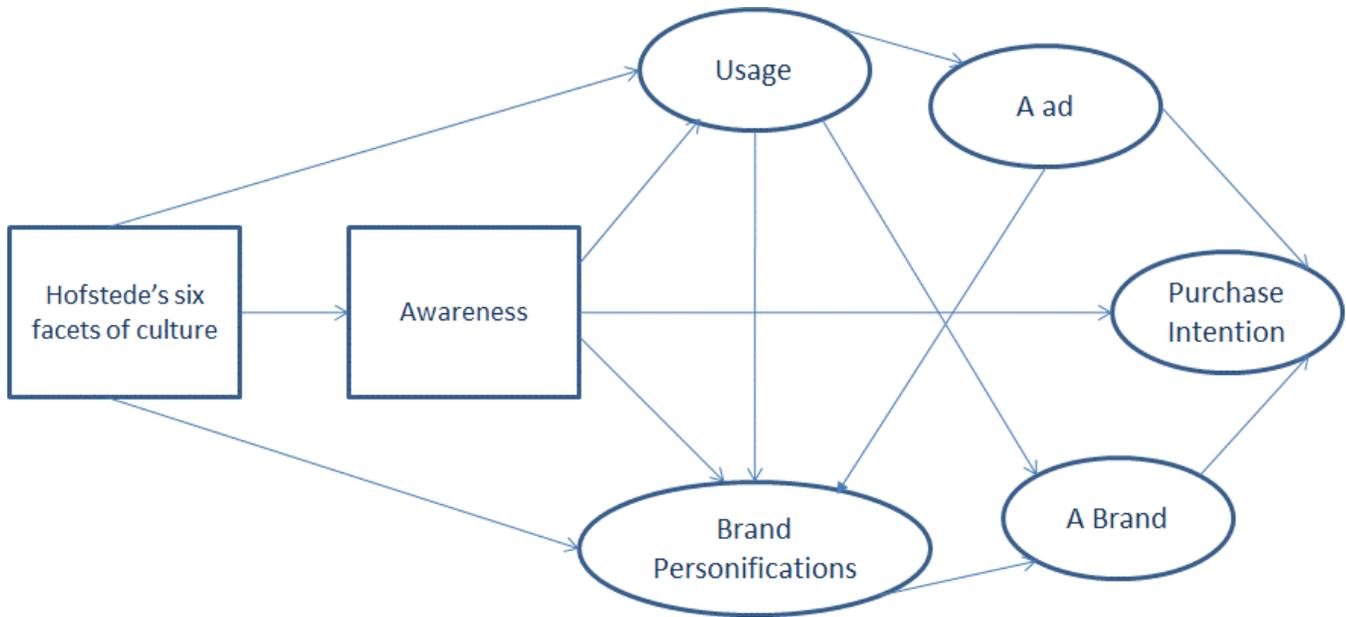
The path model's six facets of cultural dimensions and demographic variables affect brand usage, awareness, and personifications. Purchase intention is the dependent variable, and the two intermediary variables- attitude to advertising and attitude to branding are used as control variables in the path model. Both the attitude variables' influence on purchase intention has been well documented and recorded in the past literature on consumer behavior, and hence, it will not be covered here. Demographic variables and Cultural factors drive brand awareness, brand usage, and brand personifications. Demographic variables, brand usage status, brand awareness, and Attitude to advertising drive attitude to branding. Demographics, brand Usage status, brand personifications, brand awareness, and cultural variables determine attitude to advertising and attitude to branding and consummate their overall impact on purchase intention. The overall regression model can be stated as follows:

**Purchase intention = F (factors of cultural dimensions, brand awareness, brand usage, Attitude to advertising, Attitude to branding, brand personifications, and demographic variables). Since a small sample was gathered during COVID-19, we could not do structural equation modeling. We chose two cosmopolitan areas in North and South India and studied their differences in personifications and purchase intentions with a survey questionnaire.**

The differences between the North Indian and South Indian consumers will be studied by separately running regression models for the two types of environments along with an overall model for India. The differences between the two environments will be studied by comparing the standardized regression coefficients (Beta Coefficients) and discriminant analysis-based structural correlation.

FIGURE 1

Impact of culture on brand personifications and consumers' usage of the brand



**Relationship development:** Brand personifications are culture-specific (Aaker, 2001). Ramifications of culture theory are used to study global advertising and branding strategies and outcomes of marketing by companies. In this study, we want to relate brand personification interpretations by end consumers based on the cultural background of female consumers for cosmetics in India. Hofstede model is used to study the concepts of self, personality, and brand identity. How cultural differences in India manifests in perceptions about the brand's personality will be studied. Further, we study the impact of cultural and demographic differences on the purchase intentions of female consumers in India. Across the world, cultural dimensions have been shown to influence consumer behavior. In this research paper, we want to add an Indian perspective in studying cultural influences on brand personifications and contrast the differences in consumer behavior of North Indian and South Indian cultures. The worldwide extant research has studied the role of cultural differences' influences on brand personifications, usage and awareness of brands, and purchase intentions of goods and services. Cultural values affect consumers' personalities, and it is essential to study how consumers interpret brand personifications that lead to purchase intentions. Culture also influences mental and social processes through the lens of sub-cultures, which leads to different brand personifications (De Mooig & Hofstede, 2010). As a result, we expect differences in brand personifications between North Indian and South Indian consumers. Mental processes refer to internal pressures on how people think, learn, perceive, categorize, and process brand information. The social processes studies show how we relate to others based on motivations and emotions. Internal and external processes affect consumer behavior and aid in interpreting brand communication messages, affecting advertising inputs. Consumer perception of self, personality, identity, images, and cultural values at a global level affects brand positioning. How does advertising work vary across cultures? Consumers attribute different personifications to different cultures. As a result, there will be differences between North Indian and South Indian female consumers, so personification differences between the two regions are expected. We study the methodological differences between cultural outcomes and analyze and contrast the working of cultural models between North Indian and South Indian consumers. We will study the six cultural constructs that Hofstede expounded on- power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus feminist cultures, uncertainty avoidance, consumers' short-term and long-term orientation, and indulgence versus austerity. We will explain product usage ownership conditions and consumption behaviors of Indian consumers with Hofstede's six dimensions.

Hofstede's culture dimensions are a framework developed by Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede that describes the cultural differences between societies. The definitions of the six cultural dimensions are as follows (See Hofstede 2001). **Power distance is related to the different solutions to the fundamental problem of human inequality. Uncertainty Avoidance is related** to the stress level in a society in the face of an unknown future—individualism **versus Collectivism**- related to the integration of individuals into primary groups. **Masculinity versus Femininity**- related to the division of emotional roles between women and men. **Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation**- related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past. **Indulgence versus Restraint**- related to the gratification versus control of basic desires related to enjoying life.

**Collectivism versus individualism:** In Hofstede's model, the first construct is the 'Individualism-Collectivism' dimension, which describes how individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic societies, people prioritize their own goals over those of the group, while in collectivistic societies, the group's needs are placed before those of the individual (Sreen et al., 2018). Individualism-collectivism refers to how people prioritize individual goals over group goals. In individualistic cultures, such as Western countries, individuals are expected to prioritize their personal goals and interests. In collectivistic cultures like those in Asia, individuals are expected to prioritize the group's or community's goals and interests (Rajveer et al., 2014).

**Individualism versus collectivism** is defined as People looking after themselves and their immediate family members versus people belonging to in-groups based on loyalty (De Mooig, 2010). India is a collectivist culture, and women in India identify themselves in a 'we consciousness,' which leads to personifications such as superior, sincere, cheerful, concerned, trustworthy, reliable, dependable, and dynamic. Further, there will be no differences in personifications between North Indian and South Indian consumers since they will behave similarly. In this culture, creating trust is very important to build relationships between members and persuade female customers to purchase cosmetics based on empathy and beautiful feelings to win over family members. Collectivist cultures encompass social relationships. In collectivist cultures, people's ideal characteristics depend on social roles, and behavior is influenced by contextual factors (Chuck, 2006).

**Hypothesis 1A:** Cosmetic-buying women from collectivistic cultures will tend to have higher purchase intention scores than consumers from individualistic cultures.

**Hypothesis 1B:** Collectivist cultures of South Indian consumers exhibit positive personifications, such as genuine, concerned, likable, trustworthy, reliable, passionate, and status value, as opposed to North Indians displaying similarly in this construct.

**A modern view of Hofstede's dimension Individualism versus collectivism: To explain cross-cultural differences and comparisons, the construct of individualism-collectivism by modern culturalist theories broaches the topic of broadening the Hofstede dimension identified in the above paragraphs (Gudykunst et al., 1988).** People in individualistic societies prefer independent relationships with others, subjugating the goals of the in-groups. In contrast, individuals prefer interdependent relationships with others in collectivistic cultures. They subjugate their individual goals to that of the in-groups (Hofstede 1980, 2001, Triandis 1989). In this conceptualization, one defines the self to the others. The interpretation of whether the self is autonomous and unique or seen as fundamentally and inextricably different from that is embedded within a larger society. Ego-centric or socio-centric is the nomenclature given to describe their selves, culminating in independent versus interdependent self-construal. (Markus et al, 1991, Shweder et al, 1982). The central notion of interdependent self-construal is the individual's value of social roles and relationships with others. In contrast, the independent self-construal identifies the individual with unique characteristics and attributes.

A growing body of literature in social psychology has broadened the views on the many implications of individualism/collectivism and independent/interdependent self-construal for social prescriptions. This social behavior has a distinct impact and explains the differences between collectivistic and individualistic societies in purchasing intentions (C. et al., 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989, 1993). For studying the sub-cultural notions of differences and delineating consumer behavioral aspects between individualistic and collectivistic societies, which can be explained using interdependent self-construal measures. Within this individualistic/collectivistic construct, Triandis and his colleagues have recently introduced a finer distinction based on horizontal (valuing equality) and vertical (emphasizing hierarchy) dimensions of societies that augment this construct (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfal, 1998)

**Power Relationship:** The second dimension is "Power Distance," which refers to the extent to which less powerful members

of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (De Mooig (2004, 2010). In societies with high power distance, unequal power relationships are seen as usual, while in those with low power distance cultures, people strive for equality in power relationships (Sreen et al., 2018). In high power distance societies, people are more likely to accept and comply with authority, which can lead to hierarchical structures in organizations and government institutions. This can result in a lack of transparency and a reluctance to challenge or question authority. On the other hand, in low power distance societies, people are more likely to question authority and promote equal rights and opportunities. This can lead to more democratic and egalitarian societies, with a greater emphasis on participation and collaboration. Understanding power distance is crucial for international companies operating in different cultural contexts (Shikha et al., 2012). In a patriarchal society like India, men wield greater power over women, and women are expected to be subservient to males in this society. To maintain the balance of power in the household, women must be acceptable to their males in the house, meaning that to attract men, women must use cosmetics to make them look beautiful. In significant power distance cultures, women's social status concerning men is transparent so that females can properly respect men.

**Hypotheses 2A:** South Indian women consumers are more emancipated than North Indian women, compared to high power distance cultures, amplify purchase intention, and depict no significant correlations between culture and brand personifications. The reverse is expected for North Indian consumers.

**Hypotheses 2B:** In high power distance cultures, female consumers' purchase intentions for cosmetics will be very high compared to lower power distance cultures.

**Hypotheses 2C:** In high power distance cultures, female cosmetics consumers prefer to exhibit higher social status.

**Masculinity versus Feminist dimension:** The third dimension is the “Masculinity-Femininity” dimension, which describes the distribution of gender roles in society. In masculine societies, traditionally male values such as achievement and success are emphasized, while in feminine societies, traditionally female values such as nurturing and caring are emphasized (Sreen et al., 2018). In cultures with high masculinity, such as India, there is often a greater emphasis on competition, achievement, and success, which can influence consumer behavior. For example, consumers may be more likely to compare shopping, seek discounts or promotions, and prioritize quality over price when purchasing. In contrast, cultures with high femininity may place more excellent value on social relationships, community, and quality of life, resulting in different purchasing behaviors. Understanding the values and norms that drive consumer behavior can help businesses tailor their marketing strategies and product offerings to better meet the needs and preferences of different consumer segments (Pankaj et al., 2017). The dominant values in a masculine society are achievement orientation and success, whereas the dominant values of a feminine society are to look after others for quality of life. (De Mooig 2005).

**Hypothesis 3A:** Masculine domination amplifies purchase intention scores for South Indian consumers, and women's achievement orientation improves purchase intention scores in North India.

**Hypothesis 3B:** Feminine characteristics such as caring for others lead to personifications such as sincere, genuine, concerned, likable, trustworthy, calm, and dependable

**Hypothesis 3C:** Masculine domination amplifies South Indian consumers' purchase intention scores for cosmetics, and male-dominated individualism contributes negatively to purchase intention scores in North India.

**Hypothesis 3D:** In feminine cultures, values such as modesty and relationships are crucial, giving rise to personifications such as honesty, sincerity, genuineness, and dependability. In a masculine society, performance and achievement are highly valued, and achievement is exhibited by personifications such as status, prestige, passion, and contemporary.

**Uncertainty avoidance:** “Uncertainty Avoidance” refers to the extent to which people in a society feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity. In societies with high uncertainty avoidance, people seek stability and security, while in those cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, people are more accepting of change and risk-taking (Sreen et al., 2018). In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, consumers may be more cautious and risk-averse when purchasing. They may prefer to stick with brands or products they know and trust and may be less willing to try new products or take risks with their purchases. On the other hand, in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, consumers may be more open to new experiences and may be willing to take risks in their purchases. The impact of uncertainty avoidance on businesses can also be significant. In cultures

with high uncertainty avoidance, businesses may need to build trust and establish a solid reputation to win over customers. They may need to invest more in marketing and advertising to build brand recognition and loyalty. In contrast, in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, businesses may have more opportunities to introduce new products or services and to experiment with different marketing strategies (Sunita et al., 2018).

This dimension studies the “extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity in life and try to avoid such situations. In the cultures we study, there is a need for rules and conformity to a structure of life that represents strong uncertainty avoidance (De Mooig, 2005). Further, Indians believe in destiny and need not necessarily seek uncertainty avoidance and risk reduction strategies to purchase cosmetics

**Hypothesis 4A:** Cultural factors such as uncertainty avoidance positively affect Purchase intention for South Indian consumers or vice versa

Women of marriageable age feel threatened by uncertainty in finding husbands to marry- under such circumstances, females will buy more cosmetics and display positive purchase intention scores to make themselves attractive to the opposite sex and avoid uncertainty. Under uncertainty avoidance, female consumers will exhibit personifications such as sincere, daring, spirited, reliable, dependable, tough, strong, risk-taking, trustworthy, and unique. Brand personifications such as prestige, status consciousness, and trustworthiness are associated with high uncertainty avoidance cultures. People with high uncertainty avoidance are less open to change and innovation than people with low uncertainty avoidance. As a result, the purchase intentions of cosmetics will be very high in such a society, leading to conformity. Uncertainty leads to the adoption of innovations, and we can say that for high-technology, premium-priced cosmetics, purchase intentions will be very high among Indian women.

**Hypothesis 4B:** High uncertainty avoidance cultures have a positive attitude to health and wellness and amplify purchase intention for South Indian consumers or vice versa.

**Hypothesis 4C:** Low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a positive attitude to health and wellness and amplify purchase intention for South Indian consumers or vice versa.

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a more positive attitude toward health by focusing on fitness and sports; customers will buy well-known and frequently used brands, so their purchase intention will be very high. Their personifications will be strong, bold, concerned, imaginative, reliable, etc. People personify brands as innovative and different in cultures with low power distance and uncertainty avoidance. High uncertainty avoidance cultures show less change and lack innovativeness, but combined with high power distance cultures, leads to modesty and status due to innovation perspective,

In cultures with substantial uncertainty avoidance, rules, regulations, and formalities structure life. This translates into a search for truth and belief in experts. Since cosmetic brands are seen as experts in beautification, purchase intention will be high for these brands in such cultures. Females view cosmetic brands from different companies based on their expertise in manufacturing them and translate this expertise into personifications such as trustworthy, contemporary, reliable, dependable, superior, unique, and different. Consumers from North India and South India will interpret personifications differently across these two regions. We will seek answers to these questions empirically.

**Long-term versus short-term orientation:** The “Long-Term Orientation” dimension refers to how people in a society focus on the future and plan for it. In societies with a long-term orientation, people are more likely to make decisions that will benefit future generations. In contrast, those with a short-term orientation focus more on immediate needs and rewards (Sreen et al., 2018). Long-term orientation is a cultural dimension that reflects how much a society values long-term planning, persistence, and perseverance in achieving goals. Cultures with high long-term orientation prioritize future rewards and delayed gratification over immediate satisfaction and value education, hard work, and self-discipline. In contrast, cultures with low long-term orientation prioritize short-term results and may focus more on traditions and fulfilling social obligations. It is important to note that the long-term orientation dimension may be irrelevant to some cultures and may not apply uniformly to all members of a given culture. However, understanding this dimension can be helpful for businesses and marketers who wish to influence others with their consumer behavior and preferences in different cultural contexts (Shikha et al., 2012). This dimension refers to the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented rather than a short-term perspective (De

Mooig 2005, 2010). Values included in long-term orientation are perseverance, ordering relationships by status, and things that lead to a sense of shame.

**Hypothesis 5A:** The long-term orientation of South Indian consumers will exhibit positive personifications and positively impact purchase intention.

Long-term orientation will make consumers exhibit the following personifications – imaginative, innovative, concerned, contemporary, reliable, respectful of tradition, and pursuit of happiness and peace. Dependable, status-oriented, unique, and risk-taking positively impact purchase intention. Short-term orientation includes steadiness and stability. Short-term orientation will lead to personifications such as sincere, cheerful, friendly, likable, contemporary, calm, peaceful, happy, contented, joyful, self-worth, and trustworthy.

**Indulgence versus restraint:** This dimension describes the extent to which people in a society allow gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. In indulgent societies, people are free to express their feelings and desires, while in restrained societies, people are more likely to control and suppress their desires (Sreen et al., 2018). Cultures with high indulgence tend to be more permissive and accepting of behaviors related to enjoying life, such as pursuing personal interests and spending money on leisure activities. In contrast, cultures with low indulgence tend to be more restrained and focused on controlling and regulating enjoyment-related behavior, such as saving money and adhering to social norms. Understanding the indulgence dimension can be helpful for businesses and marketers who wish to tailor their marketing strategies and product offerings to better meet the needs and preferences of consumers in different cultural contexts. For example, in highly indulgent cultures, businesses may want to promote products and experiences related to enjoyment and leisure activities. In contrast, low-indulgence cultures may want to emphasize their products' or services' practical and functional benefits (Pankaj et al., 2017). Indulgence relates to the gratification of needs versus the exhibition of austerity in human desires related to enjoying life.

**Hypothesis 6:** The indulgence versus restraint cultural dimension has a positive impact on

North Indian cosmetics consumers compared to South Indian women, amplifying purchase intention.

Enjoying life means acquiring cosmetic brands for a better life, with personifications such as glamorous, romantic, happy, contented, joyful, etc. being salient.

**Some other findings on female consumers in India:** In 'I cultures,' happiness is related to a sense of indulgence, whereas in 'we' cultures, good feelings are related to indulgence (Nezlak et al., 2008). In 'we cultures', dependence is a familial hierarchical relationship, and this group ideal is being like others, not being different (Triandis, 1995).

**Hypothesis 7:** In this type of 'we' culture, personifications such as confidence, reliability, and dependability arise. In the 'I' culture, people feel superior, contemporary, passionate, unique, different, intense, challenging, and bold.

**Cultural Findings in India:** One study found that collectivism strongly influences female consumers' purchase intentions in India, as women in collectivistic cultures are more likely to seek the opinions and recommendations of others before making a purchase. This highlights the importance of word-of-mouth communication and the role of social networks in shaping purchasing decisions (Singh R, 2018). Another study found that femininity significantly impacts product preferences among female consumers in India. Women in feminine cultures are likelier to value emotions, relationships, and personal well-being, leading to a greater demand for products that promote self-expression, social status, and personal care (Namita et al., 2012). Studies have also explored the role of power distance in shaping purchase intentions among female consumers in India. Women in cultures with high power distance are more likely to be influenced by the opinions and decisions of those in positions of authority, such as family elders and religious leaders. This highlights the importance of considering the influence of these individuals when developing marketing strategies aimed at female consumers in India (N Singh, J Agarwal, 2017).

In addition to these cultural factors, previous research has also explored the impact of socioeconomic factors, such as education and income, on purchase intentions among female consumers in India. These studies have found that higher education and income levels are associated with greater independence and decision-making power among female consumers, leading to greater purchasing autonomy and a greater demand for products that align with personal values and preferences (P Rani, K

Rao, 2017)—emancipated South Indian consumers with higher education more than North Indian women consumers would prefer cosmetics. Previous research has demonstrated the importance of cultural factors in shaping the buying behavior of female consumers in India, highlighting the need for companies to tailor their marketing strategies to this market's unique cultural and socioeconomic characteristics.

**Cosmetic Industry in India:** Revenue in the Cosmetics segment amounts to US\$6.27bn in 2023. The market is expected to grow annually by 2.87% (CAGR 2023-2027). In global comparison, most revenue is generated in the United States (US\$19,430.00m in 2023). Regarding total population figures in India, low per-person revenues of US\$4.42 will be generated in 2023, as per statistics.

**Product ownership and usage:** Some consumption differences across consumer segments can be explained by cultural and demographic differences after adjusting for the per capita incomes of the cultures. Brand usage, consumption, and cultural variables are correlated (De Mooig, 2010). Brand usage characteristics of high-end luxury cosmetics can be related to the masculinity (feminist dimension) dimension, and this relationship has been stable over time. The dimensions of individualism (and collectivism) also explain the differences in the usage and consumption of cosmetics by female consumers (De Mooig & Hofstede, 2010)

**Sampling and Measurement of Dimensions.** The study was done in Delhi (North India) and Bangalore (South India). Two hundred twenty face-to-face interviews were conducted amongst female consumers in Delhi and Bangalore. We sampled 120 respondents, and some people used two brands. We got 150 used brand data, with 74 users from North India and 76 from South India. The respondents were randomly selected from the Delhi and Bangalore metropolitan areas, and they were studied through a face-to-face interview by investigators using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from Hofstede's cultural statements and adapted to the Indian context. We choose 4 to 6 statements for the six dimensions tempered with the experiences of researchers in this context. The eighteen personification dimensions were selected based on researchers' industry experience and sourcing some personification dimensions from Aaker's (1997) article. Also, relevant demographic variables such as monthly household income, age, religion, family life cycle stage, languages spoken at home, food eating habits, and where the respondent belongs were asked while answering the questionnaire.

**Hofstede's six dimensions were operationalized with indicators from published sources but relevant to India:** (1) Uncertainty avoidance – 4 indicators (2) Power distance – 5 indicators (3) Individualism versus collectivism eight indicators (4) Masculine versus feminine characteristics – 9 indicators (5) Future orientation- 7 indicators (6) Performance orientation- 2 indicators (7) Indulgence and restraint – 2 indicators. Personification dimensions were measured based on Aaker's Big 5 personality constructs. A total of 18 different personifications were used in the study based on the experiences of the researchers, and based on the sales volume, the following seven brands were studied in the research: (1) Garnier Natural White, (2) Lakme Perfect Radiance (3) L'Oréal Paris Skin (4) Fair & Lovely cream (5) Revlon Touch and Glow (6) Olay Natural White, and (7) others. Brand Usage and brand awareness were measured as dichotomous yes or no variables. For attitude to advertising, attitude to branding, and purchase intention, we captured three multiple indicators for each construct measured on a 7-point scale.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a quantitative descriptive research with research issues addressed earlier. In totality, two research steps are accomplished in the study as described below: (1) Correlations between Hofstede cultural dimensions and brand personifications (2) A comparison of correlations between North Indian and South Indian consumers (3) A regression model based on purchase intention as the dependent variable and modeled as a function of other independent variables: demographic variables, cultural factors, brand awareness, brand usage, attitude to advertising and attitude to branding variables stated above (4) Lastly, we undertook a discriminant analysis to find the differences between North Indian and South Indian consumers. (5) Validity and reliability measures were captured by Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman's split-half alpha

A 2-step process in methodologies was undertaken, which is described below.

#### **Details of method 1:**

We created several dummy variables for the demographic variables mentioned above. Later, we ran Correlations between cultural dimensions and brand personifications. In the first step, we used the ANOVA procedure to derive differences between North Indian and South Indian consumers on cultural dimensions. **We ran an ANOVA procedure (See Web Appendix page 2)** for each of the cultural dimensions on individual ratings based on Hofstede's constructs between the North Indians and South Indians to find cultural differences. Since personifications were measured on a binary scale, we ran a categorical principal component analysis to get linear quantifications for each of the 18 personifications (**in SPSS**). **Then**, we ran correlations between cultural variables that differ across regions and personification quantifications for North India and South India separately. The results tables display only significant correlations between each dimension. (See Web Appendix pages 3 to 7)

#### **Details of method 2:**

**FACTOR ANALYSIS:** We ran 6-factor analysis procedures on the 6 Hofstede constructs separately and Obtained orthogonal factors (with exploratory factor analysis through principal component analysis with VARIMAX rotation) on cultural dimensions. The resulting factors with Eigen values greater than one were chosen, along with the desired cumulative explained variances of the factors more significant than 60 %. These factors were used as input to the purchase intention regression model.

**CAT PCS:** We used categorical principal components analysis to get quantifications of personifications and use the quantifications as regressors in the purchase intention model. We used the sums of the indicators for purchase intention, attitude to advertising, and attitude to branding, and we used the sums as regressors in the model. We used bivariate dummy variables for awareness, usage, and demographic variables.

**Regression model:** We ran a purchase intention regression model with cultural factors, personification's quantifications, usage and awareness variables, attitude to advertising and attitude to branding variables, and demographic dummy variables. The results of the purchase intention regression for All Indian, North Indian, and South Indian consumers are given separately (See Web Appendix pages 10 to 14))

**Discriminant Analysis:** Lastly, we ran a discriminant analysis procedure to find differences between North Indian and South Indian women consumers of cosmetic products. The results found significant differences between the North Indian and South Indian consumers regarding cultural values and personifications.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

**Cultural Differences between the South Indian and North Indian consumers (See Table 1-Web Appendix):** We ran a ONE-WAY ANOVA model on each of the indicators of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The statistically significant valid differences in cultural statements are discussed below (See Table number 1 Web Appendix)

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** For this dimension, only one indicator is statistically (significantly) different between the North Indian and South Indian consumers. In the South Indian culture, consumers voted favorably to societal requirements that bear societal instructions that are spelled out so that respondents know what they are expected to do. For the South Indian consumers, this dimension loaded positively. It is easy to observe that South India is well-ordered, organized, and structured compared to the chaos in the North Indian context. This difference is easily noticeable in North India compared to South India.

**Power Distance:** Out of the five indicators for this dimension, three statistically differ between the North Indian and South Indian consumers. In this society, followers are expected to question their leaders when disagreeing. For this statement, the mean score for South India is (4.19 on a 7 Point Scale) which is higher than that of the North Indian consumers (3.68). Consumers in North India (4.79) respect and fear older people more than South Indian consumers (4.23). Women from South

India are more emancipated and aggressive than women from North India in maintaining their power over men. The statement that religion stresses equality of behaviors, even income distribution, and equality of roles loaded favorably for the North Indian consumers (4.14) more than the South Indian consumers (3.51). South Indian consumers are less involved with religious beliefs than North Indian consumers because of rationalization by political parties.

**Individualism versus Collectivism:** Only one statement of this cultural dimension significantly differs between the North Indian and South Indian consumers. The North Indian consumers take more pride in the individual accomplishments of their children (4.71), while on the same dimension, scores are lower for the South Indian consumers (4.16)

**Masculinity versus feminine characteristics:** Four statements in this dimension statistically differ between the North Indian and South Indian consumers. The South Indians are less likely to endorse the view that people need to be fair, slim, and attractive for success in life (2.81) versus a 3.37 score, which is the same indicator for North Indian consumers. Further, North Indians feel that men and women should be assertive and ambitious (4.72), while South Indian women favor modesty and caring for others in the family (3.64). Also, in North Indian customs, girls should cry and not fight back (3.94), while boys should not cry and fight back in South Indian customs (4.32). For the North Indian consumers, religion focuses on the relationship to Gods and god's men (4.6), which is practiced to a lesser degree by the South Indian consumers (4.08)-(South India uses rationalization of religious practices)

**Future Orientation:** Nearly four indicators statistically differ between the North Indian and South Indian customers. The North Indian women plan for the future (4.49), while South Indian consumers accept the status quo (3.71). Both groups feel that the critical events in life are going to occur in the future (North India score (4.15) versus South India score (4.58)). The North Indian customers believe that success and failure occur due to luck (4.68), while the South Indian consumers attribute this to a lesser degree on this dimension (4.03). Further, North Indian consumers believe that students attribute success to effort and failure due to lack of effort (5.00), while the same score for the South Indians is less at 4.11.

**Performance:** North Indian consumers believe that people are rewarded for excellent performance (5.15), while the score for the same attribute is lower for South Indian consumers (4.23). **Indulgence:** North Indian consumers feel that they have no control over their destiny, feel helpless in life, and think that what happens to them is due to external forces (4.81), and South Indian consumers disagree with this belief (3.97). The above differences in cultural statements between the North Indian consumers and South Indian consumers are observed. For these significant dimensions, we studied correlations between the cultural dimensions and brand personifications separately for North Indian and South Indian consumers. Based on international learnings (See Table A at the end of the Web Appendix), hypotheses of cultural differences determining brand personifications are made for all 6 Hofstede dimensions, and findings are given (Table number B). The association of the big five personality dimensions, along with culturally valid statements obtained in this research, is given in the Web Appendix pages 3 to 7). These tables show the actual, significantly different correlations and differences in personifications between North Indian and South Indian consumers.

### **Interpretation of personifications due to regional cultural differences (See Web Appendix page 3-7)**

**Power Distance:** The power distant statement, obey the leaders without questioning, resulted in three negative personification correlations for the North Indian consumers such as contemporary, glamorous/romantic, and status/prestige, while for the same statement, friendly and likable positive personifications are evoked for the South Indian consumers (in partial support of H1A and H1B). The personifications for the cultural value of older people being respected, revered, and feared by North Indians lead to consumer personifications such as cheerful, friendly, likable, independent, peaceful, calm, unique, and different. For the same dimension, none of the personification's correlations are statistically different from zero for South Indian consumers. (See Web Appendix pages 3-7)). For the power distance statement that religion stresses the equality of behaviors, even income distribution and equality of roles, there are no significant correlations between culture and brand personifications for the South Indian consumers, while the following personifications for the North Indian consumers are positively significant, sincere, friendly, likable, daring, spirited, trustworthy, independent, peaceful, calm, passionate, glamorous, romantic, tough, strong and unique/different (in partial support of H2A H2B and H2C (See Web Appendix pages 3-7)

**Individualism versus collectivism:** For the statement that parents take pride in their children's accomplishments, there are no significant personifications (correlations) for the South Indian consumers, while for the North Indian consumers, innovative, imaginative, independent, peaceful, calm, unique, and different are salient personifications (these personifications were not observed concerning proposed Hypotheses 1A and 1 B).

**Masculine versus feminine:** For the indicator that people should be fair, slim, beautiful, and attractive to be successful in life, North Indian consumers attribute the following positive personifications to it such as: honest, sincere, genuine, friendly, likable, daring, spirited, innovative, imaginative, trustworthy, peaceful, calm, passionate, reliable, dependable, superior, glamorous, romantic, rugged, robust, unique and different. Similarly, positive personifications for South Indian consumers are imaginative, innovative, reliable, dependable, glamorous, romantic, unique, and different. The third indicator that people should be modest and caring loads positively on one significant personification –superior for the South Indian consumers. (Some of these observed personifications support Hypotheses 3A and 3B). For the North Indian consumers, none of the correlations are significant.

**Future Orientation:** For the cultural statement that essential events in life occur in the future, the South Indian consumers believe in risk-taking personification, while for the North Indian consumers, negative personifications were observed, such as innovative, imaginative, and risk-taking. For the statement that people attribute success and failure to luck, personifications such as daring, spirited, trustworthy, peaceful, calm, status, prestige, tough, strong, unique, and different are observed for the North Indian Consumers. In contrast, trustworthiness was the sole personification loading on this cultural dimension for South Indian consumers. For the statement that students attribute success to effort and failure due to lack of effort, North Indian consumers displayed positive personifications such as calm, peaceful, glamorous, romantic, status, and prestige. For the same statement, South Indian consumers observe positive personifications, such as being friendly and likable. The following personifications (unique, innovative, status-oriented, risk-taking) were observed in confirming Hypotheses 5A and 5B)

**Performance Orientation:** For North Indian consumers, getting rewarded for excellent performance leads to positive personifications like contemporary, glamorous, and romantic, while for South Indian consumers, negative correlations occur for the same dimension, such as peace and calm.

**Indulgence versus restraint:** On this dimension, the South Indian consumers feel that they have no control over their destiny and that none of the correlations of the personifications loaded significantly for them. In stark contrast, the North Indian consumers feel helpless in life and that whatever happens to them is due to external forces and is not their doing. Imaginative, innovative, and contemporary personifications positively impacted this dimension for North Indian consumers. (None of the proposed personifications were observed in the data, disproving hypotheses H6.)

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** No significant personifications (correlations) are emerging for uncertainty avoidance; hence, they are not covered in the above sections. (No support for any of the proposed personifications was observed for hypotheses in support of 4A and 4B)

**Table Number B1:** Hypotheses results as represented by six cultural dimensions and their influence on five categorizations of (Aaker, 1997) personifications in India is given in Table B. (Compare it to Table Number A at the end of the Web Appendix)

**Table Number B1**

Cultural dimensions (Aaker's Personality categorization)	Hofstede's cultural statements that are different across North	Sincerity-	Excitement-	Competence-	Sophistication-	Ruggedness -

	<b>and South India</b>					
Power distance	Followers question the leader when in disagreement	Friendly (-)	Likeable (-) Contemporary (-)		Glamorous, romantic (-)	
	Older people are respected and feared.	Cheerful (+) friendly (+)	Likeable (+) Aloof (+) Peaceful /calm (+)	Independent (+)	Aloof (+) Unique (+)	Different (+)
	Religion stresses equality of behaviors, income distribution, and equality of roles.	Honest (+) Sincere (+) Friendly (+)	Likeable (+) Daring-spirited (+) Peaceful / calm (+) Passionate (+)	Trustworthy (+) Independent (+)	Aloof (+) Glamorous /romantic (+)	Tough-strong (+) Unique – different (+)
Uncertainty avoidance	No significant correlations					
	No significant correlations					
Individualism/collectivism	Children take pride in parental accomplishments vs parents take pride in children's accomplishments.		Imaginative/innovative (+) Peaceful / calm (+)	Independent (+)	Aloof (+)	, unique/different (+)
Masculine/feminine	People must be fair, slim, beautiful, and attractive for success in life-applicable to	Honest, sincere (+) Genuine (+) Friendly (+)	Likeable (+) Daring, spirited (+) Imaginative, innovative (+South) Peaceful, calm (+)	Trustworthy (+) Reliable/dependable (+)	Glamorous/romantic (+)	Superior (+) Tough/strong (+) Unique/different (+) South

	women vs men.		Passionate (+)			
	Men and women should be modest and caring vs assertive and ambitious.					Superior (+) South
LT/ST orientation	Future orientation- the most critical events in life occurred in the past versus the future.		Imaginative/innovative (-)			Risk-taking (+) South
	People attribute success and fortune to luck.		Daring/spirited (+) Peaceful / calm (+)	Trustworthy (+)-both	Status/prestige (+)	Tough/strong (+) Unique/different (+)
	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort	Friendly (+) South	Likeable (+) South Peaceful / calm (+)		Glamorous/romantic (+) Status/prestige (+)	
Performance	People are rewarded for excellent performance.		Contemporary (+) Peaceful/calm (-) South		Glamorous/romantic (+)	
Indulgence/restraint	People have control over destiny, people feel helpless in life, and what happens to me is not my own doing.		Imaginative/innovative (+) Contemporary (+)			

**Notes:** 1. significant correlations are only included for either North or South India or both  
2. Most of the significant correlations are observed in North India, and wherever significant correlations in South India are noted, they are marked as +South  
In 3 cases, both North India and South India Correlations were significant.

### **Discussion of the Factor Analysis Results (See Web Appendix pages 7-9)**

We did seven individual factor analyses on the 6 Hofstede cultural dimensions. Where feasible, we did Varimax rotation in all the cases and examined KMO values and Bartlett test results to validate factor analysis. For the uncertainty avoidance dimension, the KMO value is 0.571, and the Bartlett test is significant, justifying the application of factor analysis for extracting latent variables. Based on the four indicators, one composite factor explaining about 57.4 % cumulative variance was obtained and labeled uncertainty avoidance. There are five indicators for the power distance dimension, and two factors are extracted, accounting for 63 % cumulative explained variance with a KMO value of 0.541, along with a significant Bartlett test. The two factors are the collective power of the society and equality and respect for others. There are eight indicators for the individualism and collectivism dimension, and two factors are extracted with an explained cumulative variance of 54 % and a KMO value of 0.586. The two extracted factors are named self-orientation and individualism and male-dominated individualism. For the masculine versus feminism dimension, nine indicators and four factors were extracted from these nine indicators with a cumulative explained variance of 63 % and a KMO value of 0.486. The four factors are male domination, assertive masculine, attractiveness, and strong character, God-men oriented ambitious people. There are six indicators for future orientation, and factor analysis yielded two factors accounting for 62 % of the cumulative explained variance and a KMO value of 0.605. The two cultural factors are future orientation and luck versus hard work orientation. One composite factor was obtained for the performance dimension with a cumulative explained variance of 78 % and a KMO value 0.5. For the indulgence dimension, the KMO value is 0.5, with one composite factor explaining 56 % of the cumulative variance. This factor is labeled indulgence.

### **Regression model results**

A purchase intention regression model is built with several cultural factors obtained from exploratory factor analysis, attitude to advertising, attitude to branding, brand usage, brand awareness, advertising awareness, demographic dummy variables consisting of age, monthly household income, languages spoken at home, religious affiliations, family life cycle stages, and similar demographic variables. One regression model was built at the overall level for the All India data by combining both the North Indian and South Indian samples. Further, two disaggregated models were built for the North Indian and South Indian data separately with the impact of similar exogenous variables on purchase intention. We interpreted the individual regression coefficients and standardized regression coefficients for the study (also known as beta values). We did stepwise backward regression with the whole set of regressors to select the best set of regressors. We further ensured that the VIF value of all the variables in the final model had scores less than 4 to eliminate multi-collinearity distorting the coefficient values.

### **All India Regression Model Results (See Web Appendix page 9)**

As expected, attitude to branding and advertising is the most potent influence on purchase intention. The younger age group (less than 15) is more open to purchasing cosmetic brands. At this stage, they are interested in looking good with makeup to hide blemishes in their skin and become fairer and more attractive due to social pressures. The young age group can be easily influenced to believe the firms' advertisements. Brand awareness of Lakme seems to positively drive purchase intention, while brand usage is favorable for Garnier Natural White and OLAY brands. While Revlon's brand awareness is a negative contributor to the purchase intention of the brand, its advertising awareness is a favorable contributor to purchase intention. L'Oréal Paris benefits from advertising awareness. Brand usage of Garnier boosts its purchase intention scores, while advertising awareness counteracts this positive contribution. All income groups are negatively correlated with purchase intention. One would expect the premium brands to benefit as income increases, which is not seen here. Further, language differences, such as Telugu-speaking consumers, were less inclined to purchase cosmetics. None of the cultural factors have an impact on purchase intention. Data aggregation washes out the individual differences between the North and South regions. The only significant cultural variables impacting purchase intention were luck and hard work. Further, in the presence of other demographic variables, the impact of culture is washed out due to a possible inter-relationship between cultural factors and demographic variables. Favorable brand personifications affecting purchase intention are- superior and contemporary, as opposed to the adverse drivers of brand personifications on purchase intention, which are friendly, likable, glamorous,

romantic, unique, and different. The R-squared value of the All India regression is very high at 0.928. In contrast, the R-squared values of the disaggregated models of North Indian (0.997) and South Indian (0.983) territories were higher than the aggregate model. That means aggregation washes out the individual differences observed between the regions. Thus, disaggregated models have higher explanatory power than the aggregate model. The cultural factors and demographic variables can explain the differences between the two regions when disaggregated.

### **Comparison of standardized regression coefficients (BETA Values) between North and South India (See Table numbers C)**

We will compare the results of purchase intention regressions by comparing the beta values for each variable's influence on purchase intention by different regions. Beta values are a comparative measure of each exogenous variable's impact on purchase intention between the two regions. They are dimensionless numbers with zero mean and 1-unit variance, measured on the same scale in both regions with the same questionnaire. **Control variables:** First, we will analyze the two controllable variables, namely, attitude to branding and attitude to advertising. The impact of attitude to branding (0.429) on purchase intention is significant and positive in North India's regression model. The same variable's impact on purchase intention in South India is (1.273), three times that of North India. The people of North India trust advertising more than South Indians. The impact of attitude to advertising is positive in the case of North India (0.069), while it is negative in the case of South India (-1.104). The South Indians are swayed by brand names and not by advertising messages.

**Age:** The age group less than 15 years is a positive contributor to purchase intention in South India (0.527). Younger age group consumers favor the purchase of cosmetics in South India because the people in general from South India are somewhat dark in color, and to obviate blemishes in their skin colors, they buy cosmetics. Further, peer pressure in schools influences these consumers' purchase of cosmetics. In the upper age group (16 to 50 years), the contribution to purchase intention is negative, implying that older consumers do not prefer cosmetics in North India.

**Monthly household income:** The lower income groups (15,000 to 1 lakh per month) favor purchasing cosmetics in both North India and South India. The impact of lower income groups on purchase intention in South India is ten times more than that of North Indian consumers (60 % of the cosmetic talcum powders are sold in South India). Higher-income groups in North India with an MHI of > 1 lakh are negatively predisposed to buying cosmetics. Probably, the flashy North Indians go to beauty parlors for their cosmetics at a higher price. The same is also true for some South Indian consumer groups.

**Life cycle stages:** Spinsters in North India are favorably disposed to purchase cosmetics. This observation is probably in line with younger age groups favoring the purchase of cosmetics. All life cycle stages, such as spinsters, married people with no children, or children under ten, are favorably predisposed to purchase cosmetics in South India. Since all three age groups are likely to be of younger age groups, this observation is consistent with the findings from the age group analysis. The effect of life cycle stages on purchase intention is considered very high in South India compared to North India.

**Religion:** Hindus in both North India and South India are conservative and use traditional makeup methods (Ayurvedic) to beautify their faces; hence, cosmetics have no traction. However, Westernized Christians exhibit positive purchase intentions for cosmetic brands. There are no recommendations for other religious groups since they were not statistically significant.

**Language spoken at home:** People speaking Malayalam in North India and people speaking Kannada and Telugu in South India do not indulge in buying cosmetics. It has to be noted that these consumers may favor Ayurvedic cosmetic preparations in both North and South India. Tamil-speaking consumers from South India are progressive as they exhibit positive tendencies to purchase cosmetics. The interactions between the demographic variables and cultural factors were not used due to interpretation difficulties of a categorical variable on the right-hand side of the regression model. Further, sample sizes are not large enough to capture all interaction terms. There is no theory to explain what interactions need to be studied.

**Brand Awareness:** L'Oréal Paris and Revlon brands' awareness does not mitigate purchase risk in North and South India cosmetics. Olay is in an advantageous position regarding brand awareness and enhancing purchase intention in North India

(0.537) and South India (0.785). Brand awareness of Lakme (0.068) is fruitful in influencing North Indian consumers, while it is detrimental to the Garnier brand in South Indian consumers (-0.564)

**Brand Usage:** High brand usage correlates positively with purchase intention for the Garnier brand (0.598) in South India and also for both Lakme (0.180) in South India and L’Oréal (0,072) in North India. Usage is a precursor for higher brand equity. All the international brands likely have a salubrious positive effect on purchase intention with high brand equity.

**Advertising Awareness:** Ad awareness, particularly in North India, is helping brands such as Garnier Natural White (0.104), L’Oréal Paris (0.504), and Revlon (0.190) register favorable purchase intention scores. The impact of L’Oréal Paris’ ad awareness (0.982) in South India on purchase intention is twice that of North India. The three international brands Garnier, L’Oréal, and Revlon need advertising support to garner and boost higher purchase intention scores.

**Cultural Factors:** Cultural factors such as uncertainty avoidance (-0.467), equality and respect for elders (-0.486), assertive masculine behavior (-0.357), and performance orientation (-0.520) hurt purchase intention for the South Indian consumers (proposed positive effect on Purchase intention but observed negative values providing lack of support for Hypotheses 4A, 4B, 1A, 1B, 3C). In contrast, cultural factors such as the collective power of the society (0.599), masculine domination (0.349), attractiveness and strong/bold customers (0.261), and indulgence (0.425) amplify purchase intention scores for South Indian consumers (In support of Hypotheses 2A, 2C, 3A, 3C and H6). Further, the collective power of the society (0.277) and performance orientation (0.793) improve purchase intention scores in North India (Supports H3A). Performance orientation of the product seems to be a significant driver for North India. Similarly, cultural factors impinging on purchase intention in South India can be ordered in descending fashion, such as the collective power of the society (0.599), indulgence (0.429), and masculine domination (0.349) (In support of Hypotheses H2A and 2C, H6, and H3C). In contrast, the descending order of impact of cultural factors on purchase intention in North India is male-dominated individualism (2.517), performance orientation (0.793), and collective power of the society (0.277) (In support of Hypotheses H1A, H2A, and H2C). Further, self-oriented individualism (-2.6177), male-dominated individualism (-0.189), and luck and hard work (-0.128) contribute negatively to purchase intention scores in North India (lack of support for Hypotheses H1A, 3A, and 3C).

**Brand Personifications:** The impact of personifications on purchase intention is positive in North India and South India on two dimensions: Contemporary (North 0.286, South 0.275) and superior (North 0.244, South 0.439). This implies that cosmetics consumers believe they live in consonance with the present-day world and feel superior to others who do not use cosmetics. A list of brand personifications affecting purchase intention in descending order in North India is status/prestige (0.468), contemporary (0.286), risk-taking (0.268), peaceful/calm (0.251), superior (0.244), cheerful (0.104), and friendly/likable (0.077). Also, the negative influencers of purchase intention in North India are honest/sincere (-0.299), daring/spirited (-0.110), imaginative/innovative (-0.102), passionate (-0.438), reliable/dependable (-0.159), and rigid/strong (-0.086). The positive influencers of purchase intention in South India in descending order are superior (0.439), passionate (0.435), reliable/dependable (0.383), contemporary (0.275), and unique/different (0.212). The impact of brand personifications that are negative influencers of purchase intention in South India are honest/sincere (-0.379), imaginative/innovative (-0.306), peaceful/calm (-0.230), tough/strong (-0.454), trustworthy (-0.156) and glamorous/romantic (-0.154). Interestingly, personifications such as unique/ different, trustworthy, glamorous, and romantic were not significant in the North Indian regression model. In contrast, personifications such as genuine, cheerful, friendly/likable, and daring/spirited status are significant in the South Indian regression model of purchase intention. Personifications such as contemporary and superior seem to insinuate that upper-end customers are snobbish about purchasing cosmetics because of the display of their status value.

**Table Number C- Beta Value Comparison**

variable	North India	South India
Attitude to branding	0.429	1.273
Attitude to advertising	0.269	-1.104

Age - < 15 years	NS	0.527
Age 16- 30 years	-0.517	NS
Age 31-50	-0.279	NS
MHI 15 K to 30 k	0.082	0.820
MHI 30 K to 50 K	0.122	0.661
MHI 50 K to 1 lakh	NS	0.527
MHI 1 lakh to 3 lakhs	-0.158	-0.545
MHI 3 to 5 lakhs	-0.197	-0.329
MHI > 5 lakhs	-0.111	NS
LCS – individuals/spinsters	0.171	0.814
LCS- married with no children	-0.114	0.546
LCS- married with young children < 10 years	-0.148	0.670
Religion - Hindus	-0.207	-0.380
Religion- Christianity	0.357	-0.278
Language – Malayalam	-0.228	NS
Language – Tamil	NS	0.286
Language – Kannada	NS	-0.684
Language - Telegu	NS	-0.480
Brand Awareness-Lakme	0.068	NS
Brand Awareness-L'Oréal Paris	-0.114	-0.540
Brand Awareness-Fair and Lovely	0.061	NS
Brand Awareness-Revlon	-0.280	-0.230
Brand Awareness-OLAY	0.357	0.785
Brand Awareness-Garnier	NS	-0.564
Brand Usage-Garnier	-0.135	0.598
Brand Usage- Lakme	0.180	0.370
Brand Usage-L'Oréal Paris	0.070	NS
Brand Usage –Revlon	-0.194	0.206
AD Awareness-Garnier Natural White	0.104	-0.618
AD Awareness-L'Oréal Paris	0.504	0.982
AD Awareness-Fair & Lovely	-0.204	NS
AD Awareness-Revlon	0.190	NS
AD Awareness-Olay	NS	-0.886
FAC 1_1- Uncertainty avoidance	-0.109	-0.467
FAC 1_2- the collective power of the society	0.277	0.599
FAC 2_2 – equality and respect for elders	NS	-0.486
FAC 1_5- Masculine domination	NS	0.349
FAC 2_5- assertive masculine	NS	-0.357
FAC 3_5 – attractiveness and bold/strong boys	NS	0.261
FAC 1_6- Future Orientation	NS	0.537
FAC 1_8-Performance orientation	0.793	-0.570
FAC 1_9- Indulgence	-0.691	0.429
FAC 2_3 – Male-dominated individualism	2.517	NS
FAC 1_4- self-orientation/ individualism	-2.617	NS
FAC 2_4- Male-dominated individualism	-0.376	NS

FAC 4_5 – god oriented and ambitious	-0.189	NS
FAC 2_6- Luck and hard work	-0.128	NS
Personification-honest, sincere	-0.299	-0.379
Personification—genuine	0.072	NS
Personification-cheerful	0.104	NS
Personification-friendly/likable	0.077	NS
Personification—daring/spirited	-0.110	NS
Personification-imaginative/innovative	-0.102	-0.306
Personification-contemporary	0.286	0.275
Personification-peaceful/calm	0.251	-0.230
Personification-passionate	-0.438	0.435
Personification-reliable/dependable	-0.159	0.383
Personification-superior	0.244	0.439
Personification-status/prestige	0.468	NS
Personification-tough / strong	-0.086	-0.454
Personification-risk taking	0.268	-0.153
Personification-unique / different	NS	0.212
Personification –trustworthy	NS	-0.154
Personification- glamorous/romantic	NS	-0.154

**Discriminant Analysis Results (See Web Appendix pages 14 to 15).** In the previous step, we ran an ANOVA to find differences between North and South Indian consumers on cultural values by looking at the significance of each statement of the dimensions. In contrast, we find differences between North Indian and South Indian consumers on demographic variables, cultural variables (including the impact of all cultural variables through inputting latent factors obtained from Varimax rotated exploratory factor analysis of each cultural dimension), and personification variables. We ran a two-group Discriminant Analysis between North Indian and South Indian respondents to find the differences in Cultural factors and brand personifications across the two cultural groups. Cultural variables that are positively correlated with the two groups (1) God-oriented, assertive, and ambitious people and their scores in North India are very high while it is harmful and shallow in South India (2) performance orientation (very high in North India and negative and low in South India (3) Equality and respect for elders (very high cheerful in North India and low optimistic in South India (4) Assertive Masculine (low in South India and very high in North India). Cultural values negatively correlated with both groups are (1) Future orientation – very negative in North India and positive in South India (2) Uncertainty avoidance – very high in South India and moderately low in North India. The scores of South Indians are thrice that of North Indian consumers (3) collective power of the society -More negative in North India compared to South India (4) attractiveness of females and strong boys’ orientation – Negative in North India and Positive in South India (5) Masculine domination – more in North India compared to South India. Differences between North India and South India on brand personifications – Positively correlated variables (1) rugged and robust – very high in North India, very weak in South India (2) imaginative and innovative- more inclined in the Northern consumers and negatively inclined in South Indian consumers (3) friendly and likable- very low in North India and moderately low in South India. Negatively correlated Brand personifications (1) glamorous and romantic – highly negative in North India and positive in South India (2) passionate – Positive in South India and highly damaging in North India. Additionally, the classification rate of the two groups is 84 %, demonstrating good predictive power. (See Web Appendix page 14)

### CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

Using empirical results, the paper explores Hofstede’s dimensions and how they relate to brand personifications. The relationship between the six dimensions of Hofstede’s model remains unknown throughout the study. Hence, no unified theory addresses how brand personifications are formed, so the empirical model is used to find relationships.

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

**Cultural differences between the North Indian and South Indian consumers:** First, it must be noted that all the indicators of six Hofstede's dimensions are not statistically different between the two regions, and there are many cultural similarities and dissimilarities between the two regions. There are only a few regional differences in cultural variables, and many of the other Hofstede indicators are insignificant between the two regions, implying sub-cultural differences. For South Indian customers, societal instructions are well spelled in detail so that they know what they are expected to do. The significance of this dimension is that the differences in orderliness and organized structure between the two regions are more relevant to South India than North India. There is more chaos in North India than in the organized structure in South India. For the South Indians, questioning the leaders is more critical than for the North Indians. Consumers in North India are obedient, and they respect and revere elders and fear them, so they do not collude with them. The consumers in South India are more aggressive, and they enjoy more freedom than the North Indians. The framework based on religious equality and equality of roles of the people is high in North India compared to South India. The South Indians are less involved with religious beliefs than the North Indians. This aspect of culture seemed to endorse accession of power in South India for the atheist political parties, and Ram Rajya moved the North Indians more than in South India. In the collectivist dimension, North Indians take more pride in the individual achievements of their children than South Indians. However, it needs to be noted that leaders in collectivistic cultures, like India, seem to distinguish themselves in higher positions than in the world of 'I' culture. Physical looks enamor the North Indians to succeed in life, while they feel that women should be more assertive, ambitious, and attractive. In contrast, South Indian women favor modesty and caring for others in the family. North Indians feel that girls should cry and not fight back, while South Indians feel that boys should not cry and fight back. South Indian customers are less likely to be moved by their relationship to God and God's men. Both the North Indian and South Indian customers feel that important events in life are forward-looking and will happen in the future. More North Indian women plan for the future, while South Indian women accept the status quo. North Indians are sure that when they show excellent performance, they will be rewarded and that success depends on effort and failure to lack effort. In terms of these dimensions, South Indians are more subdued than North Indian consumers. The North Indian consumers rationalize that what happens to them in their lives is more determined by external forces and destiny than by their Southern counterparts.

Personification's differences between international learnings and the Indian context as it has evolved in this study. First, we will compare brand personifications that are culture-oriented in the international learnings (Table A-web appendix) and compare them to those of the Indian consumers (Table B). In international studies, low power distance positively correlates with personifications such as freedom/equality, innovativeness, trustworthiness, and different but risk averse. In India, questioning the leaders is negatively correlated with personifications such as friendly/likable, contemporary, and glamorous/romantic. Older people are respected and revered in high power distance cultures like India, leading to positive personifications like cheerful, friendly/likable, peaceful/calm, independent, aloof, unique, and different. Concerning religion, it offers equality of roles and behaviors. Personifications such as honest/sincere, friendly/likable, daring/spirited, trustworthy, independent, glamorous/romantic, tough/strong, and unique/different are evident for the Indians. Similar to international learning, the common elements of brand personifications are freedom, independence, trustworthiness, and risk averseness. The rest of the personifications are a manifestation of Indian cultural values. There is no difference between the North and South Indian customers regarding uncertainty avoidance.

International brand personifications that load on to individualistic 'I' cultures are consistency, standardization, peacefulness, passion, growth-oriented, likable, adjustable, independent, unique/different, superior, and ruggedness. In stark contrast, brand personifications of 'we' culture-based Indian consumers are imaginative, innovative, peaceful/calm, independent/alooof, and unique/different. Despite these cultural differences, common brand personifications between international and Indian learning are trust, peace/calm, independence, aloofness, uniqueness, and difference. Regarding the masculinity/femininity dimension, international learnings prescribe self-enhancement, self-actualization, and dependability as vital brand personifications. However, Indian consumers, on the same dimension, favor brand personifications such as honest/sincere, likable/friendly, daring/spirited, imaginative/innovative, peaceful/calm, reliable/dependable, superior, tough/firm, and unique/different. For Indian consumers, dimensions related to self-actualization are tough/strong, superior, unique/different, and

reliable/dependable. For the long-term orientation dimension, international learnings are associated with brand personifications such as perseverance, stability, consistency, status, and risk-taking. The short-term orientation is associated with contentedness, friendliness, warmth, sociability, seriousness, hard work, and stability. For the Indians, the most critical events in life occurred in the past; unlike the future, risk-taking is seen as successful, while imaginative/innovative personifications are negatively correlated with the same statement in the Indian context. People in India attribute success and failure to luck and associate brand personifications such as daring/spirited, peaceful/calm, trustworthy, status/prestige, tough/strong, and unique/different. Further, in the Indian context, on the statement, students attribute success to effort, and failure to lack effort espouses brand personifications such as friendly/likable, peaceful/calm, glamorous/romantic, and status/prestige. Indians who believe people are rewarded for excellent performance empathize with brand personifications such as contemporary, glamorous, and romantic. People who blame others for the things happening in their lives portray brand personifications as imaginative/innovative, and contemporary. While we show the differences between international learnings in comparison to the Indian context, specific differences between the North Indian and South Indian consumers can be inferred from tables (See Web Appendix pages 3 to 12)

**Differences between the North Indian and South Indian customers on purchase intention regression:** India's aggregate purchase intention model did not correctly align with cultural differences. Hence, a disaggregate model for North and South India is done to get better results for the two polar sub-cultures. Based on a comparison of beta values (standardized regression coefficients) between the North Indian and South Indian purchase regression models, the following inferences can be gleaned. The younger age groups and lower/middle-income consumers prefer to purchase cosmetics, and affluent customers are disinterested in the purchase of cosmetics. Probably, affluent customers go to upmarket beauty parlors. Amongst the religious groups, Christians favor cosmetics and exhibit positive purchase intentions for cosmetic brands. Spoken regional languages are associated with lower consumption of cosmetics, while aggressive Tamil-speaking women exhibit positive tendencies to purchase cosmetics. Cultural factors that hurt purchase intention scores for South Indian customers are uncertainty avoidance, equality and respect for elders, assertive masculine behavior, and performance orientation. The factors favoring purchase intention scores for South Indian customers are the collective power of the society, masculine domination, attractive physique, strong/bold customers, and indulgence orientation of the customers. The factors favoring purchase intention in North India rely on performance orientation and the collective power of the society. Further, cultural manifestations such as self-oriented individualism, male-dominated individualism and luck, and lack of hard work negatively affect purchase intention in North India.

**Brand Personifications differences between North Indian and South Indian female customers from the purchase intention regression:** Common brand personifications emerge from purchase intention regression amongst South and North Indian consumers who are contemporary and superior. Women want to use cosmetic products that make them look modern, current-dated, and superior to others. The brand personifications impinging favorably on purchase intention for the North Indian consumers are status/prestige, contemporary, risk-taking, peaceful/calm, superior, cheerful, and friendly/likable, while in contrast, positive influencers of purchase intention amongst the South Indian consumers are: superior, passionate, reliable/dependable, contemporary and unique/different. There are some negative influencers of purchase intention amongst North Indian and South Indian consumers. It is often said that brand personifications influence consumer behavior, and we find good evidence for the same in this study. Common personifications between the two regions are contemporary and superior to cosmetic consumption. This seems to imply that customers buying cosmetics in both regions are snobbish, arrived-in-life, and display their status and badge value to others.

**Reliability Statistics** are given in the Web Appendix (page 17), and we make the following inferences. Reliability Statistics are more than 0.6 for the following constructs: (1) uncertainty Avoidance, (2) individualism-collectivism, (3) future orientation, (4) performance, and (5) personifications. Power distance and indulgence had meager reliability statistics despite sourcing some of those indicators from Hofstede's variables for each dimension. All split-half scores are more than 0.5 for all the constructs.

**Limitations:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we could not obtain a larger sample of respondents, and we could not perform structural equation modeling due to sample size restrictions.

### **Statements and declarations**

#### **Compliance with ethical standards:**

We are using market research data and not any of the respondents' personal identification data. This study confirms the ethical standards outlined by the Market Research Society of India

The authors did not receive any support from any organization for the submitted work

No funding was received to assist with preparing this manuscript -authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to declare.

**Conflict of interest-** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

**Data from the corresponding author can be shared whenever required during the evaluation process.**

**On behalf of all the authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research and that we have consent from the required sources to utilize the data in this research paper.**

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