



# Effect of consumption-context and product attributes on social value perception of luxury clothes for Indian female consumers

Raghav Manocha

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Effect of consumption-context and product attributes on social value perception of luxury clothes for Indian female consumers.

Effets du contexte de consommation et des caractéristiques des produits sur la perception de la valeur sociale des vêtements de luxe pour les consommatrices indiennes.

Thèse de Doctorat présentée en vue de l'obtention  
du grade de docteur en sciences de gestion  
par

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**Titre : Effets du contexte de consommation et des caractéristiques des produits sur la perception de la valeur sociale des vêtements de luxe pour les consommatrices indiennes.**

**RÉSUMÉ**

Cette étude, réalisée auprès de jeunes femmes Indiennes, met en lumière l'importance du contexte de consommation et celle du design dans la valeur sociale perçue d'un vêtement de luxe. L'étude analyse la perception de la valeur sociale d'un vêtement de luxe (*Perceived Social Fit*) en fonction de deux facteurs. Le premier facteur, lié au contexte est illustré par le genre d'événement (traditionnel ou moderne) et la proximité en âge des personnes présentes à l'événement (personnes du même âge ou personnes plus âgées). Le deuxième facteur, lié aux caractéristiques du vêtement de luxe se réfère à l'origine perçue du design (indienne, occidentale ou indo-occidentale) et à sa modestie (modeste ou plus dénudé). Du fait des orientations collectives de la société indienne, porter un vêtement de luxe approprié à l'occasion sociale confère plus de prestige et est socialement mieux perçu.

Le cadre conceptuel est fondé sur la littérature portant sur la valeur sociale perçue d'un vêtement de luxe tandis que le luxe et la mode en Inde évolue entre tradition locale et influence globale. Dans la culture Indienne collectiviste, les femmes Indiennes donne la priorité au contexte d'usage dans le processus de choix d'un vêtement de luxe.

La validation empirique a en premier lieu visé à mieux comprendre les déterminants du choix d'un vêtement de luxe à l'aide d'une analyse de 24 entretiens semi directifs réalisés auprès de jeunes femmes Indiennes.

Le travail empirique s'est poursuivi par une expérimentation réalisée auprès de 994 femmes Indiennes. Lors de cette expérimentation intra-sujets, chaque répondant a évalué six robes pour chacun des quatre événements représentatifs de la société Indienne. Les six robes varient en design (Indien, Indo-occidental, Occidental) et en modestie (modeste, dénudé). Les quatre événements varient en modernité (traditionnel versus moderne) et en compagnie (de pairs ou de plus âgés).

De nombreux effets principaux sont significatifs. Par exemple, les robes au design indien ont une meilleure adaptation sociale perçue que les robes au design indo-occidental et occidental; les robes au design indo-occidental ont une meilleure adaptation sociale perçue que les robes au design occidental et les robes modestes ont une meilleure adaptation sociale perçue que les robes dénudées. Parmi les effets d'interaction, lors d'un événement fréquenté par des personnes plus âgées, une robe de style indien a une meilleure adaptation sociale perçue que les robes de style occidental et indo-occidental, tandis que lors d'un événement fréquenté par des personnes du même âge, c'est la robe de style occidental qui a la meilleure adaptation sociale perçue. De plus, lors d'un événement social dit « moderne », une robe de luxe plus dénudée est socialement mieux perçue qu'une robe modeste, alors que lors d'un événement traditionnel, une robe modeste est mieux perçue qu'une robe plus dénudée. Résultat inattendu, les robes de style Indo occidental sont socialement mieux perçues lors d'un événement moderne que les robes de style occidental.

La recherche suggère un certain nombre d'implications managériales. Ainsi, les maisons de luxe occidentales auraient intérêt à tenir compte du contexte dans lequel la robe risque d'être portée. Par exemple pour un événement dit « moderne », nous suggérons d'insérer des éléments de design occidental dans les robes indiennes. Ces mêmes maisons de luxe pourraient également adapter les robes occidentales au design Indien empreint de modestie (c'est-à-dire en respectant les parties du corps qui doivent être cachées en Inde), et en recourant à des tissus et teintes appréciés en Inde. Les créateurs indiens ont pour leur part tout intérêt à conserver et à renforcer leur point fort, à savoir l'artisanat et les matériaux traditionnels. Mais ils peuvent innover en insérant certains traits de design occidental dans leurs modèles Indiens.



**Title: Effect of consumption-context and product attributes on social value perception of luxury clothes for Indian female consumers.**

### ABSTRACT

This study conducted among young Indian females, sheds light on the importance of consumption-context and apparel attributes in determining the social value perception of a luxury dress. The study analyzes the perceived social fit of a luxury dress as a function of two factors: First, a context-related factor comprises the type of event (traditional or modern), and the people who are present at the event (peers or elders). Second, an attribute-related factor refers to the perceived design origin (Indian or Western or Indo-western), and the modesty of the dress (modest or revealing). As a result of collectivistic orientations of Indian society, wearing a contextually-fit luxury dress helps earn more prestige in one's group and will help gain high social value.

The literature review analyzes the importance of the perceived social value for a luxury outfit in India, in the Indian context of luxury apparel, evolving along traditional design and global influence. In the Indian collectivist culture, Indian females give priority to the usage context when they choose a luxury garment. We propose a conceptual framework derived from the literature.

In the empirical work, we started analyzing 24 semi-structured interviews of young Indian females. This qualitative study helped to better understand the choice process of a luxury garment.

Next, an experiment was carried out with 994 Indian females. In this within-subjects experiment, each subject had to assess the social fit of six dresses, for each of four representative events of Indian society. The six dresses varied in design (Indian, Indo-western, Western) and in modesty (modest or revealing). The four events varied in modernity (traditional versus modern) and in company (with peers, or with elders).

Many main effects are significant. For example, Indian dresses have higher perceived social fit than Indo-western and Western dresses; Indo-western dresses have higher perceived social fit than Western dresses; and modest dresses have higher perceived social fit than revealing dresses.

Among interaction effects, for an event with elders, an Indian dress has a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western dresses, whereas for an event with peers, a Western luxury dress has a higher perceived social fit. During a modern social occasion, a revealing luxury dress has a higher perceived social fit than a modest dress, whereas during a traditional event, a modest dress has a higher perceived social fit than a revealing dress. Unexpectedly, Indo-western dresses score higher in perceived social fit than Western dresses for a modern social occasion.

The research suggests a number of managerial implications. Western luxury houses should take into account the context in which the dress will be worn. For example, in a so called "modern" event, we suggest to infuse Western elements in Indian dresses. Western houses can also tailor Western dresses, to Indian dress attributes such as modesty (i.e., respecting the parts of body that should be hidden in India), and textiles and colors liked in India. Indian designers should hold on to and strengthen their forte – traditional craftsmanship and dress-materials. However, they may innovate by infusing selected Western elements in their Indian models.

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## INTRODUCTION

La présente recherche, une étude spécifique à l'Inde, vise à explorer et à analyser l'impact du contexte de consommation sur le processus de choix de vêtements de luxe par des jeunes femmes indiennes, à l'occasion d'un événement social ou familial.

La consommation de produits de luxe augmente rapidement dans les marchés émergents qui représentent aujourd'hui près de 50 % des ventes totales de produits de luxe. La Grande Chine s'avère être l'un des principaux marchés pour de nombreuses marques de luxe (Atwal & Bryson, 2014, p. 1), le Brésil est le plus grand marché mondial de parfums et de fragrances (Armstrong, 2017) et l'Inde domine en matière de consommation de bijoux en or (O'Connell et al., 2016). Afin de soutenir leur croissance sur ces marchés, les marques de luxe se doivent de comprendre les aspirations des consommateurs de ces pays et de prêter attention à leurs traditions et à leur histoire (Atwal & Bryson, 2014, pp. 1, 2).

En dépit des politiques strictes du gouvernement en matière de droits de douane et de taxes sur les produits de luxe, le marché indien du luxe devrait poursuivre sa croissance à deux chiffres. Cette croissance est portée par le nombre croissant de personnes à haut revenu et par l'aspiration grandissante des jeunes consommateurs à progresser dans l'échelle sociale. En 2018, le nombre de personnes à valeur nette élevée en Inde était de 187 milliers (contre 146 milliers en 2013). En 2018, les ventes de produits de luxe en Inde s'élevaient à 589 milliards de roupies indiennes (8,5 milliards de dollars américains), soit une croissance de plus de 97 % en valeur courante sur la période 2013-2018. Sur le total des ventes réalisées en 2018, la catégorie '*Designer Apparel* (prêt-à-porter)' s'élevait à 44 milliards INR (0,63 milliard de dollars US). En particulier, la catégorie '*Women's Designer Apparel*' a enregistré la plus forte croissance en valeur courante au détail, soit 20 % en 2018. D'ici 2023, la catégorie '*Designer Apparel*' (prêt-à-porter) devrait atteindre un chiffre d'affaires de 98 milliards INR (1,4 milliard de dollars US) avec une croissance en valeur constante de 121 % et dans la catégorie '*Women's Designer Apparel*', la croissance devrait atteindre 154 % de 2018 à 2023. Les prévisions de ventes de



produits de luxe pour 2023 sont estimées à plus de 865 milliards INR (12,4 milliards de dollars US) (Euromonitor, 2019; Euromonitor International, 2019).

Le marché indien du luxe offre donc un grand potentiel. Cependant, il s'est révélé problématique pour les marques de luxe occidentales. Par exemple, les robes traditionnelles sont toujours pertinentes en Inde (les Indiens préfèrent s'habiller de manière traditionnelle pour de nombreuses occasions sociales et pour les festivals) (Atwal & Jain, 2012; Chadha & Husband, 2006; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012); les marques de luxe occidentales sont confrontées à la concurrence des marques locales (Atwal & Jain, 2012); et la base de consommateurs en Inde est diverse et fragmentée (KPMG & Assocham, 2014).

Certains auteurs, citant la popularité des robes traditionnelles en Inde, ont souvent incité les marques de luxe occidentales à indianiser leurs produits pour réussir sur le marché indien (Atwal & Jain, 2012; Chadha & Husband, 2006; CII & AT Kearney, 2011). L'édition limitée de saris lancée par Hermès en Inde, les produits ethniques (Nawab Jacket et Guru Jacket) lancés par des marques de luxe telles que Canali et Ermenegildo Zegna, la pochette Chandra de Jimmy Choo en sont quelques exemples.

En analysant la littérature sur la consommation relative à l'identité culturelle, j'ai constaté que les résultats portent principalement sur les sous-cultures minoritaires basées dans les pays occidentaux, mais pas dans les marchés émergents (par exemple Barakat, Gopalakrishna, & Lala, 2014; Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Chattaraman, Lennon, & Rudd, 2010; Chattaraman, Rudd, & Lennon, 2009; Kim & Arthur, 2003; Laroche et al., 1998). Par conséquent, je n'ai pas trouvé beaucoup d'études se concentrant sur l'impact sur la consommation d'une sous-culture occidentale dans une économie émergente dominante (par exemple Bartikowski & Cleveland, 2017).

La perception de la valeur des produits de luxe a fait l'objet de nombreuses publications (Christodoulides et al., 2009; Hennigs et al., 2012; Shukla & Purani, 2012; Vigneron &

Johnson, 2004; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2007, 2009). Cependant, l'impact du contexte de consommation et des attributs des produits sur la pertinence contextuelle des produits de luxe, ainsi que celui de la pertinence contextuelle sur la dimension de la valeur sociale n'ont, pour autant que l'on puisse en juger, pas été traités.

Jain & Mishra (2018), cernent les lacunes de la littérature sur la consommation de luxe en Inde. Selon ces auteurs, bien que l'Inde soit le marché émergent de produits de luxe qui croît le plus rapidement (Chandran, 2014), peu d'études quantitatives analysent les facteurs déterminants de la consommation des marques de luxe dans le secteur de la mode en Inde. Ils ajoutent que dans les travaux précédents, l'accent a été mis principalement sur les différentes théories relatives à la perception de la valeur dans la consommation de luxe. Par conséquent, il est important d'examiner empiriquement les modèles dans divers contextes culturels pour vérifier la fiabilité et la validité des variables latentes (Chattalas & Shukla, 2015; Christodoulides et al., 2009; Hung et al., 2011; Tsai, 2005; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Selon Jain & Mishra (2018), bien que Paurav Shukla & Purani (2012) et Paurav Shukla (2012) aient les premiers étudié le contexte transnational en Inde, il reste nécessaire de chercher de nouvelles perspectives car le marché indien du luxe continue d'évoluer suite aux réformes économiques, à l'évolution des politiques gouvernementales, et à l'arrivée de nouvelles entreprises de luxe.

En revanche, selon Jain & Mishra (2018), de nombreuses études ont approfondi l'impact du contexte culturel sur les marchés du luxe dans les sociétés occidentales (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Cheah, Phau, Chong, & Shimul, 2015; Doss & Robinson, 2013; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Phau & Siew Leng, 2008; Walley, Custance, Copley, & Perry, 2013).

En conséquence de l'importance du contexte culturel et des lacunes sur les pays émergents, la présente étude est une étude spécifique à l'Inde, qui vise à contribuer à la

littérature sur la perception des valeurs sociales des produits de luxe et le comportement des consommateurs indiens.

Dans cette étude, nous nous concentrons sur les vêtements de luxe, et en particulier sur les robes de luxe, pour deux raisons principales: les vêtements d'une personne manifestent à la fois son image de soi et son identité sociale (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982). Selon Sharda & Bhat (2018), dans le secteur du luxe, les consommateurs indiens dépensent beaucoup plus en vêtements, bijoux et accessoires que dans d'autres catégories (Kotak Wealth Management, 2016).

La proposition principale de cette étude est que le choix d'une robe de luxe en Inde dépend principalement du contexte de consommation. Les catégories de luxe telles que les vêtements (surtout les robes) et les bijoux offrent l'occasion d'une consommation ostentatoire, et aident les jeunes à valoriser leur statut économique. Le désir de statut social se traduit par une consommation matérialiste via les marques de luxe (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006; Gil, Kwon, Good, & Johnson, 2012).

L'étude a été réalisée auprès de répondants du genre féminin. En effet, les femmes forment un segment bien identifié dans la plupart des marchés de biens de consommation, en particulier dans le secteur de la mode (Palackal, 2011, p. 13); en outre, les femmes sont considérées comme les ambassadrices de la tradition indienne. A ce titre, elles sont garantes de la dignité et de la droiture de la famille et de la maison (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2008, p. 153).

L'étude se concentre principalement sur le processus décisionnel de la consommation de luxe des jeunes femmes, car de nombreuses études ont montré que les consommateurs jeunes sont plus enclins à consommer du luxe afin de se conférer un statut social (Aliyev & Wagner, 2018; Eastman & Liu, 2012).

La présente recherche souligne qu'en Inde, le choix d'une jeune femme en matière de robe de luxe dépend principalement du contexte de consommation qui pourrait mener à la mise en évidence d'une facette particulière de son identité, et du symbolisme du produit. Dans son étude approfondie et détaillée de l'art corporel chez les femmes à Banaras, Pravina Shukla (2016) observe: "Alors que les peuples du monde se déplacent à travers les étapes du cycle de vie, ils se déplacent aussi littéralement, passant d'un contexte physique à un autre. L'art corporel, contrairement à d'autres formes de culture matérielle, est utilisé comme un moyen ambulatorio par lequel le soi est positionné dans l'espace. Dans leurs vêtements, les gens créent et reconnaissent l'espace social approprié et la distinction, en aiguisant les concepts d'espace public, d'espace partagé et d'espace privé"<sup>1</sup> (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 413). Elle affirme également que l'art corporel est toujours évalué dans un contexte social particulier (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 279).

En suivant une approche pragmatique, j'ai utilisé une méthode séquentielle mixte – comprenant une étude qualitative exploratoire (entrevues semi-structurées) et une expérimentation (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27). Les analyses de vingt-quatre entretiens ont contribué à mettre sur pied l'expérimentation menée par la suite. Ainsi, les données exploitées dans la thèse ont été recueillies en deux phases, d'abord pendant la phase initiale de l'étude qualitative, puis par une étude quantitative. L'analyse des données recueillies au cours de la première phase m'a aidé à déterminer les variables sur lesquelles me concentrer au cours de la deuxième phase.

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<sup>1</sup> Original Quote in English: "While the world's people are moving through the stages in the lifecycle, they are also literally moving, passing from one physical context to another. Body art, unlike other forms of material culture, is employed as an ambulatory means by which the self is positioned in space. In their dress people create and acknowledge spatial range and distinction, sharpening concepts of public, shared, and private space." (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 413)

La présente recherche apporte une contribution dans deux domaines importants : la perception de la valeur des vêtements de luxe et le processus décisionnel chez les jeunes Indiennes concernant les robes de luxe. L'étude, au cours de sa revue théorique et de sa validation empirique, confirme la prédominance de la valeur sociale perçue dans la consommation de luxe au sein de la société indienne collectiviste. L'étude a également établi l'influence critique du contexte de consommation sur le choix d'une robe de luxe par les jeunes femmes Indiennes.

Cette contribution est justifiée parce que le corpus de connaissances sur la perception de la valeur dans la consommation de luxe, quoique bien fourni, ne tient pas compte de l'impact du contexte de consommation et des attributs des produits sur la pertinence culturelle des biens de luxe, ainsi que l'impact de la pertinence culturelle sur leur valeur sociale.

En outre, les études interculturelles quant à la perception de la valeur de la consommation de luxe forment désormais un axe de recherche bien établi. Enfin, il existe une pénurie évidente d'études récentes sur la consommation de luxe en Inde, si l'on considère le vaste potentiel et les complexités socio-économiques d'un tel marché émergent.

Cette thèse comprend quatre chapitres. Le **chapitre 1** analyse la littérature sur les facteurs qui déterminent la valeur sociale perçue d'une robe de luxe. Le chapitre propose un cadre conceptuel et un ensemble d'hypothèses.

Le **chapitre 2** présente l'étude qualitative. Le chapitre développe la méthodologie des vingt-quatre interviews semi-structurées, et leur analyse des données. Il recense et illustre par des verbatims les thèmes importants au sujet de la prise de décision des jeunes femmes indiennes interrogées sur le choix d'une robe de luxe. Le chapitre traite de l'analyse des données à l'aide de la technique de codage, qui a permis de cerner les thèmes pertinents et à les regrouper dans des thèmes plus larges. Grâce à l'analyse des données qualitatives, les variables et les

hypothèses ont été précisées pour la recherche quantitative. Le diagramme conceptuel a été mis à jour avec de nouvelles hypothèses en sus de celles indiquées au chapitre 1.

Le **chapitre 3** présente l'étude quantitative, comprenant le travail préparatoire et l'expérimentation principale. Ce chapitre présente la méthodologie et les résultats de la recherche effectuée à travers un plan expérimental factoriel complexe. Au préalable, ce chapitre décrit les études pilotes et les pré-tests pour mettre au point les stimuli. L'étude principale est une expérimentation intra-sujets administrée en ligne. L'essentiel de ce chapitre détaille l'analyse des données pour tester les hypothèses de mon cadre conceptuel. Le chapitre présente les résultats de ces tests en identifiant les principaux effets significatifs et les effets d'interaction obtenus à partir des données. Il examine également les résultats de régressions linéaires pour comprendre comment une robe de luxe particulière peut avoir des valeurs sociales perçues différentes selon les caractéristiques des événements et de la société/des personnes présentes à l'événement, en contrôlant les données démographiques des répondants. Le chapitre met ainsi en lumière l'impact des données sociodémographiques individuelles sur la valeur sociale perçue d'une robe.

Le **chapitre 4** résume les grandes lignes de la recherche et analyse les principaux résultats. Par la suite, je propose les contributions de cette recherche par rapport à la littérature. Les effets principaux et d'interaction mis en évidence suggèrent de nombreuses implications managériales, implications que j'envisage pour les marques de luxe occidentales et pour les créateurs de mode indiens. Le chapitre présente également les limites de ce travail et, au final, il développe de nouvelles pistes de recherche.



## INTRODUCTION

This research, a study specific to India, aims to explore and analyze the impact of consumption-context on the process of choice of luxury clothing by young Indian women, on the occasion of a social or family event.

Consumption of luxury products is swiftly increasing in emerging markets, which now are responsible for almost 50% of total luxury sales. Greater China is turning out to be one of the biggest markets for many luxury brands (Atwal & Bryson, 2014, p. 1), Brazil is the world's largest market of perfumes and fragrances (Armstrong, 2017) and India leads when it comes to consumption of gold jewelry (O'Connell et al., 2016). In order to sustain their growth in these markets, luxury brands will have to understand the aspirations of consumers from these countries as well as pay attention to local traditions and histories (Atwal & Bryson, 2014, pp. 1, 2).

Despite government's stringent policies relating to customs duty and local taxes on luxury goods, the Indian luxury market is expected to continue with double-digit current value growth. The growth is expected to be propelled by the growing number of high income individuals and the rising aspiration of younger consumers to move up the social ladder. In 2018 the number of high net worth individuals in India were 187 thousand (up from 146 thousand in 2013). The sales of luxury goods in India in 2018 stood at INR 589 billion (US \$ 8.5 billion) representing more than 97% current value growth in the period 2013-2018. Out of the total sales in 2018, the category 'Designer Apparel (ready to wear)' stood at INR 44 billion (US \$ 0.63 billion). In particular, the category 'Women's Designer Apparel' has registered the fastest retail current value growth of 20% in 2018. By 2023, the category 'Designer Apparel (ready to wear)' is expected to reach a sales of INR 98 billion (US\$ 1.4 billion) with 121% constant value growth and in the category 'Women's Designer Apparel', growth is expected to be 154% for 2018-2023 period. The forecast sales of luxury goods for 2023 stand at INR 865 billion (US \$ 12.4 billion) (Euromonitor, 2019; Euromonitor International, 2019).



The Indian luxury market promises a lot of potential. However, it has often proven to be problematic for Western luxury brands. For example, traditional dresses have not lost their relevance in India (Indians prefer to dress up in traditional attire for many social functions and festivals) (Atwal & Jain, 2012; Chadha & Husband, 2006; Kapferer & Bastien, 2012); Western luxury brands face competition from local brands (Atwal & Jain, 2012); and the consumer base in India is diverse and fragmented (KPMG & Assocham, 2014).

Some authors, citing the popularity of traditional dresses in India, have often prompted Western luxury brands to indianize their products to achieve success in the Indian market (Atwal & Jain, 2012; Chadha & Husband, 2006; CII & AT Kearney, 2011). The limited edition of saris launched by Hermès in India, ethnic products (Nawab Jacket and Guru Jacket) launched by luxury brands such as Canali and Ermenegildo Zegna, Chandra clutch by Jimmy Choo, are just a few examples.

In reviewing the literature on consumption, based on cultural identity, I have found that the studies focus primarily on minority subcultures based in Western countries, but not in emerging markets (e.g. Barakat, Gopalakrishna, & Lala, 2014; Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Chattaraman, Lennon, & Rudd, 2010; Chattaraman, Rudd, & Lennon, 2009; Kim & Arthur, 2003; Laroche et al., 1998). As a result, I couldn't find many studies focusing on the impact of a western sub-culture in a dominant emerging economy (e.g. Bartikowski & Cleveland, 2017).

The debate relating to value perception of luxury goods is well developed. Various authors (Christodoulides et al., 2009; Hennigs et al., 2012; Shukla & Purani, 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2007, 2009) have contributed to the same. However, the literature does not take into account the impact of consumption-context and product attributes on contextual relevance of luxury goods, as well as the impact of contextual relevance on the social value dimension.

Jain & Mishra (2018), identify gaps in the literature on luxury consumption in India. According to these authors, although India is the fastest growing emerging market for

luxury goods (Chandran, 2014), few quantitative studies analyze the determinants of luxury brand consumption in the Indian fashion sector. They add that in the previous works, the main focus has been on the different theories of value perception in luxury consumption. Therefore, it is important to empirically examine models in various cultural contexts to test the reliability and validity of latent variables (Chattalas & Shukla, 2015; Christodoulides et al., 2009; Hung et al., 2011; Tsai, 2005; Tynan et al., 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). According to Jain & Mishra (2018), although Paurav Shukla & Purani (2012) and Paurav Shukla (2012) made pioneering attempts in the empirical study of the cross-national context in India, the ever-changing dynamics of the Indian luxury market (as a result of economic reforms, evolving government policies, arrival of new luxury companies, etc.), has caused a need for seeking new insights.

By contrast, according to Jain & Mishra (2018), there have been many important and comprehensive studies focusing on the impact of cultural-context on luxury markets in Western societies (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Cheah et al., 2015; Doss & Robinson, 2013; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Phau & Siew Leng, 2008; Walley et al., 2013).

In line with the emerging focus on cultural-context and the gaps in the literature, the present study is an India-specific study, that will contribute to the literature on the social value perception of luxury products and consumption behavior of Indian consumers.

In this study, we focus on luxury clothing, and in particular on luxury dresses, for two main reasons: A person's clothing manifests both his or her self-image and social identity (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982). According to Sharda & Bhat (2018), in the luxury sector, Indian consumers spend much more on the apparel, jewelry and accessories than on other categories (Kotak Wealth Management, 2016).

The main proposition of this study is that the choice of a luxury dress in India depends mainly on the consumption-context. Luxury categories such as clothing (especially dresses) and jewelry offer the opportunity for ostentatious consumption, and help young people to

enhance their economic status. The desire for social status translates into materialistic consumption via luxury brands (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006; Gil et al., 2012).

The study was done with female respondents. Indeed, in most consumer goods' markets, women are specifically earmarked as a separate segment, particularly in the apparel sector (Palackal, 2011, p. 13). Additionally, women are seen as emissary of Indian tradition. They are expected to sustain the dignity and uprightness of the family and the home (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2008, p. 153).

The study focuses primarily on the luxury consumption decision-making process of young females as many studies have shown youngsters are more inclined to indulge in luxury consumption in order to gain social status (Aliyev & Wagner, 2018; Eastman & Liu, 2012).

The present research underlines that in India, a young woman's choice of luxury dress depends mainly on the context of consumption, which could lead to the highlighting of a particular facet of her identity, and the symbolism of the product. In her extensive and detailed study of body art among the females in Banaras, Pravina Shukla (2016) observes, "While the world's people are moving through the stages in the lifecycle, they are also literally moving, passing from one physical context to another. Body art, unlike other forms of material culture, is employed as an ambulatory means by which the self is positioned in space. In their dress people create and acknowledge spatial range and distinction, sharpening concepts of public, shared, and private space" (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 413). She also posits that body art is always evaluated in a specific social context (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 279).

Following the pragmatic approach, I employed sequential mixed method – comprising an exploratory qualitative study (semi-structured interviews) and an experiment (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27). The analyses of twenty-four interviews helped in the formulation of the subsequently conducted experiment. Thus, the data was collected in two phases, first during the initial phase of qualitative study and then through quantitative study. Analyses of data collected during the first phase, helped me to decide which variables to focus on during the second phase.

The proposed contribution of the present research pertains to two important domains – value perception of luxury apparel, and decision-making process among young Indian females concerning luxury dresses. The study, theoretically and empirically, has validated the dominance of social value perception in luxury consumption in the collectivist Indian society. The study has also established the critical influence that the consumption-context holds in the consumption-choice of a luxury dress by a young Indian female.

The contribution is important, because, the well-developed corpus of knowledge about value perception in luxury consumption does not take into account the impact of consumption-context and product attributes on cultural relevance of luxury goods, as well as the impact of cultural relevance on the social value dimension.

In addition, cross-cultural studies on the perception of the value of luxury consumption are now a well-established line of research. Finally, there is a clear dearth of recent studies on luxury consumption in India, considering the vast potential and socio-economic complexities of such an emerging market.

This thesis comprises four chapters. **Chapter 1** reviews the literature pertaining to the factors that determine the perceived social value of a luxury dress. The chapter proposes a conceptual framework and a set of hypotheses.

**Chapter 2** presents the qualitative study. The chapter develops the methodology of the twenty-four semi-structured interviews, and their data analysis. The chapter, next identifies and illustrates with verbatims, the important themes about the decision-making process of young Indian females, interviewed regarding their luxury dress choices. The chapter covers data analysis using the technique of Coding, which helped identify the relevant themes and the formulation of broad topics. The learnings from the qualitative data analysis helped to specify the variables and hypotheses for quantitative research. The conceptual diagram was updated with new hypotheses in addition to those identified in Chapter 1.

**Chapter 3** presents the quantitative study, comprising preparatory groundwork and the main experiment. This chapter comprehensively discusses the methodology and results of the research carried out through a complex factorial experimental design. Before relating the design and data analysis of the main experiment, this chapter at first covers the pilot studies and pre-tests. The main study is an online with-in subjects experiment. The core part of this chapter details data analysis for testing the hypotheses of my conceptual framework. The chapter presents the results of these tests by listing the significant main effects and the interaction effects obtained from this experiment. It also discusses the results of linear regressions to understand how a particular luxury dress can have different perceived social values depending on the characteristics of events and company/people present at the event, when controlling for respondents' demographics. The chapter also sheds light on the impact of the latter on perceived social value of a dress.

**Chapter 4** sums up the research outlines and discusses the main findings. Thereafter, I list the proposed contributions to the previous research. Based on the number of main and interaction effects provided by the study, the chapter proposes numerous managerial implications for Western luxury brands and Indian fashion designers. The chapter also presents limitations of this work and at the end it develops new research avenues.

## CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

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## 1.1 Introduction

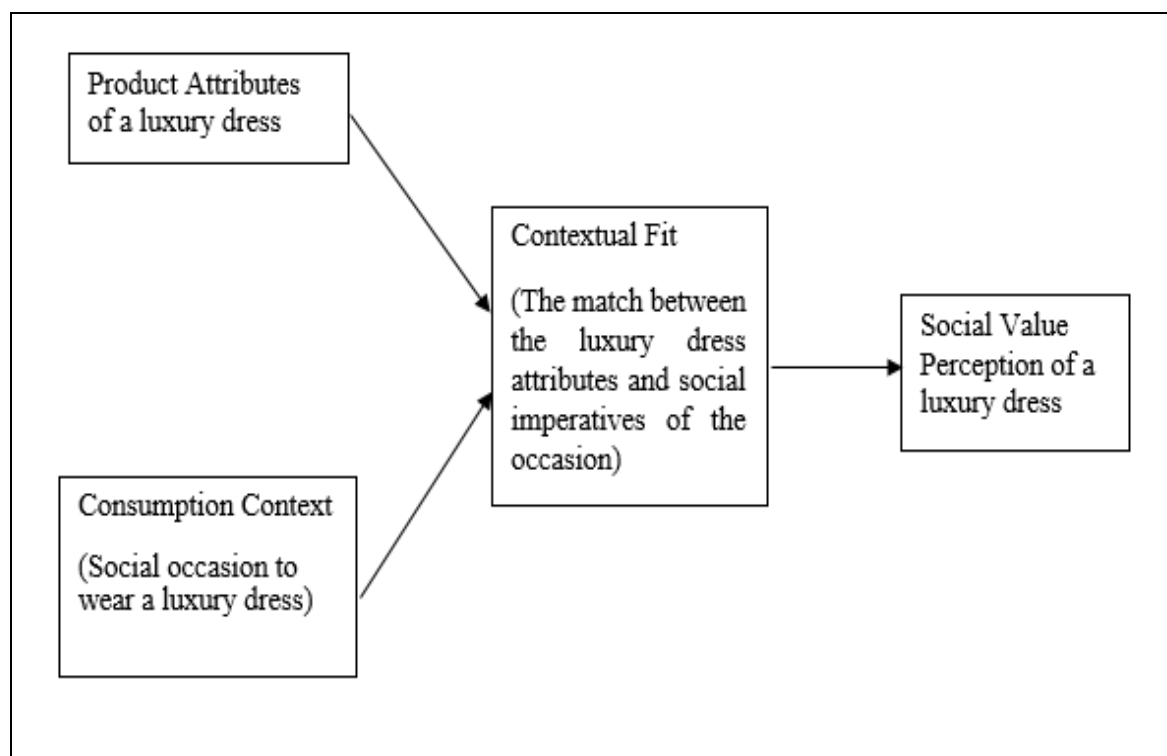
In India, the otherwise seemingly simple and mundane task of choosing a dress for a social occasion, goes beyond the personal consideration of a young female, and more so if it is about the selection of a luxury dress for a special occasion. She invests a good amount of time, money and efforts to make the most appropriate choice, as the requisites for the choice to be appropriate are too many and she needs to bring these together. The choice should be an easily recognizable symbol for status, be socially acceptable in terms of its attributes to the people present, fit in the social environs of the occasion, suit her personal taste and attitudes, make her appear more beautiful than her peers, leave a good unforgettable impression and be comfortable to wear. Phyllida Jay (2015) illustrates this complex decision-making process in the context of bridal wear which is generally distinguished by opulence and widespread ornamentation. Referring to visual imagery of Anita Dongre, a famous Indian fashion designer, she writes that it amalgamates tradition and modernity, and reveals that each season Dongre takes inspiration from a fictional muse Nayantara – “A young, effervescent girl who challenges convention, yet loves all things traditional. Coming from a royal lineage, Nayantara epitomizes modern-day femininity juxtaposed with a free-spirited, adventurous soul” (quoted in Jay, 2015, pp. 48–51).

Building on this choice complexity, this thesis proposes that consumption-choices of consumers change with the consumption-context, then consumption-context affects contextual-fit of a product, and so do product-attributes, last contextual-fit of a product impacts its social value perception (see figure 1.1).

The present research started with the objective to model young Indian female’s consumption-choice of a luxury outfit for a social occasion. Literature review pertaining to luxury value perceptions, establishes the dominance of social value perception among Indian consumers and relates it to collectivist orientations of the Indian society (Section 1.2). The literature review led me to develop a concept for the study, called Contextual-Fit (defined as the match between the consumption-choice (dress-attributes) and social imperatives of the

occasion) (Section 1.3). The literature review suggests the primary role of the consumption-context in impacting the luxury-dress choice by young Indian females. One's consumption-choice of luxury dress is influenced by social-context perceived through the type of event – traditional or modern; and through characteristic of the people present – age (peers only or elders). The inverse relationship between age and degree of acculturation is found to reflect upon the consumption-choices (Section 1.4).

**Figure 1. 1: Basic conceptual idea about the impact of consumption-context and product attributes on the perceived social value of a luxury dress**



Literature on luxury consumption in India, highlights occasion-oriented extravagance among Indians; trends in apparels and the significance of modesty as a dress-attribute (Section 1.5). The literature review helped establish the positive correlation between social value perception of luxury dress consumption and its contextual fit. In this process of learning through a comprehensive literature review, a number of hypotheses were predicted under different sections.

At the end, section 1.6, sums up all the interactions predicted through various hypotheses in a conceptual diagram and also provides a conclusion for the chapter.



## **1.2 Social value perception of luxury in India**

This section highlights that the social value dimension of luxury consumption is of the utmost importance for Indian consumers. The section traces the primacy of other-directed luxury-consumption among Indians to the dominance of collectivist social set-up coupled with hierarchical orientations. The studies indicate that conspicuous value is the prime motivation for luxury consumption and it is so especially on special occasions such as weddings and festivals.

“Luxury is particularly slippery to define” (Cornell, 2002). Nueno & Quelch (1998, p. 62) in their article defined luxury brands as those for which “ratio of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high”. According to Vigneron & Johnson (2004), consumption of luxury products leads to not only functional benefit but also earn the consumers, admiration of others.

Aliyev & Wagner (2018), mention that differences in the psychology of consumption and values result in lack of uniformity in the adoption of luxury (Belk, 1999). The most crucial aspect of cultural differentiation in social behavior is manifested in terms of the relative primacy of individualism versus collectivism (Triandis, 1988, p. 60). As a result, various studies have focused on perception of luxury (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Godey et al., 2013; Hennigs et al., 2012; Paurav Shukla & Purani, 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009) from a cross cultural perspective.

Bagozzi, Wong, Abe, & Bergami (2000) pointed out that in the purchase intentions of Asians, subjective norms are crucial since they relate strongly with referent groups. This is in contrast to Western cultures (which have a more individualistic orientation), where purchase intentions are mainly determined by internal attitudes.

Paurav Shukla (2011) and Paurav Shukla & Purani (2012), in their studies developed a model of luxury value perception and tested it with data from British and Indian consumers. The study revealed that luxury value perceptions held by consumers have an impact on their purchase intentions both in Britain and India. These two countries are culturally rather

distinctive as per Hofstede's cultural dimensions (especially in case of Individualism). UK is a developed Western nation, which scores quite high on the individualism scale whereas India is a developing Eastern nation where the society prefers collectivism (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). Moreover, one can also classify UK as a mature luxury market and India as a new but swiftly growing luxury market. Both, Indians as well as citizens of UK, considered luxury goods as status symbols, and purchased these products to make a statement. Thus, normative interpersonal influences facilitated purchase of luxury goods in both countries. However, Indian consumers were more receptive to normative interpersonal influences as well as informational interpersonal influences. This perhaps can be attributed to the collectivist nature of the Indian society – Indians being collectivist in nature feel more compelled to fit-in as well as rely on others for information (Paurav Shukla, 2011). It was found that British consumers would take into account more dimensions of luxury value than Indian consumers. The authors found that British consumers took into account “self-directed symbolic/expressive values, other-directed symbolic/expressive values, utilitarian/functional values and cost/sacrifice values for developing their overall luxury value perceptions”. Whereas the Indian consumers would only consider other-directed symbolic/expressive values and cost/sacrifice values. This finding suggests that the criterion to estimate value of a luxury product is simpler in collectivist cultures in comparison with individualistic cultures. Indian consumers gave more importance to other-directed symbolic/expressive values than British consumers.

Banerjee & Dittmar (2008) posit that the prevalence of social comparisons in India, together with peer pressures, leads to externally oriented materialism that is, materialism not for oneself or for the pursuit of pleasure but rather as a collectively oriented ideal. Shukla (2012) similarly proposes that Indian culture emphasizes people's interdependence in society, so conspicuousness is valued.

Social value dimension deals with concepts such as social utility of luxury brands, and comprises conspicuousness value and prestige value attached with luxury brands. Social value

dimension of a luxury product is extremely significant for Indian consumers (Hennigs et al., 2012). Writings of other authors (Mann & Sahni, 2015; Paurav Shukla, Singh, & Banerjee, 2015) also point out the significance of greater social value dimension of luxury for the Indian consumers. For example, according to Mann & Sahni (2015), Indian consumers during weddings desire to show off their wealth and conform to social norms. “Social conformity is conceived as an act in accordance with the social group to which one belongs, so as to comply with and be recognized by the group” (Mann & Sahni, 2015, p. 183). Shukla et al., (2015) infer that the dominance of other-directed symbolism for luxury consumption choice in India illustrates the vertical collectivism/hierarchical set-up of Indian society. Their study suggests that an Indian’s decision making relating to luxury consumption is affected significantly by others’ opinions and as a result he/she chooses to consume for societal acceptance.

Chadha & Husband (2006) too, point out that the Indian wedding best illustrates the fact that the Indians are culturally ingrained for conspicuous consumption. They comment – “It’s the Chinese concept of “face” at work, what the Indians call *izzat*, whereby to maintain social standing you put up a grand show” (Chadha & Husband, 2006, pp. 237 & 239).

Pino, Amatulli, Peluso, Natarajan, & Guido (2019) in their comparative study of the United States of America and India, discovered that Indian consumers with higher status consumption, have a tendency to opt for conspicuously branded luxury accessories, with the motive to reflect their social standing. U.S. consumers, on the other hand, with more individualistic orientation tend to buy subtly branded products, as they do not give much importance to social status.

Indian middle class often judges their own as well as others’ position in society through their consumption. They have started indulging in conspicuous consumption and sometimes feel the pressure to do so (N. Mathur, 2014b, p. 105). Titus (2015), based on statistics, confirms that the young India is investing its resources – time and finances on carving their looks and images to act out in conspicuous contexts. He adds – “It is on conspicuous lifestyle brands that

the young rely to build images for themselves so they can stave off being social outcasts” (Titus, 2015, pp. 16 & 18).

In their analysis, Sharda & Bhat (2018) infer that Indian youngsters opt for luxury brands as they endow them with high social and symbolic value. They find the social dimension to be significant in forecasting the purchase of luxury brands by young Indians. Their study also underlines the Indian consumers’ desire to own high end, famous brands, which illustrates the primacy they give to the social and symbolic value of the luxury experience. In their book – *India by Design*, Michael Boroian & Alix De Poix (2010) observe – “In India the current mantra is “big house, big car, big luxury, then branded clothes or ready-to-wear.” The “gifting market” is a key potential market because it marks “status.” They also add that for those Indians who are affluent: “luxury is defined as something that is indulgence rather than a necessity, something perceived as being at the highest end of the market in quality and price, which brings a sense of being part of something select, superior, and exclusive” (Boroian & De Poix, 2010, pp. 82 & 119).

S. Jain & Mishra (2018) in their study find that conspicuous value is the foremost motivation behind the desire to purchase luxury among Indians. The other two important factors are hedonic value and social value. This re-validates the established understanding in the literature, that people in collectivist social set-ups, like India, opt for luxury experience to exhibit their status and prestige. Indians basically consume luxury to create a favorable impression upon others. Their study also exhibits the emergence of individualism among Indians, with reflections of self-gratification and experiential values too becoming the motivations behind luxury consumption.

In the present consumer culture of India, the dominant focus lies on symbolic values of luxury goods. “With the aim to make good impressions, these symbols are used to create, maintain and manipulate the performance so as to constantly project the ‘winning image’ (Featherstone, 2003, p. 164)” (quoted in I. Sinha, 2016, p. 52).

Predominantly, research studies (S. Banerjee, 2008; Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Paurav Shukla, 2011) have termed Indian consumers as collectivists. However, certain studies have also pointed out that Indian consumers are becoming more individualistic (Jain, Pingle, & Daswani, 2012; Jain, Roy, & Ranchhod, 2015).

As a result of globalization, elements of individualism may creep into collectivistic cultures, without altering the overall collectivist orientation (Brewer & Chen, 2007). Titus (2015), commenting on the young Indian psyche, observes that a young Indian mind is an assemblage of a synthetic cultural exposure. Being Indian has shaped them for collectivism, and external influences have created individualistic tendencies in their social identity formation. As a consequence, their conspicuous consumption is propelled by such requirements. The youth is eager to embellish images for social-contexts (Titus, 2015, pp. 149 & 150).

As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, luxury consumption in India is primarily status consumption and the consumption-choices are in line with social norms. Therefore, Indian motivations would more relate to *Bandwagon* (a dimension of symbolic motivation, as a construct in luxury consumption), which implies that the Indian consumers aim for social conformity in their consumption-choices (Yu & Sapp, 2019). Jain & Mishra (2018) mention in their paper that Indians employ luxury as a status symbol to exhibit their achievements to others (Shukla 2012). Indians prefer purchasing those luxury products which conform to societal norms. Their purchase intentions are primarily dependent on relevant ‘others’ (externalized luxury) rather than ‘self’ (internalized luxury) (Jain & Khan, 2017). Sanyal, Datta, & Banerjee (2014) also found social value as one of the prime motives behind luxury consumption decisions by Indians.

*For our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p. 31), we learn from the above-mentioned literature references, that, despite the impact of globalization in younger Indian generations, Indians are still having a collectivist orientation, and therefore, tend to have their luxury consumption-choices in relation to the social-context. Since they give priority to the group,*

*their consumption-choices seek social conformity. Moreover, social value dimension of a luxury product is the major determinant for luxury-consumption among Indians. In the next section, we will focus on clothing, a category that probably makes social conformity as an important criterion in one's perception of the social value of a luxury outfit.*

### **1.3 Contextual Fit**

This section pertains to literature review suggesting that getting dressed is more social than being an individual experience and especially so in collectivist social set-ups. The major concern affecting the consumption-choice about clothes is the desire to fit-in the given socio-cultural context. It also highlights that in the present era of globalization one's identity becomes fluid and gets manifested through consumption-choices as per the social-context.

#### **1.3.1 Clothes - identity and positive social affiliation**

According to Roach-Higgins & Eicher's broad definition (1992), a dress comprises any type of change/alteration done to one's body as well as products that supplement to one's body. A dress communicates a lot about one's identity, including one's age, gender, social identity, social class, religion (Eicher, 1995; Khare, 2014a; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). The use of the term "dress" (or apparel or costume) has a limited connotation and implies "clothing", in the present study.

Dress can be used to communicate one's political and religious affiliation. Dress can also be used to communicate and maintain collective identity (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). For example, Humphreys & Brown (2002) discussed the use of Islamic headscarves and their perceived impact on collective identity for a Turkish university. Meanings that an individual attaches to various attributes of a dress are going to be subjective and will depend on his/her cultural context. For example, color red is used in different contexts around the world; associated with weddings in China and funerals in Ghana (Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 73).

Clothing reflects one's personal and social identity as clothing is not only a matter of personal taste but also reflects social norms. Hence, both self-image and social identity get manifested through apparel (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982). Clothes convey and hide the social position of the individual, and therefore, fashion provides the means to formulate, realize and comprehend social relations. According to Simmel (1957) fashion, a social process, as a way of emulation fulfils the need for social transformation as well as the need for social distinction (Narasimhan, 2016, pp. 75, 76). In reference to India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Usha Narasimhan (2016, pp. 75, 76, 81, 82) mentions that the Indian fashion evolved with opposing beliefs, and comments: "the rise of the Swadeshi movement (protest movement to promote the use of Indian goods and boycott of British made goods) and the Indian freedom struggle saw women's clothing as symbols of nationhood and tradition. The ideal Indian woman of that time was educated without being overtly Westernized". Veblen (1899) opined: "Expenditure on dress has this advantage over most other methods, that our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance" (quoted in Chadha & Husband, 2006, p. 39).

According to art historian Bell (1976), our clothes are so much a part of ourselves that we cannot be, without being concerned for them. It is as if the fabric is really an extension of one's body or even the soul. Clothes relate to us physically as well as emotionally (Corner, 2014, p. 45). For example, Pravina Shukla (2016, p. 259) in her research documents emotional relevance of clothes. She cites her married female participants' preferences for youthful clothes while on vacations, away from the restricting environment of the hometown. Such clothes, participants report, make them feel liberated from social conventions in a romantic getaway with their husbands. She, in contrast, also comments that – "a plain woman in a white sari has left the celebratory aspect of her life behind, resigning herself to the marginal role that widows tragically occupy in India" (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 321).

Hindol Sengupta (2005), one of India's famous fashion writers, comments that clothes help us become who we are and furthermore, who we desire to become. He also opines that in India, clothes convey distinctive meanings. Traditionally, there have been clothes for every occasion from birth to death. He further adds that each color bears lots of connotations and each attire portrays a particular attitude (Sengupta, 2005, p. 10). Sari for participation in religious rituals in Hinduism as uncut and unstitched cloth is believed to be pure; lehanga (a long paneled skirt) with traditional embroidery and embellishment as a wedding outfit; and general norms prescribe white clothing for widows (Pravina Shukla, 2016, pp. 69, 315, 351). Ritu Kumar mentions that because of the norms concerning religious practices, seasonal changes and rites of passage, there are varying choices of colors, e.g., wearing yellow to celebrate spring and young married females wearing bright colors, especially red, the color representing youth and fecundity (M. Banerjee & Miller, 2018, p. 139; Sengupta, 2005, p. 8).

Our clothes like many other artefacts, form part of our identity. Clothes help us to associate with certain groups and dissociate from others (Mair, 2018, p. 2). Clothing and identity are inseparable as clothes are outward reflection of our self and identity (Mair, 2018, p. 55). "Clothing is our second skin; it sits next to our bodies and becomes part of our identity" (Mair, 2018, p. 4). What we wear – clothing/apparel/fashion is certainly an important dimension of human experience (Mair, 2018, p. 13). Fashion helps to enhance or hide certain features of our body and relate ourselves with specific social and ethnic groupings (Mair, 2018, p. 34). "Our clothing serves many purposes beyond functionality and shelter: it conveys symbolic meaning; meets the demands of individual taste, modesty and cultural expectations; and can display social status and gender preference" (Mair, 2018, p. 19). Our positive affiliation to social group is important to our positive self-concept and deliberately or otherwise, our clothing identifies us with a social group/in-group and separates us from the rest/outgroups. What we wear can make us different or fit in at the same time (Mair, 2018, pp. 70–71).



Through dress, we can project a lot – our personal identities and our relationships with others. A dress may also project the type of situation one is involved in. One's appearance transmits a significant amount of information and we have a wonderful capacity to comprehend the involved intricacies efficiently (Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 69). For example, Kente cloth worn by African American students at their graduation ceremonies, conveys not only their pride in their African heritage but also in their academic achievement (Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 79). Sarah Shepherd-Manandhar (2018) in her work based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kathmandu, Nepal, analyses an interesting type of context based consumption of clothing among young Nepali women. She observes – “In the context of marriage arrangements, where it is vital to know who someone is, dress becomes a key piece of information. In this context, young women actively use fashions to support their claims to be modern or traditional and thus to entitlement to the lifestyles those positions entail” (Shepherd-Manandhar, 2018, p. 172). By displaying her clothing choices in the context of family arranged marriage, the young woman communicates to the potential husband and in-laws' family, what status she holds, what kind of future she desires and signals her gender role expectations after marriage. “The contrasting gender roles of modern and traditional are not only presented to young women as a choice they must express through their clothing, they also represent the choice that families looking for brides are considering” (Shepherd-Manandhar, 2018, p. 172). Through a specific clothing consumption-choice – modern or traditional and by status-based consumption in terms of brands and superior quality, the young women deliberately put forth their family's *izat* (honour) to potential matchmakers. In Nepal, the modern women are perceived to be independent in their outlook and individualist in orientation whereas the traditional ones are perceived to be good at household chores and working hard for others, giving up their own interests (Shepherd-Manandhar, 2018, pp. 171–174).

Ritu Kumar, the leading name among the first-generation fashion designers in India, believes that one's choice of clothes is the most discernible portrayal of one's identity and

culture and further adds that “the study of India’s myriad ways of dressing and use of its textures, ornamentation and textiles mirror the country’s complex history and tradition” (quoted in Sengupta, 2005, p. 8).

The need to conform correlates with the need for social identity – both involve embracing the collective beliefs and attitudes (Mair, 2018, p. 93). Patel (2014), a curator in the Asian Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, remarks – “For the consumer, fashion is a medium of identification, allowing the wearer to be identified as part of a group or sharing a lifestyle, as well as a differentiating medium, allowing the constant re-definition of an individual’s social status in relation to other groups in society” (Patel, 2014, p. 35).

Susan B Kaiser (1997) has advanced a contextual perspective in the appraisal of the body and the dress. She postulates that the comprehension of social, cultural and historical elements at a particular time are essential pre-requisites to appreciating dress and associated meanings. Having inputs from various fields like sociology, psychology and anthropology, the contextual approach helps discovering latent meanings (quoted in Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 91) As Witte (2004) put it, “Costume thus does not dress the body, but rather the person” (quoted in Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 85).

Referring to S. Woodward's (2007) work about dress practices among women, Entwistle (2015) mentions that the concept of ‘comfort’ involves many strands, the physical fit and the clothing fitting into the social context and being “really me” (S. Woodward, 2007, p. 22). She further adds that S. Woodward (2007) highlights the dressed body/self as a totality which emanates through intricate interactions between one’s body and different identities that must be put forth in the various social contexts in which one is placed (Entwistle, 2015, preface, p. 11,12). She sums up: “Fashion and dress articulate the body in culture: fashion produces discourses on the body and how to adorn it, dress is the translation of fashion into everyday practice” (Entwistle, 2015, p. 245).

De Mooij (1998) recognized that in collectivist cultures, consumers yearn for conformity to their reference groups. Individuals in these cultures dress up with the belief that their appearance indicates their social standing. On the other hand as per Singelis (1994), individualists obtain self-esteem through their own expressions and by attesting their own notions (Lee, M. Edwards, Youn, & Yun, 2018). Millan & Reynolds (2011) analyzed the effects of cultural orientation (individualism vs collectivism) on the kind of clothes people wear. Apparel consumption of individualistic consumers reflects their motivations and personal values and not group norms. However, collectivist consumers pay more attention to social norms. Kim & Arthur (2003) carried out a study on Asian American residents of Honolulu. The authors found that ethnic attributes of clothes, trendy designs and store displays mattered more to Asian Americans who identified more with their ethnic group. The study also highlighted that the correlation between use of ethnic language and the probability of consumption of ethnic apparels, gets amplified for those (Asian Americans) who strongly identify with their ethnic group.

*The above literature review shows that what one wears is not just a personal matter, it also reflects social norms i.e. one's dress manifests self-image as well as social identity. Clothes help in both ways - to fit in or differentiate oneself from a given social situation. For social conformity and social identity, one needs to embrace collective beliefs and attitudes. The socio-cultural context is essential to appreciate a dress and comprehend associated meanings. In collectivist social set-ups, social perception matters the most in consumption-choices and hence, the focus on social conformity.*

On the basis of aforesaid, I envisage that consumption of contextually-fit luxury products would help one earn more prestige in one's in-group. *In particular, for this study, contextual-fit is seen as the match between the consumption-choice (dress-attributes) and social imperatives of the occasion.* Moreover, within the Indian context, such dresses would often tend to be more conspicuous. Hence, I predict that a luxury dress with high contextual-fit

shall also have a high social value as it manifests social conformity. Therefore, I hypothesize that –

**H1: For an Indian female, the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress will positively impact its perceived social value for a particular social occasion.**

### **1.3.2 Cultural relevance of product attributes in consumption and identity formation**

In the present era of globalization, one comes across changing social environments and one's identity has become more fluid – one demonstrates multiple identities (El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006, p. 150; Karalay, 2016, p. 209).

Goffman (1956) and Gergen (1965, 1982) very rightly illustrate the need to refer to the identities in the plural because individual or collectivity, both as social agents, can realize and manifest identities as per the context. Goffman (1956) does it by his illustrations of individual playing different roles for different audiences and Gergen (1965, 1982) through his notion of fluidity of the self. 'Identity' acts as a guiding frame for individual's actions and necessary for societal functioning (Deschamps & Devos, 1998, p. 3). Sociologist Giddens (1991) opines that in a fast-changing globalized arena, identities become more fluid and diverse. "Change is characterized by uncertainties and insecurities as well as by diversity and opportunities for the formation of new identities" (K. Woodward, 2000, p. 24).

Reversely, McCracken (1986) in his article explained how consumer goods can carry cultural meaning, which can further be passed on to the individual. Aaker, Benet-Martínez, & Garolera (2001) also suggested that both brands and products can carry and convey a cultural meaning. According to Reed (2002), consumers should react positively to identity relevant products. As stated above, this can be seen in the case of ethnic inspired clothes (Kim & Arthur, 2003), traditional foods (Laroche, Kim, & Tomiuk, 1998), etc.

Consumption defines, more than anything else, the individual and collective identities. In contemporary market culture, individuals' identities are crafted as consumers – with goods of consumption as special constituents of identities. In this culture, individual's freedom

manifests as a choice of consumption (Palackal, 2011, p. 7). Today's consumption is not merely consumption of products, but of signs, and therefore, products are defined more by what they stand for than their functional attributes. Ritzer (1998, p. 7) makes it more explicit, "And what they signify is defined not by what they do, but by their relationship to the entire system of commodities and signs" (N. Mathur, 2014a, introduction, p. 16). According to He & Wang (2015), cultural identity enhances preference towards, and purchase of, domestic brands. Cultural relevance of product attributes positively influences product attribute evaluations (Chattaraman et al., 2009). According to Khare (2014b), generally, those who are inclined towards a global identity, tend to follow global lifestyles through fashion involvement.

Shared between cultural globalization and cultural identity, Indian consumers have started appreciating fusion clothing - representing a mix of Indian and Western styles (Vittal, 2010). They use fashion clothing for identity creation, seek social conformity as well as projection of social status (Khare, 2014a; Khare, Parveen, & Mishra, 2012). Khare (2014) infers that value expressive factors of normative influences, along with cosmopolitanism and self-identification with global consumers have an impact on Indian consumers' fashion clothing involvement. Value-expressiveness denotes one's wish to relate with a particular group through consumption-choices similar to those approved by the group. The above study included both male and female respondents from 7 different Indian cities. The study implies that Indian consumers consider and use clothes "for self-expression and identification with global consumer identity and social groups". The author highlighting the significance of social conformity for Indian consumers (as India is a collectivist country), advised that fashion apparel for Indian consumers, needs to be indianized as per social norms and apparel creators should try to create products that represent a mix of ethnic designs and Western style.

*In a global arena, identities become more fluid and diverse; varying as per the social-context. Globalization is affecting identity formation process. In the light of our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p. 31), despite the growing impact of globalization, the insights from*

*this section emphasize the importance of cultural relevance of product-attributes in consumption decision-making process.*

#### **1.4 The role of context in the choice of luxury clothes in India**

This section comprises literature review highlighting that Indians with a dominant collectivist social set-up, desire to relate to the social-context and tend to be like others. One's consumption-choice of luxury dress is influenced by social-context perceived through type of event – traditional or modern; and through the people present and the relationships with them. In the predominantly hierarchical social organization of Indian society, authoritarian norms influence social behavior. In addition, older Indians are less acculturated than younger ones, and the degree of acculturation impacts one's choice of clothes: the more the consumers are acculturated, the more open and free is their choice of clothes.

##### **1.4.1 Indians – importance of consumption-context in luxury-dress choice**

Patel (2014), in her analysis of fashion in India, observes: “Within the present urban context, professional women navigate global office spaces and cosmopolitan city environments, as well as sites of traditional interactions such as festivals, family gatherings and life-cycle rituals. Their clothing enables them to shift from one identity to another through these incongruent spaces” (Patel, 2014, p. 43).

Pravina Shukla (2016), in her study of body art among the females in Banaras (a city in India), comments that most of the Indian females, do not have a simple two-fold division of space into public and private. They define the space through the people present, the relationships with those, who are present and choose with caution what to wear in each of those contexts. She, further adds that the decision about what is appropriate for an occasion is based on socially derived norms. For special occasions that involve religious rituals, women wear traditional clothes whereas on other days, they may wear modern Western clothes (Pravina Shukla, 2016, pp. 413–416).

For women's clothes in India, Säävälä (2012) also identifies the separation between the domestic and public domains. At home and in private social milieu, women are comfortable in shorts, mini-skirts and dresses, whereas in the public set-up, they are found to be more conservative (Sandhu, 2015, p. 64,65).

Markus & Kitayama's (1991) theory of independent and interdependent self-construals postulates that collectivists, generally have interdependent self-construals, which envisage a person as connected to the social context and not much different from others. In such a mental set-up, one is motivated to attempt a fit with significant others and be a constituent of interpersonal relationships. One finds the important aspects of self in the interdependent and societal elements. Writing about the consumption and lifestyle choices of a young India today and in future, Titus (2015) observes that young will, without any discomfort, keep shifting between myriad of cultural ways as per what suits the most for a given context – in a party at the lounge, one may prefer without any hesitation, ankle-length boots with a jump-suit and for a wedding, opt for a traditional dress – anarkali suit or a richly embroidered lehenga (Titus, 2015, p. 7).

Shukla et al. (2015), by employing impression management theory and the horizontal/vertical collectivistic cultural differentiation, give new insights about luxury consumption behavior of Asian consumers (China, India and Indonesia). Their study finds that the other-directed symbolism constitutes a major part of luxury value perceptions among Indians, suggesting further, that Indians consume for societal acceptance. On the other hand, among Indonesians, self-directed symbolism of luxury is significant. In contrast, Indians want to amplify their self through socially accepted luxury consumption. Shukla et al. (2015) find the explanation for the difference between the two collectivist cultures through the nature of societal organization – hierarchical in India (vertical) versus equality in Indonesia (horizontal).

The clothes we wear perform many functions. At the basic level, it is protection of body; besides that, clothes project connotative meanings. Clothes fulfil the requirements pertaining to

one's taste and culture; also reflect one's social standing and gender preference. "Interpretations of the psychological meaning of clothing are influenced not only by the wearer but also by the observer, as well as by the social and cultural context" (Mair, 2018, p. 2). Linking clothing with social identity theory, Mair (2018) submits that clothing reflects one's group association, when it fulfils social identity congruence and is employed as a social symbol, fashion can allow us to stand out or fit in as the same (Mair, 2018, pp. 62, 71). Referring to the analyses of communication through clothes by Solomon (1985), Solomon & Rabolt (2004) and Barnard (2002), Mair (2018) writes – clothes act as codes which are dependent on context and interpretation, and the interpretation of particular clothing is a factor of the wearer, the occasion, the situation and the people present (Mair, 2018, p. 107).

Writing on consumption in the Indian context, Ishita Sinha (2016) comments that in the present consumer society, the connotative and demonstrative features of products are given priority over the functional elements. Consumption tends to reflect not only the personal but social identity, too (I. Sinha, 2016, p. 49).

"Symbolic motivation in luxury clothing consumption is the motivation to display social prestige, to show uniqueness or to fit in by signal social meanings developed from consuming luxury clothing" (Yu & Sapp, 2019, p. 2).

Collectivists are more influenced by others, so in their luxury consumption choices, they emphasize on relational and contextual parameters rather than their own feelings or contentment (Lee et al., 2018).

Literature on identity based consumption, also points to changes in consumer preference based on consumption-context. For ex., according to Stayman & Deshpande (1989) & Wooten (1995), ethnic composition of consumption situation will also have an effect on product choice, and according to Chattaraman et al. (2009), consumers evaluate ethnically pertinent product attributes more positively during a culturally congruent situation than during a non-ethnic situation.



Pravina Shukla (2016, p. 404), in her study on body art in Banaras in India, opines that all items of culture – material and verbal, are meaningful as per some social context and with shift in context, their importance changes.

*In reference to our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p. 31), the insights from the literature survey on the importance of consumption-context in luxury-dress choice among Indians can be summed up as – Indians being collectivists with hierarchical societal organization exhibit other-directed symbolism in their luxury value perceptions. Collectivists are connected to the social-context and as a result the consumption and lifestyle choices of Indian youth shift as per what is most appropriate for a given context. Indian females using clothes as their symbols of identity shift through incongruent spaces of cosmopolitan environments and traditional social occasions. Indian females comprehend the space through the people present and the relationships with those, who are present. They exhibit caution in their consumption-choices for what to wear in various social-contexts as per the social norms. Meanings the clothes convey are influenced not only by the wearer but also by the observer as well as the socio-cultural context. Consumption situation and its ethnic composition affect the consumption-choice.*

Following Pravina Shukla (2016, pp. 413–416), the consumption-context is defined more specifically in terms of the type of event and characteristic of the company (other people attending the event). As a result, the definition of contextual-fit can be further specified as follows:

**In this study, the match between the consumption-choice (dress-attributes) and social imperatives of the occasion in terms of the type of event and the characteristic of people present is called Contextual-Fit.**

#### **1.4.2 India – consumption-context – co-existence of tradition and modernity**

In a traditional society, individual's identity was anchored on the society and also firmly fixed. There were no recurrent changes in the environment – work or living. Nevertheless, in

the globalized era, one is always mobile and confronts changing social environments. To succeed, one needs to enact his/her role in conformity to the given social context. In the present times, the identity has become ever unstable and changeable. One exhibits multiple identities. (El-Ojeili & Hayden, 2006, p. 150; Karalay, 2016, p. 209). Giddens (1991) opines that the concept of lifestyle emerges to be of crucial significance in modern social life. He further adds that despite standardization, enhanced freedom in social life and the emergence of a variety of contexts and new constraining frames make the contemplation of lifestyle choices imperative (N. Mathur, 2014a, introduction, p. 15).

Nita Mathur (2014b) has made two major conclusions about youth's projection of modernity in India – first, modernity gets expressed through social, economic and cultural contexts, the ways in which tradition and modernity get intermingled; and second, idea of modernity gets concretized through socialization, one's own experiences and interactions with peers (N. Mathur, 2014b, pp. 106, 107). The phenomenon of modernity is rather complex in India, where one finds that modernist values often co-exist with traditional values (Ahmed, 2016, p. 106). Singer's field work (Singer, 1972) in India led to his understanding of the ways in which urban dwellers manage the duality of tradition and modernity of everybody's life. One of the identified ways, was referred to as compartmentalization i.e. a stringent spatial and temporal dichotomy of traditional and modern situations/institutions (Deshpande, 2004). Singer (1972) critically analyzed that the Madras industrialists made their work environment free of traditional norms and ritual sanctions and as a result were able to innovate in terms of experiences, processes and products (Chaudhuri, 2014, p. 192). This coexistence of tradition and modernity is also reflected through difference in acculturation of adults and youngsters in India (S. Mathur, 2010).

*For our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p. 31), this section highlights that in the present era of globalization, one confronts changing social-contexts – many being incongruent – traditional and modern. As a result, one needs to enact multiple identities.*

The consumption of contextually-fit luxury dresses helps reproduce traditions, customs and ideologies (Kuldova, 2016, p. 38). In fact, in the Indian context, where luxury dresses are often purchased for important social occasions such as marriages and festivals, measurement of social value of a dress for an occasion should also reveal its contextual-fit. Hence, I propose that for studying the Indian market, these two variables/concepts should be treated as a single variable/concept. For the purpose of this study, I am naming this variable as **Perceived Social Fit**.

I define **Perceived Social Fit** as the measure of one's perceived social appreciation/acceptance by referent group in accordance with the degree of social conformity in one's behavior (in terms of the fit between attributes of dress chosen for a social occasion and the social imperatives of the occasion).

The aforesaid literature review (Chattaraman et al., 2009; Patel, 2014; Pravina Shukla, 2016; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989; Wooten, 1995) hints that a luxury dress will get evaluated as per the social-context. One can expect that the social approval or appreciation of a luxury dress will pertain to the fact that how closely the luxury dress meets the social imperatives of the given event – traditional or modern. Therefore, I hypothesize that -

**H2a: The traditional or modern characteristics of a social occasion result in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female.**

#### **1.4.3 India - Consumption-context - characteristics of company**

This sub-section highlights one of the most dominant features of Indian society – the patrilineal, hierarchical set-up governed by significantly authoritarian relationships. The sub-section underlines that despite high personal achievements, one is still constrained by the conventional kinship norms. The sub-section also discusses the inverse correlation between acculturation and age. This inverse relationship itself becomes a reflection of co-existence of tradition and modernity. The young, with greater influence of modernization are more inclined towards a change to adopt modern, especially Western elements.

India is a hierarchical society. The authority of elders over youngsters has been explained by Uberoi (2004) within the context of an arranged marriage (a norm in Indian society which could be seen as manifestation of authority of elders over children) (Uberoi, 2004).

The Indian society in general is undemocratic and all relationships are governed through superiority and subordination (Lahiri-Roy, 2016). Many social scientists, like Dube (1992), have found patriarchy to be a defining characteristic of Indian society (Dube, 1992). Extended family is given a lot of importance in India. The famous social anthropologist, Veena Das (1985, p. 3), interestingly talks about the role of the older women in the extended family as “female patriarchs” as they often become the main proponents and practitioners of patriarchal hegemony (quoted in Lahiri-Roy, 2016, p. 253).

India’s renowned psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar and anthropologist Katharina Kakar (2009), in their analysis of the nature of ‘Indian-ness’ note that despite one’s personal heights reached, there occurs no change in his role as per Kinship hierarchy. They write “in spite of rapid social changes in the last decades, an Indian continues to be part of a hierarchically ordered and, above all, stable network of relationships throughout the course of his life” (Kakar & Kakar, 2009, pp. 15–16).

*For our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p 31), this section reveals that patriarchy is the defining feature of Indian society. In the explicit hierarchical social organization, the relationships are characterized by superiority and subordination.*

#### **1.4.3.1 Age and acculturation**

Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits (1936, p. 149) defined acculturation as – “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”. Consumer acculturation was defined to describe the behavioral and attitudinal changes in consumers as a result of globalization (N. Gupta, 2012).

The consumption preferences of youngsters would differ from older generations' preferences, due to acculturation. Many researchers (Arnett, 2002; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; N. Gupta, 2012, 2013; Zhang & Khare, 2009) have shed light on the impact of globalization on consumers. Globalization has played a major role in the adoption of global consumer culture by local consumers (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

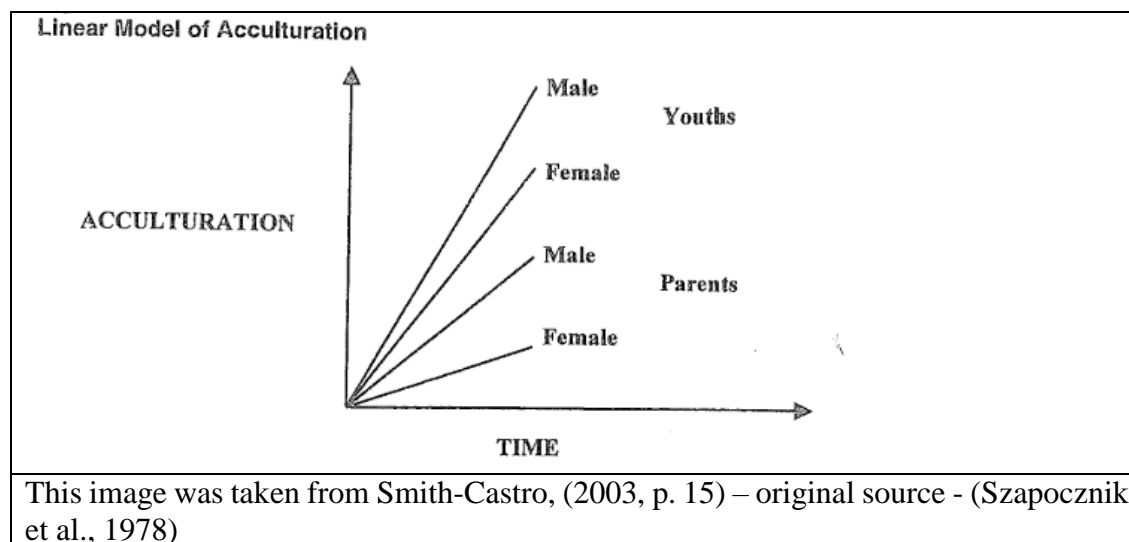
A number of studies have confirmed that youngsters are more acculturated to global culture than older respondents (N. Gupta, 2013; S. Mathur, 2010) and youngsters are more likely to wear global apparel in comparison to older consumers (Cleveland, Papadopoulos, & Laroche, 2011). According to Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Aranalde, (1978) rate of acculturation decreases with age (see Figure 1.2). As per the image, acculturation depends on the amount of time one spends interacting with the host culture and the rate of acculturation varies with age (Smith-Castro, 2003, p. 15). In case of India, younger (16-25 years) consumers who were economically better-off (upper middle class) and had higher levels of education were more acculturated to global culture than other consumers (N. Gupta, 2013). S. Mathur (2010) has shown that both, Asian Indians in India and USA are becoming more bicultural. However, when parents (Asian Indians in India and USA) are compared to their children in both these countries regarding issues such as marriage and mate selection, it was found that parents still held traditional Hindu values (although some shift towards Western values was apparent). The children in both these countries, on the other hand held more Western values.

Aliyev & Wagner (2018) in their research have discovered a negative correlation between age and luxury purchase intentions and their finding confirms Eastman & Liu's (2012) conclusion that generation Y is more inclined to indulge in consumption for status. This insight strengthens the choice of young respondents for luxury consumption decision making process.

Jasleen Kaur Gupta and Sonu Bohra, famous fashion bloggers (<https://www.facebook.com/FashionBombay>) and Ekta Rajani, a fashion stylist, posit that there is an increasing realization among Indians towards becoming individualistic and having fun,

and therefore, love to experiment with innovative life styles and labels. This trend is more conspicuous in the younger generation for whom fashion provides the key for identity management and to compete with peers and affiliate with popular groupings (Sandhu, 2015, pp. 65, 66).

**Figure 1. 2: Linear model of acculturation**



*In relation to our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p 31), this section informs us that youngsters are more acculturated to global culture than elders, and it is more probable for youngsters to wear global apparels. Youngsters with Western influences have become individualistic and love to experiment with global lifestyle-choices. However, since these youngsters also have tendencies for collectivist social-orientation, their consumption-choices are expected to be influenced by the social imperatives of the occasion.*

Stayman & Deshpande (1989) have shown that food choices of consumers changed based on ethnic composition of their surrounding (with parents vs with business associates). Indian females comprehend the space through the people present and the relationships with those, who are present. Summing up the social set-up in India, social scientists have identified patriarchy as the defining feature. In the explicit hierarchical social organization, the relationships are characterized by superiority and subordination. Women strike a balance in their clothing choices according to their changing social roles as well as the already existing

expectations of Indian womanhood (Sandhu, 2015, p. 22). We know that the youngsters tend to be more influenced by global culture than older respondents (N. Gupta, 2013; S. Mathur, 2010) and youngsters are more likely to wear global apparel in comparison to older consumers (Cleveland et al., 2011). Sandhu (2018) writing about attitudinal shift with economic reforms in India and rising conspicuous consumption, comments – “Most media publications tend to portray the global desi as the ‘ideal Indian consumer who is young, hip, and conscious of his or her sense of locality and simultaneously aware of global trends, while being socially mobile and financially able to indulge in them’ (Sandhu, 2015, p. 106)” (Sandhu, 2018, p. 35).

Corner (2014) posits “Societal norms determine that we make our image chime with current expectations. If we do not dress appropriately, we cannot build a career or have much of a social life. From work to special occasions, we have to dress the part” (Corner, 2014, p. 42). Youngsters with Western influences have become individualistic and love to experiment with global lifestyle-choices. As these youngsters do also have strong tendencies for collectivist social-orientation, therefore, they aspire to achieve social-conformity through consumption-choices to fit-in a given social context. Their consumption-choices are expected to be influenced by the social imperatives of the occasion in terms of the type of the event and the age of people present. As elders are less acculturated to global influences and more tradition-bound, their expectations about the appropriateness of a dress, one wears at a given occasion would differ from those who are younger in age. It is expected that a given luxury dress will be perceived to have different social value as per the characteristic of the people present at the occasion, in terms of age. Therefore, I hypothesize that –

**H2b: The characteristic of the company/people present at the occasion (peer group or elders) results in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female.**

### **1.5 Consumption of luxury clothing in India – Key attributes**

This section focuses on literature pertaining to the major dimensions of luxury clothing consumption among Indians. Literature review explicitly manifests that luxury consumption in

India is predominantly occasion oriented - weddings & festivals are particularly the occasions for extravagance. Luxury dress attributes reflect tradition and modernity. The section also highlights that modesty as a product-attribute remains a major factor in deciding the appropriateness of a dress for a given social occasion.

### **1.5.1 Indians – consumption of luxury clothes**

In a consumer culture, one tends to reflect one's identity through acts of consumption. Indians tend to exhibit their affluence at important occasions (especially weddings and important festivals) through luxury consumption (fashion clothes) and this luxury consumption is oriented towards social conformity and exhibition of social status.

The demand for, and show off of luxury is not new for Indians. It draws from the royalty of the past, who had jewelry embedded clothes which have impacted and inspired many designers of luxury dresses and accessories. Many luxury brands, ranging from Louis Vuitton to Ferragamo had ties with India and received patronage from royal families. Conspicuous consumption was visible in the expensive shawls, lehengas and saris that formed a part of the collection for the selected groups (Sandhu, 2015, p. 67).

Indian consumers often purchase luxury clothing for special occasions such as festivals, marriages, and other family celebrations. Boroian & De Poix (2010) writing on cultural issues and specifications of the Indian luxury market, comment – “Indian wedding dresses are often a combination of intricate patterns, threading, sequences, and beadwork. Some Indian brides with money have their Indian wedding dresses woven with jewelry, pure gold or silver as part of the dowry” (Boroian & De Poix, 2010, p. 89).

Patel (2014), writing about weddings in India, observes that weddings have been essential in the emergence of fashion as well as in the sustenance of traditional embroidery techniques of India. She further adds that as the Indian economy is creating more luxury consumers, the ‘wedding’ gets further strengthened in its symbolism of social status. The wish to identify with the elite – the maharajas of the past and contemporary Bollywood film stars -



manifests in the luxurious weddings. Thus, the big-budget wedding becomes the route for class distinction and recognition (Patel, 2014, p. 71).

Pravina Shukla (2016) observes that in India, families demonstrate their economic status through women's clothes, the reason being that men's clothes, in comparison, are very general. In women's clothes there is an immense variety with a great opportunity for exhibiting their tastes and financial well-being (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 371). She further mentions that social norms are primary in consumption decision-making process, in the contexts where one is being viewed (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 414). Dress portrays the different identities of an individual – social, religious, occupational, sexual and of course the personal one (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 416).

By buying luxury products, individuals try to be a part of their aspirational group. “The obsession with excess, lavishness and distinction merges the neo-liberal valorization of ‘culture of excess’ (Mani, 2008, p. 44) with the Indian elite's need to show off hierarchical distinction, cultural, belonging and regained confidence in India” (Kuldova, 2013, p. 8).

“In the current context, fashion for the growing elite and middle classes forms an important part of public practice in India. This is especially so because in India class struggle is centered around social belonging and acceptance (Liechty, 2003; Saavala, 2012). The role of branded and designer clothing as markers of displaying wealth and distinction through conspicuous consumption is re-emphasized through the presence of global fashion and luxury brands, as well as new forms of local and globalized media that promote them” (Sandhu, 2015, p. 60).

Pankaj and Nidhi, fashion designers, comment: “India has a huge market for clothes that cater to festivals and weddings. The same consumer who wears a colorful, blingy Indian outfit to a friend's Sangeet function (a song-and-dance Bollywood-style party preceding any Indian wedding ceremony) will probably be seen wearing one of our very contemporary dresses

the same morning over a champagne brunch. This dichotomy is what makes India an exciting market; the contrasts are jarring and yet exciting” (quoted in Jay, 2015, p. 192).

Chadha & Husband (2006) point out that the Indian woman is accustomed to detailed patterned embroidery and embellishments, lively colors and prolific fabrics as a result of the great traditions of crafts, and in contrast Western ready-to-wear variety remain simpler with primacy of silhouette, cut, and styling (Chadha & Husband, 2006, p. 246).

*Looking at the above literature review we retain that - luxury consumption in India primarily pertains to special occasions, especially marriages and festivals. In fact, weddings in India have provided the reasons for more widespread luxury consumption, the emergence of fashion and in keeping the traditional techniques like embroidery alive and flourish. Indians are known to adopt fashion clothing for seeking desired identity, social conformity, and show off hierarchical social-standing. Social norms are significant in decision-making for consumption-choices in clothes for social-contexts where one is being viewed by others.*

### **1.5.2 Indian apparel**

The trends in Indian apparel in contemporary times indicate the persisting but dynamic traditional ethnic wear, and the emergence of Indo-western and Western dresses.

Indian costumes have evolved as per the climatic, social and political changes that have taken place in the country. They also represent India’s long history. Though their transformation, with regard to taste and utility, is a long ongoing process, they are still rooted in their past traditional moorings. They are contoured by the inevitable context of the larger global reality but in the fundamentals, they follow the Indian emotions of shyness and dignity (Bhattacharyya, 1995, p. 109).

In the myriad of manifestations of co-existence of tradition and modernity in Indian society, fashion has taken its place as the principal intermediary between tradition and modernity. Fashion produces both - tradition and modernity. One major defining element of Indian fashion has been the dynamic between traditional ethnic and Western wear. The ethnic

dress also has its own dynamics in the innovative works of designers and craftsmen. Designers' creations manifest the ever-present dialogue between tradition and modernity (Jay, 2015, p. 10). Narasimhan (2016) sums up by adding – “the twenty-first century has seen India adapt, adopt and absorb global influences into traditional forms to come up with eclectic styles” (Narasimhan, 2016, p. 84).

Economic liberalization in 1990s became the real tonic for fashion in India. It was a time for fashion resonance in terms of volume, value and trends. The period of 1990s had emergence of Indo-western forms, besides the modifications of Western fashions into Indian fashions – the most exclusive being ‘blouse’ by designer Suneet Verma as a substitute for the traditional choli/blouse. If 1990s was the decade for ‘Haute Couture’, the next decade witnessed a stream of brands from the West, leading to a beginning of ready-to-wear/pret-a-porter trend among designers and corporates (Narasimhan, 2016, p. 83).

After the economic reforms of the 1990s, there has been a significant alteration in the consumption, display, performance, composition, and design in Indian fashion. These reforms that aimed at liberalization not only altered economic and political realms, but also the socio-cultural perspectives of the different hierarchical groups within India. Apart from professional and financial gain, the emerging elite and middle classes saw a growing change in the ideologies, with a marked shift towards progress and modernity. Not only financial and social mobility increased, but also the social roles were changing amongst the urban classes. Therefore, women particularly found greater access to transnational lifestyles and commodities, which showed their impact on fashion. This led to the emerging Indian designers laying down a strong Indian design aesthetic (Sandhu, 2015, p. 3).

To the Western world, Indian fashion was mainly the works of sequin, gold thread/Zardozi and the embroidery (the centerpiece of Indian fashion). Embroidery has remained the most famous and exported feature of Indian fashion (Narasimhan, 2016, p. 82).

Dresses with heavy prints and embroidery were considered to be Indian. Earlier dresses with embroidery and embellishments were considered to be more expensive and beautiful. However, now focus is also on “cut, styles, fabric and the eventual weight” (Jay, 2015, p. 26).

The Indian nationalist movement and freedom struggle, like other similar movements, often saw women’s clothing as representative and idealistically symbolic of the “nation” and “tradition” (Sandhu, 2015, p. 34). Post-independence, due to the increasing visibility and availability, there was greater tolerance for Western clothing for women (Sandhu, 2015, p. 36). Post-liberalization fashion is not simply a combination of the East and the West or an example of Westernization of Indian clothing. Liberalization led to people becoming more interested in preserving their Indian identity amidst the global influences (Sandhu, 2015, p. 19). Sabyasachi, one of the most famous fashion designers, comments – “As India’s economy booms and pride in our nation surges, Indian fashion is looking inwards. Instead of mimicking Western traditions, we must look into our own past and grapple with our identity” (quoted in Patel, 2014, p. 69).

“Indian fashion designers such as Manish Aurora and Abraham and Thakore are embracing traditional skills in the design of garments that often fuse Western cuts with Indian fabrics, surface decoration and detailing – and which look as fashionable on the streets of Paris as in Mumbai (Corner, 2014, p. 68)”. Patel (2014), opines in her book that in the new milieus emerging in India as a consequence of liberalization and globalization, the designers are carving out, in a plethora of imaginative ways, fusions of Asian and Western aesthetics and are weaving tradition and modernity together into clothes. She adds that they steer the notions of Indian-ness and of internationalism with exemplary skillfulness (Patel, 2014, p. 33).

Indian fashion reflects the consumers’ changing socio-economic and cultural conditions, through its fascinating, luxurious, bridal wear which is laden with jewels, its minimal but elegant saris and suits made of hand-loom, as well as the saris and other ethnic garments that have more Western elements, creating ultimately, a new form of fashion, thus making Indian

fashion an unending spectrum of combinations of the modern and the traditional (Jay, 2015, p. 16).

Ethnic Indian wear is often linked with unchanging tradition and Western wear is linked with modernity, due to globalization. India's colonial past might also play a part in establishment of this distinction between traditional local dresses and Western dresses (Jay, 2015, p. 10). "Anthropologist Emma Tarlo (1996) observed an 'ethnic chic' trend in India in the 1990s, where women's fashions were guided by rural motifs and ethnic Indian-ness. From subsequent visits in the 2000s, she observed that this was followed by a trend of 'luxury chic'; here women's clothes imitated the lifestyles of India's past royalty and aristocracy" (Shreen, 2015, p. 204).

In both Indian and foreign views, the Sari is the essential symbol of Indian women. Based on the belief that uncut cloth is pure, Saris are preferred for Hindu rituals. Even on secular but formal events, Saris are preferred as they are considered elegant. However, the *Salwar Suit* is becoming popular. *Suits*, also called *Punjabis* because of their origin in the Punjab region, are preferred more, especially for everyday wear, both in India and the diaspora. Recent studies have seen them as a way of identity expression by women of diverse demographics (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 69).

The *salwar suit* has gained immense popularity among women in India. It is an ensemble of three pieces: the *salwar* pants, the *kurta* tunic, and a long scarf, called a *chunni or dupatta* which is about two and a half feet wide and seven feet long. The *dupatta* is mostly draped over the chest, hanging over both shoulders and down the back. It is very often made of light cloth, but is symbolic of modesty in dress, like the many outer layers in garments worn by Muslim women (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 72).

Amongst Indian wearers, a number of techniques of self-fashioning came up, that helped them to adopt different clothing styles that fit with their lifestyles. The need for meeting the pre-requisites pertaining to Indian taste, socio-cultural aspects, traditions and norms of modesty

and morality required localization of Western/global dress styles and attributes. At the same time, for traditional styles to not look outdated, they are revised regularly in terms of global trends. Thus, localization, globalization and glocalization, carried out by the wearer/designer, lead to a number of results that fuse Indian and Western aesthetics – color palettes, embellishments, and print patterns. Thus, global/Western styles and Indian styles are worn together, leading to the indigenization of Western styles and the Westernization of Indian ones. What results is often called Indo-western, fusion fashion or *desi-chic*. Hybrid styles of clothing have thus become popular and allow for preserving and maintaining traditions, and at the same time, experiencing modernity and lifestyles that are in line with the rest of the world. “Therefore, ensuring the compatibility of Indian and Western garments as a strategy for personal and collective styling not only acts as a medium for experiencing global modernity but also for maintaining a point of distinction (Tarlo, 1996) while experiencing a sense of national pride” (Sandhu, 2015, pp. 19, 20).

The distinctive nature of Indian fashion, in comparison to other, seemingly similar, Asian fashions, stems from its local context – India’s history, the still existent influence of the ideals of nationalism, the rebirth and use of Indian crafts and textile, and the acceptance of the continually changing traditions emerging from the changing socio-cultural context post-reforms (Sandhu, 2015, p. 4).

*Our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p. 31), points out that product-attributes affect the contextual-fit of a product. This section highlights the fact that fashion in India hinges on both tradition and modernity. Indian fashion at present represents adaptation, adoption and adsorption of global/Western elements. Contemporary styles are broadly categorized as Indian, Western and Indo-western. Fashion, acting as intermediary between tradition and modernity, helps the Indian consumers, exhibit the traditional as well as modern lifestyles.*

In the present consumer society, consumption is more about the meanings it conveys than its functional gains. Cultural relevance of product attributes is important in consumption

decision-making process. As per Ronal Barthes (1968/1983), “Clothing concerns all of the human person, all of the body, all of the relationships of man to body as well as the relationships of the body to the society” (quoted in Corner, 2014, p. 45).

Consumers react positively to identity relevant products (Chattaraman et al., 2010, 2009; Reed, 2002), like ethnic inspired clothes (Kim & Arthur, 2003), traditional foods (Laroche, Kim, & Tomiuk, 1998), etc.

The motivation to fit in would be even more in a collectivist country (Millan & Reynolds, 2011) like India, where consumers’ decision making relating to luxury consumption is affected significantly by others’ opinions and as a result they choose to consume for societal acceptance (Paurav Shukla & Purani, 2012; Paurav Shukla et al., 2015). Begum, Dasgupta, & Lewis (2018), writing on South Asian youth cultures, comment that even at present in number of areas in South Asia, Western clothes are related to Western modernization with reflections of loss of culture and over-tones of un-wanted sexuality, whereas the traditional clothes are correlated with chasteness, national identity, and being pious (Begum et al., 2018, p. 10).

Moreover, Indian clothes have special design characteristics (Jay, 2015, p. 26; Narasimhan, 2016, p. 82) that make them different from Western clothes. Social norms are significant in decision-making for consumption-choices in clothes for social contexts where one is being viewed by others. Considering that collectivist consumers pay more attention to social norms and Indians often use fashion clothing for identity creation, seeking social conformity as well as projection of social status (Khare, 2014a; Khare et al., 2012), one could assume that for Indian consumers, the product-attributes reflecting Indianness will help achieving higher social value perception.

The literature review also manifests the interesting co-existence of tradition and modernity. Globalization has opened up new avenues for experimentation for new life experiences (Sandhu, 2015, pp. 19, 20).

The young consumer feels proud of rich Indian heritage and at the same time wishes to adopt modern/Western elements. The rich textile heritage, fine craftsmanship and culture of embroidery and embellishments have provided a great scope for all kinds of experimentation for fusion with elements of Western societies (Jay, 2015, p. 16).

The aforesaid, points out that for young Indian consumers, Indian and Indo-western dresses would have a better perceived contextual-fit in a variety of social situations than a Western dress, and as a result have higher perceived social value. According to Millan & Reynolds (2011), the motivation to fit in would be more in a collectivist country like India. Hence, luxury consumption would be affected by others' opinions and used for seeking societal acceptance (Paurav Shukla & Purani, 2012; Paurav Shukla et al., 2015). Therefore, I hypothesize that -

**H3a: For an Indian female, Indian luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Indo-western and Western luxury dresses.**

**H3b: For an Indian female, Indo-western luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Western luxury dresses.**

### **1.5.3 Modesty – as a dress-attribute**

This sub-section focuses on the fact that in almost all hierarchical set-ups, especially the patrilineal societies, there are restrictions, in particular for women, about the “appropriateness” of their clothes. The literature review pertaining to Indian society indicates that modesty as a dress-attribute (vis-à-vis the people present) is one major determinant for women and the consumption-choice of a luxury dress pivots around the understanding of the difference between what is and what is not accepted in a specific social context.

In his work on Indian Costumes, Biswas (2017) states that mores in a society set the contours of modesty - decide what body parts need to be covered and what could be exposed and how these to be concealed/revealed. The social norms decide the shame concerning the exposed part/s of the body. The perception of shame varies in space and time. He further adds



that a body part which has been traditionally covered brings an element of mystery around it and if it is kept bare, it may be surprising for the society. He very rightly infers that it is the practice of covering that leads to a concern towards modesty rather than the opposite (Biswas, 2017, p. 3).

Writing on styling South Asian youth cultures, Begum et al. (2018) note that a young female's dress practices are governed by a network of moral norms, which correlate to social expectations in terms of religion, family and community orientations pertaining to heterosexuality and custom of arranged marriages (Liechty, 1995). The social ideals of dress and behavior are shaped by repetitive notions of shame and honor (Begum et al., 2018, p. 9).

“Patriarchal traditions constrain the behavior of wives and daughters by the yardstick of male group honor. If one of them deviates from the rules, she defames society's armor and causes collective shame. In the relations between men and women, body covering or the lack of it may provoke complex emotions, from arousal to shame and anger” (Schipper, 2017, p. 227).

As noted earlier in the chapter, India is one of the classic examples of a patrilineal, hierarchically organized society, permeated throughout by undemocratic relationships governed by superiority and subordination. In such societies, women are most often singled out for the rules of modesty. As Hoggard (2013), a consumer journalist, writing about the ‘modesty regulators’, opines: “Arguably the panic about modest dress is just the other side of the coin in terms of what happens to all women. Clothing is visual and tangible. It is also political and social” (Hoggard, 2013, p. 187).

After independence, women in India could not adopt Western clothing as swiftly as Indian men. This was because patriarchal tendencies held women as preservers of customs and abstinence, thus complicating the way Western modernity was viewed (M. Banerjee & Miller, 2018; Tarlo, 1996). Begum (2018, p. 206), adds that, “these patriarchal moral attitudes also heightened the shamelessness and eroticization popularly associated with Western clothing.”

European influence and further modernization led to a sartorial change from focus on community appearance to personal looks. According to Biswas (2017), this led to a new issue regarding concealing and hiding body parts; and the emergence of a tussle between the choice of clothes hugging body lines, on the one hand, and loose clothes on the other. He adds: “Feminine ingenuity found a compromise between modernity and tradition, resulting in beauty and individuality of Indian dresses” (Biswas, 2017, pp. 121–122).

In contemporary times, women find fashions that lead to exposure and this becomes a challenge for women who wish to be modest and also appear stylish (Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 138). Women strike a balance in their clothing choices according to their changing social roles as well as the already existing expectations of Indian womanhood (Sandhu, 2015, p. 22).

Pravina Shukla (2016) points out that one very common observation made by people in India is that “shyness” is the most important “ornament” of all women. She adds that propriety in behavior and disposition are believed to amplify the beauty of a woman as much as shining gold or silver (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 166).

In the making of a choice of dress, modesty remains an important determinant for women and the decision pivots around on understanding the difference between what is and what is not accepted in a particular setting (Sandhu, 2015, p. 65). Jeans and t-shirts being popular may get accepted but wearing revealing dresses like skirts which expose legs and thighs in public spaces is not. Similarly, a sleeveless kurta with a tight churidar, being in vogue may not incite an adverse reaction because of being a variant of traditional clothing but a spaghetti top with a low-cut does get undesirable notice (Sandhu, 2015, p. 65).

Das & Narasimhachary (2012, p. 202) also note that customarily there has been a focus on being modest and graceful rather than on fashion and sexually alluring clothing.

With the reform movements during British rule, there were changes in norms for modesty, especially for women from higher and middle strata, and these changes brought about

modifications in women's dress. With the new social role and expectations, it was imperative to dress appropriately (Karlekar, 2011). For example, the petticoat, although initially an influence of the West, subtly fit in due to the fact that it provided covering and "respectability" to the sari that was hitherto made of transparent fabric (Sandhu, 2015, p. 33).

Western women's modern clothing items in general may cover more than what they reveal, but what they reveal is not acceptable for most Indian women. Though women from the working class as a matter of practice hitch up their saris, exposing their lower legs and ankles, those who are from middle and upper strata of society, do hide their legs and use scarves/sari pallu (the portion of sari, draped over the shoulder) to cover the chest or the head. A comparatively modest skirt in the West is more revealing than what may be considered appropriate for an Indian female from a higher social group. Wearing a Western dress with adherence to the outlines of body parts like buttocks and legs has always been more worrying for women than men (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014, p. 72).

Anju Modi, a fashion designer from Delhi, points out how Indian women in the public domain are aware of how the clothes fit and move on their bodies. She illustrates this with her simple observation that if a boat neck slips off a female's shoulder, it would make her anxious. In the West, the same goes unnoticed or is taken as an element of style (Sandhu, 2015, p. 65).

Pravina Shukla (2016), based on the observations made by people in Benaras, comments that generally young females are highly anxious about the appropriateness of their dresses in the social spaces. They aim to avert adverse reactions from males as well as to ward off a penalty from society or the Almighty (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 331).

Derne & Jadwin (2007) in their study in India about male Hindi filmgoers' gaze confirm that besides gender, the national identity may also play a role in shaping the direction and dynamics of gaze. They comment that men being concerned about their Indianness believe that Indian women do merit protection from male gazing whereas gazing Westernized women is perceived as being okay (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 55).

Indian movies have often been an inspiration behind the fashion choices made by many Indians (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014, pp. 99, 160). Dress choices of characters in movies, often reflect their social positions and values (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014, p. 54). In Indian movies, the characters wearing modest clothing are shown to be more in touch with traditional Indian values, and characters wearing more Western and revealing clothes are shown to be more modern (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 49,52,53).

Indian films depict the contemporary conundrum and uncertainty which assert the still persisting influence of the past nationalist ideals relating to women – in which, on the one hand, there is an effort to associate oneself with modernity, wearing bodycon dresses and swimsuits, and on the other hand, women must also obscure their curves to fit in traditional roles with traditional modest attires (Sandhu, 2015, p. 82).

A larger reconnaissance of urban dress styles explicitly shows that women's consumption choices are all about negotiating the tight rope between tradition and modernity. Though women wearing Western dresses are seen often in the media and in big cities, their choices most often remain within the contours of Indian expectations of modesty and morality (Saavala, 2012; Sandhu, 2015, p. 64).

*In reference to our basic conceptual idea (Fig. 1.1, p. 31), this section provides insights relating to product/dress-attributes' impact on contextual-fit. Summing up this section, one can conclude that in general, patrilineal social set-ups and religious groups single out women for preservation of moral norms. This very often manifests in societal constraints on women's behavior including their dresses. Indian women strike a balance in their clothing choices by negotiating between fashion elements and the existing expectations of Indian womanhood as per the demand of the social situation. Modesty as a dress-attribute appears to be a major determinant for appropriateness of a dress for a particular social occasion.*

In the choice of a dress, the decision pivots around on understanding the difference between what is and what is not accepted in a particular setting (Sandhu, 2015, p. 65).

**Table 1. 1: Pictorial description of modesty related norms in Indian society**

Picture	Description	Picture	Description
	<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Shorts / Skirt <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Thighs and legs <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> Adverse reaction/Not acceptable		<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Sari with a sleeveless and backless blouse <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Arms, shoulders and back <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> May invite some unwanted attention
	<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Low cut spaghetti top/ Low cut and cropped spaghetti top <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Cleavage/ Midriff and cleavage <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> May invite some unwanted attention		<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Gown with a plunging/low cut neckline <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Cleavage <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> Adverse reaction/Not acceptable
	<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Sari without blouse <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Chest, shoulders and back <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> Adverse reaction/Not acceptable		<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Salwaar and a sleeveless kameez/Kurta <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Arms <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> May go unnoticed
	<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Sari with a sleeveless blouse <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Arms and shoulders <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> May go unnoticed		<b>Dress/Clothes:</b> Off shoulder tops <b>Body parts exposed/revealed:</b> Shoulders <b>Elders' Reaction:</b> May invite some unwanted attention
References: (Sandhu, 2015; Pravina Shukla, 2016; Wilkinson-Weber, 2014)			

Generally, in Indian movies, modest clothing is often associated with traditional Indian values (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 49,52,53). In India, often more modest clothes are also at times considered to be more decent and often associated with self-respect (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014, p. 96).

Sandhu (2015, p. 64) supports the argument that modesty as an attribute of a dress, would affect its perceived contextual-fit. Considering that collectivistic consumers pay more attention to social norms and Indians often use fashion clothing for identity creation, seeking social conformity as well as projection of social status (Khare, 2014a; Khare et al., 2012), one would assume that for Indian consumers, modest dresses would have a better perceived contextual-fit than revealing dresses. Therefore, I hypothesize that –

**H4: For an Indian female, modest luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses.**

Each social situation has its own set of concomitant social imperatives in a collectivist and hierarchically social set-up of India. The socio-economic context is essential to appreciate a dress and comprehend associated meanings. In a global arena, identities become more fluid and diverse; varying as per the social-context.

**Extending the arguments leading to the formulation of hypothesis H2a**, one tends to infer further that a given luxury dress-attribute's social acceptance/appreciation under different social situations will differ. Through fashion, Indian consumers exhibit both traditional and modern lifestyles. Indian women strike a balance in their clothing choices by negotiating fashion elements and the existing expectations of Indian womanhood as per the demand of the social situation. Considering the co-existence of tradition and modernity in Indian society and young Indian female's negotiation of incongruent spaces through multiple identities, it is expected that dress-attribute of a luxury dress will have differential acceptance/approval as per the type of event – traditional and modern. This is in line with what Chattaraman et al. (2009) conclude - that consumers evaluate ethnically pertinent product-attributes more positively during an ethnically congruent situation than during a non-ethnic situation. This implies that the attributes of a luxury dress would interact with the type of event (traditional or modern), to impact its perceived social fit.

The Indian clothes have special design characteristics (Jay, 2015, p. 26; Narasimhan, 2016, p. 82) that make them different from Western clothes. In India, modernist values often co-exist with traditional values (Ahmed, 2016, p. 106). This coexistence of tradition and modernity is also reflected through difference in acculturation of adults and youngsters in India (S. Mathur, 2010). Moreover, ethnic Indian wear is often linked with unchanging tradition and Western wear is linked with modernity due to globalization (Jay, 2015, p. 10). The above-mentioned facts and analysis suggest that for events (social occasions) that are considered to be modern, consumers would prefer Western (design) luxury dresses and for traditional social occasions, consumers would prefer Indian (design) luxury dresses. Therefore, I hypothesize that –

**H5a: For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.**

**H5b: For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceive social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.**

Extending the arguments leading to the formulation of hypothesis H4 further in relation to the co-existence of tradition and modernity and pursuit for social-conformity coupled with individualistic personal orientations, one can infer what is reflected in the following comment – “South Asian youth of both genders use ‘code-switching’ appearance management techniques to dress differently for familial domains or social scenes, switching between traditional clothes for the home and family events and Western clothing for school or the workplace” (Begum et al., 2018, p. 9). Indian movies have often been an inspiration behind the fashion choices made by many Indians (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014, pp. 99, 160). Dress choices of characters in movies, often reflect their social positions and values (Wilkinson-Weber, 2014, p. 54). In Indian movies, the characters wearing modest clothing are shown to be more in touch with traditional Indian values and characters wearing more Western and revealing clothes are shown to be more modern (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 49,52,53). This suggests that modesty as a dress-attribute

is an essential pre-requisite for better contextual-fit of a luxury dress in a traditional social occasion, whereas a revealing dress can be perceived to fit better for a modern social occasion. Therefore, I hypothesize that –

**H6a: For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.**

**H6b: For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, a modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.**

Besides, the type of event, the social situation may also differ in terms of the characteristic of the people present at the occasion. In terms of age, the people present, may differ in the level of acculturation to the global influences and belief in the traditional features/values of the society. The studies have shown, as mentioned earlier, that there exists an inverse relationship between age and acculturation. Jasleen Kaur Gupta and Sonu Bohra, famous fashion bloggers (<https://www.facebook.com/FashionBombay>) and Ekta Rajani, a fashion stylist posit that there is an increasing realization among Indians towards becoming individualistic and having fun, and therefore love to experiment with innovative lifestyles and labels. This trend is more conspicuous in the younger generation for whom fashion provides the key for identity management and to compete with peers and affiliate with popular groupings (Sandhu, 2015, p. 65,66).

This coupled with the features of patrilineal and collectivist social set-up tends to suggest the differential acceptance/approval of various dress-attributes by different age groups – elders and youngsters. Young Indian females' consumption-choices are expected to be influenced by the social imperatives of the occasion in terms of the age of people present (peers only or with elders).

**Extending the arguments leading to the formulation of hypothesis H2b**, it is expected that the social value perception for a given dress-attribute may differ significantly in



relation to the age characteristic of the people to be present at a social occasion. Therefore, I hypothesize that –

**H7: For an Indian female, the attributes of a luxury dress interact with the characteristic of company/people present (with peers or with elders) at a social occasion to impact its perceived social fit.**

## **1.6 Conceptual Diagram and Conclusion**

The following figure (Figure 1.3) depicts the interactions predicted through the various hypotheses in a conceptual diagram. Based on the literature review, we can hypothesize the following relationships between the pertinent variables -

- a. Building on the existing literature, I have predicted that consumption of contextually appropriate luxury dresses would lead to higher prestige at a social gathering in the Indian society (Hypothesis - H1).
- b. Based on insights from literature review, I decided to merge the two variables (contextual-fit and social value perception) and proposed a single variable named **perceived social fit**.
- c. Literature suggests that Indian consumers tend to make their consumption choices of luxury dresses in accordance with the type of event and characteristic of company/people (Hypotheses - H2a and H2b).
- d. The young consumers after economic reforms in India (1990s), represent a confident consumer with a global outlook, who is proud of rich Indian heritage and is willing to experiment with Western elements. The collectivist orientations demand social conformity and hence, context-congruence in consumption. The literature also confirms positive evaluation of identity/culturally relevant products. Hence, one could assume that cultural relevance would have a positive impact on perceived social fit of a luxury dress (Hypotheses H3a and H3b).

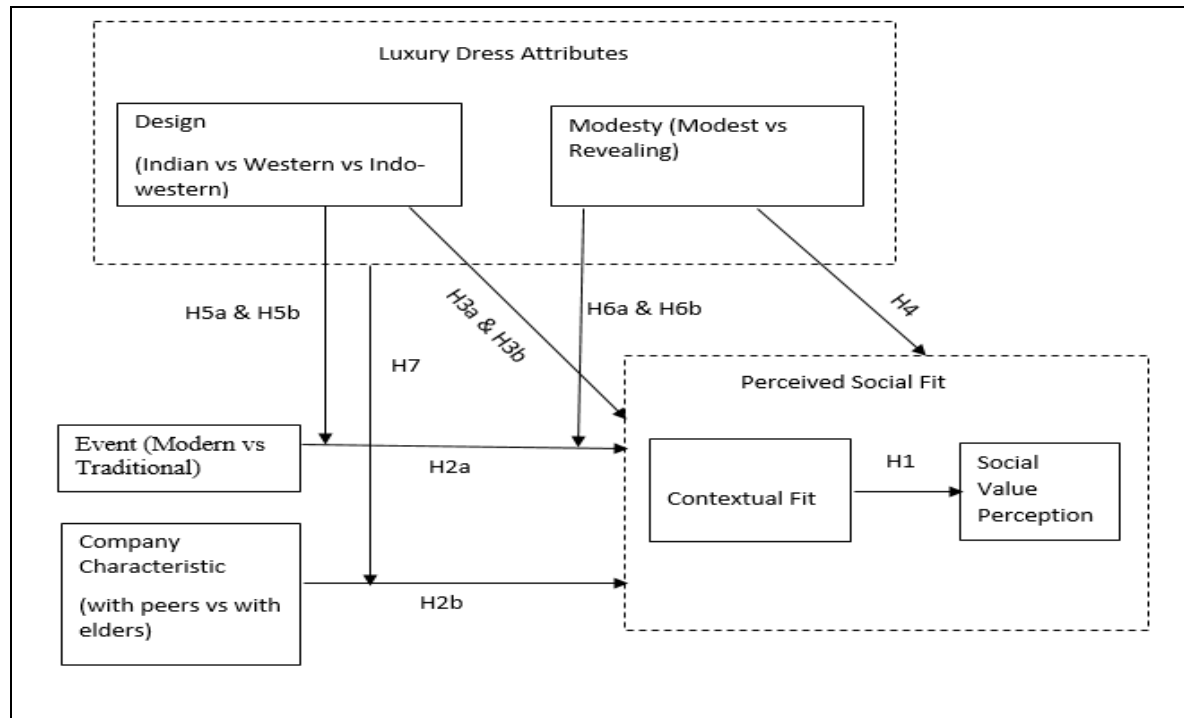
- e. Literature review has revealed the cultural relevance of modest clothing in India, hence, one could assume that modesty as a dress-attribute will have a positive impact on perceived social fit of a luxury dress (Hypothesis H4).
- f. Context-congruence in consumption for social conformity in order to enhance social value perception of luxury consumption among Indians and co-existence of tradition and modernity, as revealed in literature review suggest the preference for Western luxury dresses for modern occasions and Indian luxury dresses for traditional occasions (Hypotheses H5a and H5b).
- g. Co-existence of tradition and modernity in the Indian society and the desire for social conformity in luxury consumption among Indian consumers also suggest that 'Modesty' as a dress attribute will interact with the variable 'Type of event' to have an impact on the perceived social fit of a luxury dress (Hypotheses H6a and H6b).
- h. Literature has established that consumption-choice gets affected by the ethnic composition of the social environment. Besides this, the level of acculturation and the importance of significant others in one's consumption choice - all point towards the relationship – the luxury dress-attributes interact with the characteristic of company/people present (Hypothesis – H7).

The model conceptualized for the study, hinges on the collectivist social orientation coupled with the patrilineal and hierarchical social set-up of India. The social imperatives of the consumption-context in terms of the type of event (modern or traditional) and the characteristic of people present (peers or elders) at the event make the luxury dress-attributes important. Indian females desire to achieve a fit between the luxury dress and the social context, so as to have higher perceived social value for the luxury dress-choice.

The literature review suggests that in India, the social relationships are largely authoritarian, and this fact couples with other-directed consumption behavior. Besides, the

inverse relationship between age and degree of acculturation also impacts one's consumption choice of clothes - the older age group exhibits more inhibitions about Western clothes.

**Figure 1. 3: Conceptual Diagram: The impact of context and dress attributes on perceived social fit**



**Table 1. 2: List of hypotheses based on literature review**

- H1:** For an Indian female, the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress will positively impact its perceived social value for a particular social occasion.
- H2a:** The traditional or modern characteristics of a social occasion result in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female.
- H2b:** The characteristic of the company/people present at the occasion (peer group or elders) results in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female.
- H3a:** For an Indian female, Indian luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Indo-western and Western luxury dresses.
- H3b:** For an Indian female, Indo-western luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Western luxury dresses.
- H4:** For an Indian female, modest luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses.
- H5a:** For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.
- H5b:** For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.
- H6a:** For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.
- H6b:** For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, a modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.
- H7:** For an Indian female, the attributes of a luxury dress interact with the characteristic of company/people present (with peers or with elders) at a social occasion to impact its perceived social fit.

Young Indian females are open to latest fashion trends but modesty as a dress-attribute always remains an essential determinant in deciding the appropriateness of a dress for a social occasion. The chapter also includes the formulation of hypotheses based on the analysis of literature review.

To further explore the process of decision-making in the selection of luxury-dresses for social occasions by young Indian females, a qualitative study was conducted. The qualitative study was carried out through semi-structured interviews for some additional insights about the luxury consumption process among young Indian females to supplement the learning reached at, through the literature review. The qualitative study with its complete analysis is covered in chapter 2. It discusses, the major avenues reached through the themes identified on the basis of Coding of qualitative data. The learning helped specification of dependent and independent variables as well as formulation of some additional hypotheses.



## CHAPTER 2: QUALITATIVE STUDY

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## **2.1 Introduction**

The aim for conducting this exploratory qualitative study was to better understand the consumption of luxury products (dresses) by Indian consumers, with special focus on discovering and understanding factors that would have an impact on cultural relevance and social value perception of luxury apparel. According to Creswell & Poth (2018) – “We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices... We also conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). My purpose for pursuing the qualitative research was to explore, through young Indian females’ own subjective expressions that how they negotiate the personal and social requisites for choosing an appropriate luxury dress for a particular social occasion.

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The selection of semi-structured interviewing technique was in relation to the nature of the field of enquiry, and to have a judicious mix of precision, focus and flexibility (details given in Methodology section – section 2.2).

The data was analyzed, using the technique of Coding, (section 2.3). Data analysis led to the identification of 7 themes: Social value of luxury is important, Propensity to spend, Type of event, Characteristics of company, Modesty (as a dress-attribute) affects cultural-fit, Product-attributes (like type, color, embroidery, etc.) affect cultural-fit, and Local weather (categorized in group “other”). The chapter lists participants’ verbatims (selectively) and discusses the identification of the themes (section 2.4). For the second last question of the interview, six luxury dress-stimuli were presented to the respondents. This section (section 2.4) also presents the analysis of responses by the interview participants regarding these luxury dress-stimuli.

The analysis of these 24 semi-structured interviews helped me specify two dependent and four independent variables (section 2.5). In a nutshell, the qualitative research helped specifying the insights reached through the literature review and hence, specifying the hypotheses for the quantitative research. These hypotheses are featured in a conceptual diagram (Conclusion).

## **2.2 Methodology**

The objective of this exploratory qualitative study was to gain more knowledge about the decision-making process in choosing a luxury dress, which could be further utilized to design the main study.

I conducted 24 semi-structured interviews between September and November 2016. The questionnaire for these interviews consisted of 12 questions (see table 2.2, p. 84), designed on the basis of learnings from the available literature and along with general understanding of the Indian society.

Qualitative interviews can be of three types – Structured interviews, Semi-structured interviews and Unstructured interviews (M. D. Myers, 2013). This classification (as the names of the three categories suggest) is based on the reducing degree of standardization (or structure) of the data collection tool utilized by the researcher to collect data (Newing, 2016).

In this semi-structured qualitative study, interviews were carried out with a pre-planned sequence of topics (Bernard, 2008). Nevertheless, while conducting semi-structured interviews, a researcher is allowed to improvise and ask a few extra questions if the need arises. Thus, semi-structured interviews are more precise and focused than unstructured interviews but are also more flexible than structured interviews (Newing, 2016). “They are most appropriate when you know what topics you wish to cover but do not know enough about likely responses to design a set of precise questions that would be needed for a questionnaire” (Newing, 2016, p. 102). The order of questions was kept the same for each interview, however, sometimes a few additional questions were asked based on participants’ responses.



## **Sampling**

The participants were chosen with purposeful convenience sampling. “The purposeful sampling is not a probability sample that will enable a researcher to determine statistical inferences to a population; rather, it is a purposeful sample that will intentionally sample a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148).

As many exploratory studies do (Newing, 2016), I also began collecting data for this exploratory qualitative study through convenience sampling. Additionally, snowball sampling was also used for this study. Hence, I began the data collection process by interviewing 16 people who were known/accessible to me (the acquaintances, who were interested in fashion & luxury dresses) and later interviewed 8 subjects, suggested by initial participants (Refer Appendix 2B- Table No. 2B, p. 7).

For the qualitative study, I interviewed primarily young Indian females with an interest in contemporary fashion and luxury dresses.

Table 2.1, provides a summary of demographic data. Only female respondents were approached for this study. Most respondents were young (71% respondents were either 33 years in age or below). A majority of respondents were working (74%). Efforts were made to recruit participants with different levels of economic resources (based on their monthly income). The categories of monthly income considered are alike those used in research conducted by Varsha Jain et al., (2015) and Schultz & Jain (2015). The recruitment was from the two cosmopolitan cities – Delhi and Mumbai, known for the latest trends of fashion and relatively higher luxury consumption.

Table No. 2B in appendix (please refer appendix of chapter 2 – appendix 2B, Table 2B, p. 7) provides more information about each respondent. The table includes date of interview, names of respondents, their professions etc.

With the participants' permission, all the interviews were recorded and these recordings were later used to transcribe the interviews. Just before the commencement of the interview, participants were emailed a pdf file containing images of 6 luxury dresses (refer Table 2.3).

**Table 2. 1: Summary of demographic data of qualitative study respondents**

Demographic Variables	Sub-categories	Frequency
Age (in years)	Mean – 33.8	
	Mode – 27	
	Minimum Age – 22	
	Maximum Age – 57	
Profession	Student	1
	Working	17
	House-wife	5
	Missing	1
City	Delhi	14
	Mumbai	10
Monthly Income	Below INR 70000 (below 970 Euros)	4
	Between INR 70000 - 140000 (between 970 Euros - 1,950 Euro)	11
	Above INR 140000 (Above 1950 Euros)	7
	Missing	2

For mutual convenience and efficiency, phone interviews were preferred. In addition, there are a number of other advantages of telephonic interviews, such as, they allow the interviewer to clear any doubts of the interviewee regarding ambiguous terms and questions introduced during the interview and probe the interviewee for more information whenever the interviewer deems it necessary; aren't expensive to conduct; and interviewees aren't affected by interviewer's appearance (Bernard, 2008). Only three interviews were conducted face to face and the rest were conducted over telephone. Subjects were contacted well in advance to organize telephonic conversations. The interviews were scheduled (date and time) as per the convenience of the participants. The interviews generally lasted for about 20 - 25 minutes. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a few acquaintances (with similar characteristics as our target sample), and these pre-tests proved to be of great help in finalizing the road map of questions in terms of comprehensiveness and language.

## **The telephonic interview guide**

Here, I detail the sources used to develop the questions of the semi-structured qualitative interviews. The focus in particular was on exploring what attributes of dress and brand are important for evaluating a dress' relevance to the Indian culture; and to identify the occasions on which Indians are more likely to opt for luxury consumption. Besides this, I wanted to find out the effects (if any) of the characteristics of people in whose company, one spends time, on the consumption-choice; and the impact of consumption-context on consumption-choice (refer table 2.2, p. 84).

Question 1 was asked to check if the participants were well acquainted with luxury brands – which brands did they consider to be luxury and had they purchased a luxury product in last one year.

Question 2 was asked to understand which aspects (product attributes) of a dress were considered important by the participants. This question was developed based on my understanding of previous studies that suggested both brands and products can carry and convey a cultural meaning (Aaker et al., 2001), and consumers react positively to identity relevant products (Chattaraman et al., 2010; Kim & Arthur, 2003; Reed, 2002). I asked question 2 and waited for the interviewee's response and then proceeded to enquire about specific attributes (such as Colors, Type of fabric, Type of dress and Print, Embroidery, or other surface designs) developed based on a scale used in Kim & Arthur (2003).

Question 3 was asked to improve my understanding of the fit of a brand to Indian culture. Question 3 focused on the impact of brand attributes on the fit of a dress to Indian culture. Here, I wanted to know which elements of a dress-brand did the participants think were essential for its fit to Indian culture. I asked question 3 and waited for the interviewee's response and then proceeded to enquire about specific attributes such as Brand's Country of Origin (COO) and Brand history based on my understanding of the following articles - Eng & Bogaert (2010), Spiggle et al. (2012) and Steenkamp et al. (2003).

Question 4 was the same as question 3, but focused on luxury brands. I wanted to compare their responses in case of luxury apparel brands with normal apparel brands.

Questions 5 was included in the questionnaire to learn more about the concept of a branded dress' fit to Indian culture. I wanted to analyze what the participants understood by the term 'cultural fit of a branded dress' and through their responses also analyze which elements related to dress and brand, affected the fit of a branded dress to Indian culture. In addition, I also wanted to understand, if these elements or aspects of both brand and product, interacted with each other in any manner.

Question 6 was asked to analyze whether the relevance of a luxury dress to Indian culture, could affect a participant's willingness to purchase that dress.

Question 7 was asked to analyze whether the fit of a brand to Indian culture could affect a participant's identification to that brand.

Question 8 was asked to know, on what occasions, would respondents wear luxury dresses.

India being a collectivist nation, question 9 was asked to understand the impact of one's company (i.e. other people present at an event, like family, friends, peers etc.) on participant's apparel consumption. I asked the question and then waited for interviewee's response, before asking them about specific characteristics, such as age and socio-economic status (of other people at the event).

Question 10 was posed to identify and understand the impact of consumption-context (in terms of the type of event) on apparel consumption in India. Respondents were asked what kind of a luxury dress (in terms of Brand – Indian or Western, Price range and Aesthetics – Ethnic or Western) they would prefer for different events. These events were traditional function (e.g., wedding), important official meeting, cocktail party, get-together with friends, and family get-together.

**Table 2. 2: Themes of questions used for conducting qualitative interviews**

<b>Themes of Questions</b> – (Appendix of Chapter 2, Appendix 2A, Table 2A, p. 4)	<b>Sources used for developing questions</b>
Q1 – Theme: Description of last luxury purchase	
Q2. – Theme: Attributes of a dress that are important to evaluate its relevance/fit to Indian culture	Kim & Arthur (2003)
Q3 – Theme: Brand attributes (dress brand) important to evaluate its relevance/fit to Indian culture	Brand CoO - (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Steenkamp et al., 2003) Brand History - (Spiggle et al., 2012; Steenkamp et al., 2003)
Q4 – Theme: Luxury Brand attributes (dress brand) important to evaluate its relevance/fit to Indian culture	
Q5 – Theme - Definition of cultural-fit of a branded product (dress) as per respondents	Chattaraman (2006)
Q6. – Theme: Determine the importance of cultural-fit while buying a luxury dress	Chattaraman et al. (2010, 2009)
Q7. – Theme: Determine the impact of brand cultural fit (with Indian culture) on one's identification with a brand	Gammoh, Koh, & Okoroafo (2011), Nijssen & Douglas (2011)
Q8. – Theme: Appropriate occasions for wearing luxury dresses	Developed on my own
Q9 Theme: Impact of characteristics of company (people present at the occasion) on luxury apparel choices	(Chattaraman et al., 2009; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989; Wooten, 1995)
Q10 Theme: Impact of type of event on luxury apparel choices	
Q11 Theme: Participants' luxury dress preferences for various occasions (reflected through their responses on 6 dress stimuli) (images in Table 2.3)	
Q12. Demographics: Age, profession, residence, and income	

In question 11, respondents had to evaluate 6 luxury dresses (refer table 2.3) on their perceived appropriateness in reference to Indian culture and on the occasions, where respondents would like to wear them. These branded dresses were not created by the brands mentioned and were made up for this study. I aimed at analyzing how product attributes and brand affected the selection of a dress. I also looked for the key aspects impacting dress

preference for certain occasions. Finally, I observed, if dress preference increased for congruent consumption-context and decreased for incongruent consumption-context.

**Table 2. 3: Six luxury dress stimuli presented in Q11 of qualitative survey**

This garment was created by Dior	This garment was created by Chanel
	
This garment was created by Hermes	This garment was created by Manish Malhotra
	
This garment was created by Sabyasachi Mukherji	This garment was created by Hermes
	

These luxury dresses were selected from e-shopping portals and fashion related websites. For example, shopping portal like Pernia's Pop-Up Shop and website Popsugar were used (see appendix of chapter 2 - Appendix 2A - Table 2A, p. 4). While choosing these six

luxury dress stimuli, I particularly focused on the contrasts pertaining to the dress design attributes – Western, Indian or a fusion of the two; and modesty as a dress-attribute (modest or revealing). The interview ended with the participant's demographics.

### **2.3 Data Analysis**

Participants' interviews were coded. Coding involves analyses of text from interview transcripts to generate concepts; organization of the text in different categories; and then analyses of the classified text to enhance our understanding of underlying patterns (Flick, 2014).

For data analyses, I coded the qualitative data as explained by Auerbach & Silverstein (2003) in their book - *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*. At first, I identified "relevant text" from my transcripts based on my research objectives. After the collection of "relevant text", I analyzed it for identification of similar points/ideas ("repeating ideas") that were mentioned by several participants and organized them with associated sentences of "relevant text". However, there were often ideas which were not reported by several participants but still were quite important as per the literature, hence, I have also taken into consideration such ideas and treated them at par with repeating ideas. "A repeating idea is an idea expressed in relevant text by two or more research participants" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 54). Thereafter, I created themes, by clubbing together the ideas that the participants were repeating and the ideas that were important as per the relevant literature. "A theme is an implicit idea or topic that a group of repeating ideas have in common" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 62). Generation of themes was also based on the literature review. Further analyses required identification of major avenues (broad topics) through clubbing of appropriate themes.

This approach is similar to the grounded theory approach in which first the interview text is analyzed to generate and identify concepts. Thereafter, these concepts are associated with the existing theories (Bernard, 2008).

## 2.4 Themes

After analyses of interview transcripts (available in appendix 2E, p. 17), seven themes were identified: i. Social value of luxury is important, ii. Propensity to spend, iii. Type of event, iv. Characteristics of company, v. Modesty (as a dress-attribute) affects cultural-fit, vi. Product-attributes (like type, color, embroidery, etc.) affect cultural-fit, and vii. Local weather.

Six of these themes were grouped in three main avenues/broad topics, indicated in column 1 of table 2.4. The three main avenues were: first, Social value is important (illustrated through the themes: social value of luxury is important, and propensity to spend); second, the Consumption-context (illustrated through the themes: type of event, and characteristics of company); and third, the Cultural-fit of a luxury dress (illustrated by the themes: modesty and product/dress-attributes affect cultural-fit). The theme ‘local weather’ was put under the category ‘other’.

In column 2 of table 2.4, the themes have been listed in a particular order based on their importance to our study, and to streamline the flow of information. These themes have been covered in the same order in the following pages (for more information see Table 2C in appendix of chapter 2 - Appendix 2C, p. 9). However, local weather, has not been discussed in this chapter and moved to the appendix (see appendix of chapter 2 – appendix 2D, p 14).

In column 3 of table 2.4, I indicate each theme’s frequency, i.e. the number of times each theme occurs in the interviews.

**Table 2. 4: Classification of Themes**

<b>Broad topic</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Social value is important	Social value of luxury is important	48
	Propensity to spend (a good reflection of the importance of social value)	12
Context-related themes	Type of event	121
	Characteristics of company	33
Attribute-related themes	Modesty (as a dress-attribute) affects cultural-fit	20
	Product attributes affect cultural-fit	46
Other	Local weather	11



**All the themes are discussed below in the same order as they have been listed in table 2.4.** We shall start by the importance of social value when people choose to wear a luxury dress.

#### **2.4.1 Social value of luxury is important**

The social value of a luxury dress is extremely important for our Indian participants. The dress choice varies as a function of the social class of the people present at the occasion; the social norms of the traditional events and in addition, the importance of the event, so as to achieve the desired social fit.

The interviews suggest that weddings, cocktail parties, important family functions and important official events/meetings (relating to one's profession, business, government/administrative organization, etc.) are the preferred occasions to wear luxury. Implicitly, it is understood that participants believe that their items/styles of consumption affect others' behavior towards them. Participants seem to believe that dress makes a statement of one's social status and taste. Interview-interactions reflect the consumers' desire to show off their wealth and conform to social norms on important occasions like wedding ceremonies.

*“Extremely special occasions, suppose like a wedding or graduation or yeah things like that I think.” (Sijya, 23)*

*“for weddings, family functions, ... I would personally not end up spending on luxury clothes if it's not a special occasion.” (Tushna, 32)*

##### **2.4.1.1 Relative importance of the event and propensity to spend**

The relative importance of an event to participants is reflected in their propensity to spend for the occasion. The classic example, of an important event in Indian society is a wedding. Indian weddings have been studied in previous research, revealing how they are related to status, prestige and conspicuous consumption (Bloch, Rao, & Desai, 2004; Mann & Sahni, 2015). Moreover, clothing is an item often specifically purchased for such an occasion (Vittal, 2010). In addition, Indian consumers give more importance to other-directed

symbolic/expressive values (Paurav Shukla et al., 2015). Thus, the propensity to spend correlates with the relative importance of the event.

The participants have been found to be very occasion-oriented in their consumption choices. Indian consumers like to consume luxury mostly for important occasions such as weddings, cocktail parties, and important official meetings but not for casual get-togethers with friends or family. This finding suggests that the social value attached with luxury is very important for Indian consumers. Propensity to spend increases considerably on occasions where larger community comes together.

The other implicit understanding from the qualitative data analysis is that there is a desire for creating an impression of oneself in others' eyes through the exhibition of a particular life-style. To look 'good' in a social gathering, one opts for luxury consumption.

**More likely to spend higher amounts during weddings:** As stated in the literature, weddings are considered by our participants to be the most important function, hence, they are more likely to spend higher amounts during weddings. One latent observation which can be gauged from interview-interactions is that wedding remains the most singular event in the lives of the Indians and perhaps for that reason provides an occasion for display of one's class and taste to the close community members. The traditional wedding ceremony appears to be the setting for conspicuous-consumption for socio-economic reasons.

*"Probably the one which is to be worn on weddings would be more expensive because they will have much more higher embellishments and on festivals there would be less embellishments and could be complete handloom. So probably the price range for wedding dress would be 25,000 to 50,000 (350 to 700 Euro) and for festivals would be somewhere between 5000 to 10000 (70 to 140 Euro)....." (Shalini, 48)*

*"Interviewer: and what do you think the price range of that would be  
Mehak: (for wedding).....45000 to 50000, Indian rupees (625 Euro – 700 Euro)  
Interviewer: yes and if it is an important official meeting..."*

*Mehak: ..... 15000 or 20000 or may be 25000 (208 or 280 or 350 Euro) (Mehak, 27)*

*“(wedding) I would like to go for an Indian brand, ethnic and price can be upto two or three lakh rupees.....(2800 Euro to 4166 Euro)*

*In case of an official meeting...(price range) Not much, I think there will be one ...for a cocktail also I think may be one or two (1400 Euro to 2800 Euro).” (Mona, 48)*

Weddings are related to status, prestige and conspicuous-consumption in the Indian context (Bloch et al., 2004; Mann & Sahni, 2015). The willingness to pay for a luxury dress for a wedding was two to three times more expenditure than for an important official meeting. In comparison, for other occasions, participants preferred to go for less expensive dresses.

## **Conclusion**

The aforesaid, submits that social value perception is the key guiding motive for luxury dress consumption among young Indian females. The consumption-choices aim for social conformity in terms of the socio-economic status of the people present at the occasion and the social imperatives as per the Indian traditions for the occasion. Young Indian females allow themselves the indulgence of luxury especially for celebrating important occasions, like weddings, festivals, etc. – this too, reflects the key importance of social value in luxury consumption.

### **2.4.2 Consumption-Context**

Consumption-context is made up of two themes: a) Type of event and b) Characteristics of company

#### **2.4.2.1 Type of event/occasion**

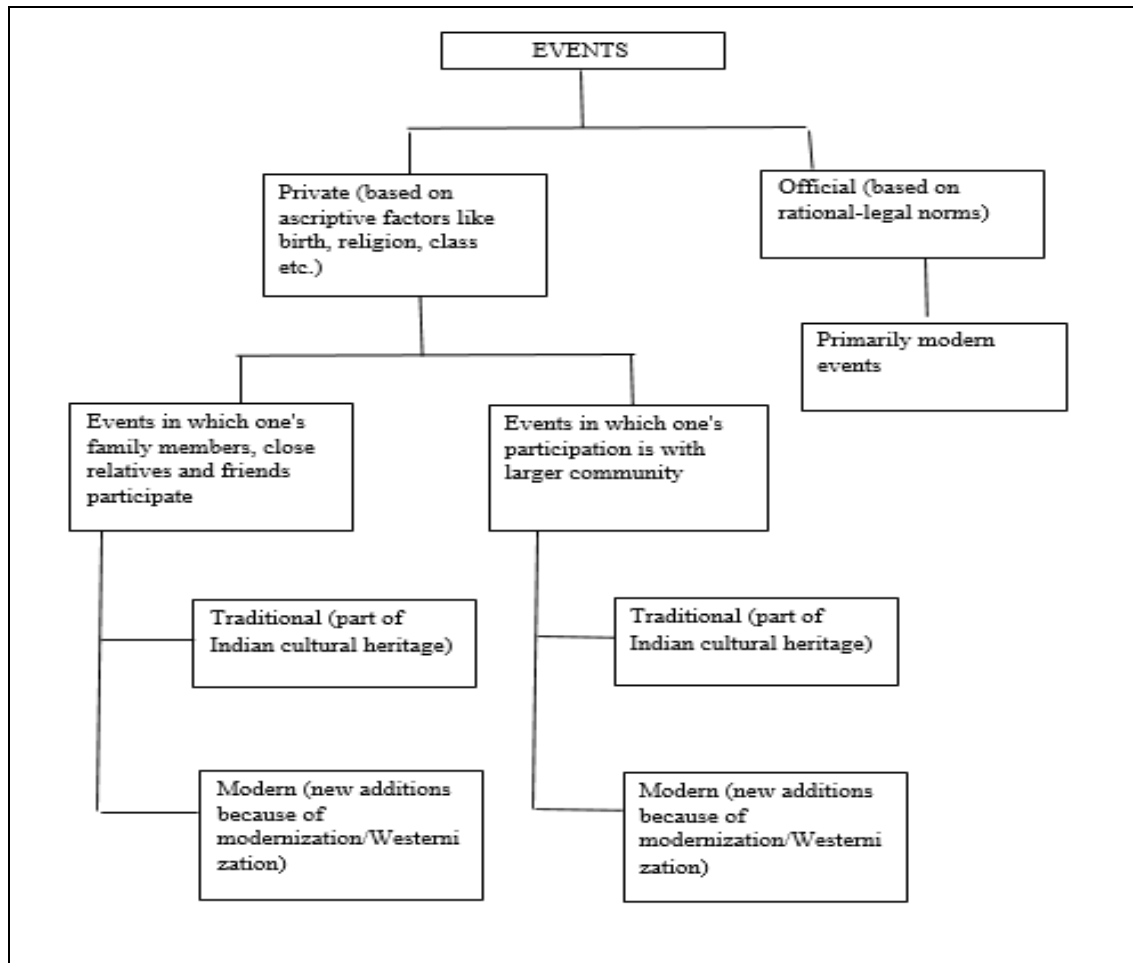
Participants have been found to be very explicit in their assertions that their choice of dress will depend on the type of event/occasion. India’s social diversity manifests in a large array of social events. These events can be broadly classified into two categories – private events (based on ascriptive factors like birth, religion, class etc., for example, wedding,

bachelorette party, festivals like Diwali, etc.) and official events (based on rational legal norms, for example, professional activity, training programme, business meeting with a client, etc.). Private events can be further sub-classified into two categories in terms of social participation, the events in which one's family members and close relatives and friends participate (e.g., wedding, bachelorette party) and the events in which one's participation is with larger community (e.g., festivals like Diwali). The events in which family members and close relatives are involved can be further classified as traditional (e.g., wedding, baby shower) and non-traditional/modern (e.g., bachelorette party, cocktail party). The traditional events are part of Indian cultural heritage, whereas the modern ones are the new additions because of modernization/Westernization. The events where one participates in a larger community can also be further classified as traditional (e.g., festivals like Diwali, Traditional music/dance performance) and modern (e.g., New year's eve, Western music concert). The official events in general are modern, as they are largely associated with modernization/Westernization.

It is understood through interview-interactions, that different events/occasions put individuals in different role sets and societal expectations, resulting in specific dress-choices. The social situation concomitant to an event provides an identity for the individual/consumer and that in-turn leads to a specific dress-choice. In a culturally congruent situation (situation congruent to Indian culture), participants are found predominantly inclined for ethnic product/dress choice.

The observation that the type of event/occasion influences consumption-choices is in concordance with the literature, concluding that consumers react positively to identity relevant products (Craig, Greene, & Douglas, 2005; Kim & Arthur, 2003). Type of event/occasion can lead to salience of a particular facet of one's identity (Chattaraman, Lennon, & Rudd, 2010; Chattaraman et al., 2009), which would in turn affect one's consumption-choice (Chattaraman et al., 2010).

**Figure 2. 1: Classification of Events**



#### 2.4.2.1.1 Co-existence of Tradition and Modernity in Indian Females' Social Life and Clothing Choices

##### Impact of traditional vs modern event on the choice of a luxury dress

The participants mainly preferred Indian aesthetics and brands for traditional functions such as weddings and festivals, and preferred Western aesthetics & brands for non-traditional functions such as cocktail parties. This is reflected in the following verbatims -

*“For a traditional function, for example a wedding I will definitely wear Indian wear...” (Tushna, 32)*

*“yes that is a very important consideration so one can’t wear say branded jeans in a traditional event such as festive celebrating season like Diwali or holi so once again the context of the event becomes very important you know in choosing a dress.....”(Sakshi, 27)*

*“In case of festival, I would still go for an Indian wear, probably an anaarkali and or you know something which is not as elaborate as saari but something which is Indian, again by Indian designer...” (Smriti, 29)*

*“So, for a cocktail party again, I would like to buy a dress, which is stylish and which is Western” (Roushni, 29)*

*“For a cocktail party, I would like to wear some luxury brand dress like a gown something a short dress ...” (Mehak, 27)*

Clothes reflect one's identity in a given social situation. The analyses of interviews showed that both tradition and modernity simultaneously affect the participants' fashion choices. The literature also sheds light on simultaneous existence of modernity and tradition in India (Singer, 1972; Ahmed, 2016, p. 106). It seems that traditional functions like marriages and festivals are still conducted and attended in accordance with age-old traditions.

*“For a wedding, I would choose an Indian ethnic wear...” (Shruti, 33)*

However, there is now an established popularity for additional Western functions like cocktail parties. It is implicit in interview-interactions that there is an awareness among the youth about India's traditions and they feel proud of their cultural heritage and at the same time they don't want to miss the fruits of globalization. The globalization of market and the work culture is leading to significant changes in youth's personality and these are being reflected in their choices of clothing in relation to their multiple roles. The participants implicitly reflect their desires to express social sentiments through varied choices with fusion of tradition and modernity.

*“I guess as in as of now in 2016 or the past two or three years there is nothing as such as relevance to Indian culture because as you know Indians are open to the Western culture, it is more of Indo-western kind of a thing. But then obviously if you are going for a wedding or a traditional function then people would obviously love to wear a lehenga or a sari.” (Neha, 29)*

The participants' choices and concerns in consumption decision-making represent their desires to keep their social relationships without friction and at the same time enjoy their individuality in their peer group. There is a reflection, in dress-choices, of negotiation between being modern and also observing adherence to social expectations.

The co-existence of tradition and modernity and their mingling has resulted in eclectic fashion designs for the youths in modern India. The clothes make a link between tradition and modernity.

*"...for example, if it is a, umm, like a flowy gown, then it is not Indian I feel, if it's a gown with a little bit of embroidery becomes Indo-western and if it's a strict Indian saree then it becomes Indian..." (Roushni, 29)*

There are reflections in participants' observations that they are ready for experimentation with clothes, within the broader requirements of the context of consumption. In the fast-moving world, the changing social environments are presenting the Indian youth, the challenge of keeping the past with the present and also not to miss the future. The interviews implicitly resonate this complex fusion of modernity and tradition.

*"for a cocktail party I would choose something which is Western preferably branded and price range again very moderate and Western aesthetics because cocktail party as a concept is very new it is basically Western concept, here it is very new to the Indian context, here men and women both experiment a lot with their dressing sense and sometimes they are given themes so it is one occasion where one can be experimental ...." (Sakshi, 27)*

Fascinating observation through qualitative data is that present Indian society does not only have the contrary pulls of modernity and tradition but also has the amalgamation of the two, leading to new patterns on clothes and plethora of choices for the youth.

*"For India there is a shift towards the Western dresses its commonly see people wearing Western dresses ... Probably the weddings or Indian occasions the festival celebrations would be on Indian clothings. General get together or visiting people, just a day out or going to office*

*could have mix of Western and Indian wear and the trend is more towards the Western wear.”*  
(Shalini, 48)

*“So, I think in terms of Indian culture, it is pretty much evolving in itself....”* (Roushni, 29)

*“I think, in apparel people associate, most people in urban middle class or upper class wear apparel with very strong Indian identity only for functions that are very strongly Indian. A lot people have started wear gowns and things for their weddings even for functions like wedding so you can say that society is becoming more Western which brands fit very well in Indian culture.”* (Sijya, 23)

The above-mentioned responses along with following repeating ideas related to preference of traditional dresses during traditional functions (for example weddings, festivals) and Western dresses during modern occasions (for example cocktail parties, official meetings), also seem to suggest a co-existence of tradition and modernity.

#### **2.4.2.1.2 Traditional dresses preferred during weddings**

The pattern which emerges from the interviews is that for an important traditional occasion like a wedding, the clear choice is an ethnic dress and that too from an Indian brand. There is an implicit belief among some respondents that Indian aesthetics are best understood and represented through dresses only by Indian designers. The traditional dress is a symbol for Indian identity and value system. The Western designers can, at best, give an Indian adaptation but that will always have a Western touch of cuts and style.

Two respondents (Sakshi, 27; Roushni, 29) remark below that for a traditional function like a wedding they would prefer a traditional Indian dress. Some respondents (Sakshi, 27; Shalini, 48) also seem to imply that for a traditional dress they would prefer an Indian brand.

*“with respect to the brand for wedding I would like to choose an Indian brand that mostly because the western designers, they do not get the context of the Indian wedding and they become experimental which you know they might not lead to a good purchasing decision*



*because I do not want to spend so much money on something which is completely off beat.. I wouldn't choose a gown I would rather wear a saree or a lehnga.....” (Sakshi, 27)*

*“so for the main wedding I will wear, uhm, an Indian dress. So ethnic dress.” (Roushni, 29)*

*“Brand could be any but when it comes to extremely traditional dress it has to be Indian because westerns can make an adaptation which would have a western touch to it. It could be not completely Indian so not on the weddings.” (Shalini, 48)*

The additional element which goes into the decision is that the decorative work (embroidery and embellishments) would go as per one's relation/closeness with the person who is getting married. In general, the preference is for heavy work (or at least a heavy appearance) of embroidery and embellishments for an important wedding in one's own family.

The above made observations are consistent with literature on Indian apparel. Ethnic Indian wear is often linked with unchanging tradition (Jay, 2015, p. 10) and dresses with heavy prints and embroidery are considered to be Indian (Jay, 2015, p. 26).

#### **2.4.2.1.3 Traditional clothes preferred during festivals**

Important festivals (like Diwali) are usually religious functions or at least sanctioned by religion. Festivals are basically celebrations of our traditions. Many important festivals trace back to our mythological origins. Interviews visibly point out a strong preference for traditional dresses on such occasions.

This preference for Indian dresses for festivals is clearly visible in the following verbatims. Sakshi (27), begins by remarking that a garment such as a branded jeans wouldn't match the context of a traditional event like a festival. Tushna (32) and Smriti (29) also point out that even though they wouldn't want to wear a sari but would still like to wear some other Indian dress. The Indian dresses mentioned - Kurti, Anaarkali [these two are different forms of Kurta (tunic-like shirt of varied length) - Kurti is shorter form, usually waist to mid-hip in length, and Anarkali is a longer one with many panels (Narasimhan, 2016, p. 86)] might be

preferred over a Sari, due to their ease of wear compared to a Sari. These two are worn with a salwar (a pair of trousers).

*“yes that is a very important consideration so one can’t wear say branded jeans in a traditional event such as festive celebrating season like Diwali or holi so once again the context of the event becomes very important you know in choosing a dress.....” (Sakshi, 27)*

*“In case of festival, I would still go for an Indian wear, probably an anaarkali and or you know something which is not as elaborate as sari but something which is Indian, again by Indian designer.....” (Smriti, 29)*

#### **2.4.2.1.4 Western dresses preferred during official meetings**

##### **Impact of private vs official event on the choice of a luxury dress**

A strong pattern visible in interview interactions has been the preference for a Western outfit for official/business meetings (i.e. meetings relating to one’s profession, business, government/administrative organization, etc.).

*“(For official meeting) It’s always a suit for me. It would be western for sure. I mean I stick to western dresses, a dress with a blazer or a skirt, a fancy shirt probably from say something like Ted Baker and mastered with a blazer, a suit, a complete suit.....” (Garima, 26)*

The common choices of respondents have been suit, blazer, skirt and shirt. As non-traditional i.e. modern event is generally correlated to Westernization, so perhaps, as a result of that there is the above stated pattern in the respondents’ views. Official or business situations (daily professional/business activities, meetings with government officials/business-clients, business reports’ presentations, training programmes, etc.) in contemporary times in India are seen to be modern (especially Western) contexts.

The range of expenditure for dress varies as per the importance of the occasion. For daily office attendance, one keeps it on the lower side but for important official meetings like some formal business/professional presentations and meetings with clients, expensive options are preferred.

*“For an office meeting, uhm, I would probably buy a Zara which is not too expensive but its for every day wear, so I would spend like a 5-6 grand (70 to 85 Euro) on that and I will wear something which is Western... so.. uh, a nice dress or a nice suit.” (Roushni, 29)*

*“for an important official meeting, I would wear a western origin I suppose and I don't mind an Indian brand. But chances are that I will wear a western brand. And I wouldn't cost more than 5000 (70 Euro) I think .....” (Sijya, 23)*

In the following sub-section, I mention about high preference for Western luxury dresses for private modern events, like cocktail parties.

#### **2.4.2.1.5 Western dresses preferred during cocktail parties**

In the case of non-traditional/modern functions (cocktail party, bachelorette party, etc.), which have become an important part of the Indian social reality, there is a strong preference for a Western dress. There is also an established practice of holding non-traditional functions as a part of a larger traditional occasion (like a cocktail or a reception party in association with a marriage). There seems to be an effort for keeping up with the traditions but at the same time there is an enthusiasm to be with the world. Globalization has made available more choices to experiment for new life experiences. It is implicit through the interviews, that the non-traditional functions provide the opportunity to individuals to lessen the societal constraints on their behavior.

Western dresses are often linked with modernity in India (Jay, 2015, p. 10). Considering that a cocktail function would be classified as a Western/modern function in India, preference for Western dresses for such an event is understandable as this choice is context-congruent.

*“For a cocktail party, I would like to wear some luxury brand dress like a gown something a short dress....” (Mehak, 27)*

*“So, for a cocktail party again, I would like to buy a dress, which is stylish and which is Western” (Roushni, 29)*

*“For a cocktail party, it would be a western, western dress it could be a actually it’s all between Indian designer or Western, it could be either. It depends, because Indian designers also started making lot of Western styles, it’s availability, it’s about pricing which one is cheaper and what one person particularly likes.....” (Smriti, 29)*

*“Cocktail party, again I would say Western. Something like a little black dress or something similar. Probably I would stick to good brands; may be Ted Baker or Zaara or something like that.....” (Garima, 26)*

#### **2.4.2.1.6 Luxury dresses not preferred for get-togethers**

A get-together is an informal social gathering of a number of friends or family members. Some popular examples are – a picnic with friends or family members; a dinner at home with old school or college friends; an extended family’s get-together over the weekend; etc. Most often such meetings are casual. The interview interactions reveal that respondents would want to dress casually for get-togethers with friends and family. This observation further suggests the importance of social utility of luxury for Indian consumers. Desire for luxury consumption seems to decrease for casual occasions.

#### **Luxury dresses not preferred for get-together with friends**

Friends know each other, in and out, and therefore, one does not need to make special efforts for any particular kind of image-building through luxury consumption-choices. This gets manifested in our interviews through a strong pattern of consumption choice being casual wear, for get-together with friends. There is a reflection, of preference for a Western outfit but with a clear no for luxury, when going for outings with friends. One can think of various reasons for this pattern, such as, these outings are very often, friendships are usually long relationships, one cannot remain in formals/luxury all the time, get-togethers with friends are for longer durations, need for more comfortable clothes and so on.

Sakshi (27) mentions that she doesn't feel a need to make a special effort (to dress up) when she is meeting her friends, and thus she would wear something casual. Similarly, other respondents also didn't feel it was necessary to wear a luxury dress for an outing with friends.

*"for a get together, outing with friends again I would not choose a branded luxury dress because my friends they know how I dress up I don't need to make special effort when I am out with them then I will wear the most casual clothes and not be worried about you know what brand I am wearing. what is the range it could be a t-shirt picked up from the streets of janpath or a pair of jeans again picked up from some local Indian brand ...."* (Sakshi, 27)

*"For an outing with friends, no luxury yeah.. it's just basic/regular stuff that you keep buying....."* (Roushni, 29)

*"For get-together with friends) No, I don't think I would like to wear luxury dress for that, I would rather have a casual but it would mostly be a Western outfit....."* (Richa, 27)

*"(For get-together with friends) Not luxury at all. I would go for a casual wear....."* (Shamika, 26)

*"Get together and outing with friends probably not a luxury dress and even a family get together probably not a luxury dress."* (Akshaya, 26)

With friends, one is at her peak individualism with least societal constraints of kinship or age or any official hierarchy. With friends, one remains in one's true elements without any burden of creating a particular identity through special dress or something else. With friends, one wears as per one's personality and is not weighed down by traditional norms. Our interviews clearly show such casualness in their behavior in the company of friends.

### **Luxury dresses not preferred for get-together with family**

Family provides a social situation with the least societal constraints except age related constraints. Thus, one can opt for going casual in clothes, with no special need for wearing formals or expensive outfits, except when there is some important occasion in the family. The respondents' views reflect almost similar consumption choice preferences as in the case of get-

together with friends. The only differences which may emerge would be related to the presence of elders in the family outings. There may be various reasons for the emerging pattern of being casual in family related settings, such as, these outings are very frequent, there is no outsider from the larger community, and so on.

*“Get together and outing with friends probably not a luxury dress and even a family get together probably not a luxury dress.” (Akshaya, 26)*

*“(For get-together with family) If it’s just a get-together, I would not like to wear a luxury dress. I would like to wear something Indian, ethnic Indian but pretty casual, not luxury.....” (Richa, 27)*

*“(For family get together) Again not a luxury brand ...” (Nupuur, 24)*

## **Conclusion**

In India, people consider a rich array of events, both official and private ones, as well as traditional and modern/non-traditional ones. Indian costumes/dresses have evolved over long time, across the diverse landscape of India. With globalization, there have been Western influences resulting in eclectic fashions. With the effects of globalization and acceptance of modern ways of life (but at the core still conforming to the traditional moorings) the participants do show willingness to experiment. It is seen that experimentation with Western styles and cuts in dresses is predominantly adopted in the modern social occasions, like a cocktail party. The rich textile heritage, fine craftsmanship, and culture of embroidery & embellishments have provided a great scope for all kinds of experimentation for fusion with elements of Western societies (Jay, 2015, p. 16). For experimentation, in non-traditional functions, the interviewees are found to prefer Western and Indo-Western dresses which manifest changing social and economic values. However, for traditional events, there is a strong preference for luxury clothes with traditional Indian attributes.

#### **2.4.2.2 Characteristics of company (people with whom you are spending time during events)**

It is evident from the interview interactions that the social value of a dress is moderated by the context-elements, as Indian females desire for social conformity in their consumption-choices. One of these elements, stands out – the characteristics of the company/the people present at the occasion. In this section, I discuss, the various characteristics of the people present at the occasion, which seem to influence the luxury dress consumption-choices.

##### **2.4.2.2.1 Age of the company/people present**

Interviewees reflected in their responses that the age of the people with whom one will be spending time has a significant impact on their dress choices. It is so, as India is a hierarchical society. Elders often are more traditional than the younger generation and also have an authority over the younger generation. Thus, when youngsters are with their peers, they prefer to wear Western clothes/dresses, however, at events with elders, they choose a more traditional attire. There is an authority of elders over youngsters, visible in all aspects of daily life.

*“yes the age would also matter because something which is perhaps acceptable to the group of people who are relatively young might be quite revolting or unacceptable to you know the aged the elderly.” (Sakshi, 27)*

*“if I am going out with my in-laws, I dress up differently. When I am going out with my friends, I dress up differently.” (Shruti, 33)*

*“If I am with my friends of my age, I rather go for a western dress, if I am with someone elder to me, I might be in an Indian dress, that matters.” (Mehak, 27)*

*“Yes, sometimes. I mean with people in my own age group, I would be equally comfortable in Western or Indian and because my personal preference is western I will always go with Western but if I am interacting with an older age group or more old-fashioned people then you know if I know the preference is more Indian then I will play it safe and go with an Indian wear.” (Shamika, 26)*

This observation is supported by the literature on patrilineal and hierarchical social-set-up of Indian society (Uberoi, 2004) as well as the literature pertaining to peoples' age and degrees of acculturation. The young are more acculturated to global culture (N. Gupta, 2013; S. Mathur, 2010) and hence, more likely to wear global apparel (Cleveland et al., 2011).

#### **2.4.2.2.2 Relative closeness/distance with people in company**

Interview analyses suggest that the relational degree of closeness/distance with the people in company also affects the consumption preference. This goes in accordance with societal norms of role-set expectations as part of the social hierarchy in a patriarchal framework. The close community of which an individual is a part, seems to exert more influence in decision making for consumption. The need to conform to social norms, among participants, appears to be more when they are going to be in the company of close community members.

It is implicitly understood that in the case of close relatives, the norms are well defined and hence, the need for stricter adherence on the part of the participants (Derné, 1995, pp. 38–65).

Relative importance of weddings further depends on relative closeness with people getting married. Thus, wedding of acquaintances would be considered to be less important than a wedding of a family member, and wedding of an immediate family member will be the most important occasion.

*“It could be like if it's wedding in my own family it should be very very heavily embellished product' If it is wedding where I only know few people it could be lighter embellishment.” (Shalini, 48)*

*“For a wedding, I would choose an Indian ethnic wear, my answer would be again divided here, If it's somebody like my sister who is getting married, then yes I would choose a designer probably Tarun Talhiani or Sabyasachi because then I wouldn't mind spending much, because it's my sister's wedding. It covers the aspect of which designer with brand. So yes luxury, Indian ethnic, ideal Sabyasachi.....” (Shruti, 33)*



*“if it is any wedding then I wouldn't wear a luxury dress. I would just wear, I wouldn't purchase a luxury dress for a distant, wedding of someone distant. And for someone that's very close, like I suppose that my own brother or my own somebody that I would invest in an expensive dress and I would prefer an Indian brand because it is going to be an ethnic design and that would an Indian dress and I would prefer an Indian brand. And the price range for me would have to be less but it is impossible to find something cheap so ended up being 20,000 to 50,000 (280 Euro to 700 Euro).....” (Sijya, 23)*

The closer the relationship with the attendants/guests of an event (for ex., members of one's family), the more, Indian females, invest in a luxury dress.

#### **2.4.2.2.3 Relationship with the people**

##### **Colleagues & official hierarchy**

The interview analyses suggest that Indians would dress up casually when in company of their friends (a private event) but would put in more effort (wear branded clothes) when in company of their colleagues (in an official event). Amongst colleagues too, the dress choice will differ based on whether one is spending time with his/her superiors or peers. It is quite explicit in interviews that the Indian society in general is undemocratic and all relationships are governed through superiority and subordination.

*“I am going for dinner with colleagues my choice of dress would be formal and if I am going with my own friends it would be anything.” (Tushna, 32)*

*“More than the background, more about what kind of relation I have with them would matter..... , the social strata would not but certain positions come along with social strata in itself like my global head of my team at the place I work, very obviously come from a particular social strata but the reason I dress up is not because of his social strata, is more because of the position he holds in the organization and the kind of professional relationship I share with him.” (Akshaya, 26)*

*“if I am going to a business meeting where a lot of my senior colleagues are going to be around, then definitely I would dress up a lot more formally with a lot more being careful, which would not probably be with my everyday colleagues.” (Richa, 27)*

### **Family & hierarchy**

Patriarchy remains, even today, a defining characteristic of Indian society. The hierarchical traditions in terms of age and social relationships of patriarchal set-up seem to add more inhibitions, about the selection of an appropriate dress. In the company of elders from the in laws’ family, it appears that one chooses different dresses than one would choose for an outing with friends.

*“Even, forget occasions, even otherwise at home if I am visiting my in laws where grandparents are also there I would dress up differently than going out with my friends ...” (Tushna, 32)*

*“if I am going out with my in-laws, I dress up differently. When I am going out with my friends, I dress up differently.” (Shruti, 33)*

The qualitative analysis summed up in this sub-section reflects that getting dressed for an Indian female is predominantly a social experience and in particular socio-demographic composition of a consumption-situation impacts the perceived social value of a luxury dress.

#### **2.4.2.2.4 Value system of the company (the people present at the occasion)**

The qualitative analysis also hints at the importance of the outlook and the value system of the persons in whose company, one is going to be. The social-context, manifests for a participant, a particular perceived life-style. If one is going to be in the company of persons, who one believes, have a progressive outlook and liberal attitude, the consumption-choices will not get restricted by traditional, conservative norms. Shamika (26) and Ranjeet (52) evoke the same -

*“Couple of considerations that I would have. One is of course you know even if you know in the same office, I would typically know the not styles, but you know whether the person is*

*more progressive or advanced or are they more rigid and old-fashioned and then I would change my dressing style accordingly.....” (Shamika, 26)*

*“It depends on the occasion and also depends on the kind of the people you are associating with. Aaa, largely what I think matter is how conservative or how liberal the place is you are going more than anything else.” (Sanjeet, 52)*

Basically, as stated earlier also, it appears that, in general one tries to be in sync with the social situation, one is going to be a part of. So, participants appear to be changing their consumption-choices as the context changes. The social-context gets defined, besides other factors, by the characteristics of the persons present. In the presence of more conservative people, one tends to play down the modern elements and focuses on exhibition of traditional traits.

Besides, the value system and the outlook of the persons in company, the other point which appears to affect the dress-choice is one’s age-proximity with the company/the people present at the occasion. A significant difference in age i.e., being much younger than the persons in company makes a participant opt for a more formal dress-choice.

*“Yes, it does. But then if I am going in an age group which is older to me but then thinking wise, mentality-wise if they are like open minded, sort of like don’t care about what clothes you are wearing, then it wouldn’t. So basically, majority of the times, age group matters. I would be more comfortable with my age-group than the old ones. And sometimes like it doesn’t matter because maybe I know the older ones and they are familiar to me, or maybe they are liberal in their ways.” (Yamini, 27)*

In addition, the level of familiarity with the people in company also impacts one’s choice of dress.

*“...depends on my level of familiarity. So if it’s not in an office context but in a casual context, if I know friends really well, then I will dress more casually for that. Like if I am meeting someone for the first time then I would be a little more formally dressed.” (Shamika, 26)*

### 2.4.2.3 Socio-economic Status affects dress choice

It is understood through interview-interactions that the socio-economic status of the people with whom one spends time, also affects dress choice. Participants wanted to dress as per the socio-economic status of people in whose company they were spending time. Socio-economic status of one's company also seems to affect how conservative or modern, and how luxurious, the dress needs to be. This seems to pertain to impression management in a social gathering. Analysis of the interview-interactions reflects that one is always trying to live up to one's status, or trying to project oneself as per the status of the people in one's company. Implicitly, it is seen in qualitative data that high socio-economic status is often equated with Westernization. Perhaps, because of India's colonial past, modernization has been more in terms of Western elements and it has been associated with social elites (Singh, 2000).

To resonate well with the company of rich class, the apparent choice of participants is to go for luxury consumption. It seems that perception of others is important for one's consumption choice. The consumption choice is with a view to represent the taste, preferences, and life styles of the class of which one is going to be a part. The consumption choice tends to reflect one's sense of social life and style. This indicates that in India, social value of luxury is more important than other values.

*"If I am going for a high-end wedding which is of my friend, sister, or someone you know, rich people if I am going to that wedding, I would generally look at a dress which is really nice and expensive and suiting for that occasion."* (Callet, 22)

*"if I am going to a wedding where people wear high end luxury brand clothes I would choose my clothes accordingly and if I am going to a slightly more lower key kind of thing.. then I will choose my garments accordingly."* (Tushna, 32)

*"That could also matter because I mean I wouldn't want to be over dressed for an occasion nor I would want to be under dressed. So, if I am already know what is the general*

*social strata or whatever function or occasion it is, then I will select my clothes accordingly.”*  
(Shamika, 26)

As already stated above, the high socio-economic status is equated with modernization, and modernization in India is generally seen to be Westernization. There is an undercurrent in participants' observations that there is an acceptance of modern/Western elements of clothing like cuts and styles, among the higher socio-economic status. Whereas, it is perceived, those who are lower in the socio-economic hierarchy, are more conservative in outlook. This observation is supported in the literature (Dube, 1992, p. 131; Singh, 2000).

This perception on the part of participants and their efforts to have a better fit with the social setting, affect their dress-choices. Today's youth, interviews reflect, is shifting in behavior with the changing social situation, of which she is a part. One adapts well and can play multiple identities as per the changing social requirements, even if the company is rather older.

*“if I am taking a look at a certain social strata, if that is going to be something that usually covers my choices then age doesn't really matter.*

*Yes, Because when you are dealing with a certain class of people, the thing is there are certain perceptions according to me are more or less uniform across ages in that specific class of people a let's say what is considered modest in let's say in middle class family, it will stay uniform across all ages, because it is , because the people you are mingling with and matches sort of and this is what we call a socialization, so that is what governs your thoughts and perspectives , but let's say if I am mingling with the upper middle class or let's say higher rich people, their perceptions would be slightly different, their beliefs what are acceptable according to them would be slightly different across all ages.”* (Nupuur, 24)

*“Talking about me, the social strata matters a lot. Where I stay, I can say that people are a little backward. When you keep an outfit in mind, exposing anything is not relevant here. When you select an outfit, backless or deep neck or such type of outfit are not welcomed in our*

*society where I stay. So when I look at an outfit, it should be proper. And what I kept in mind is okay its fine, a little stomach is showing off, it's cool. But not more exposure. That I will keep in mind.” (Sujal, 22)*

Interviews suggest implicitly that respondents tend to form an identity through a particular dress-choice and their choice differs, as the social situation changes. One can also see this in another way, that identity not only leads to a particular consumption choice but by consuming something particular, one tends to be a part of a social group. This implies that one opts for particular dress, reflecting her status/standing or through it she tends to associate with a particular socio-economic class in the society.

*“it would definitely be for occasion where you are mingling with a certain class or that in a social strata.... specific to gatherings that are dictated by the class, social structure, for that would be cocktail parties and all of those things.” (Nupuur, 24)*

The sub-section highlights that through their luxury dress-choices, Indian females attempt to fit in a given social situation. The desired fit is perceived in terms of the age and value-system of the people present at the occasion. The level of familiarity, social proximity with the people present at the occasion, and socio-economic status of the people present at the occasion, also seem to affect the perceived fit for a luxury dress.

#### **2.4.3 Cultural-Fit of the dress attributes**

Two themes are considered to make up the ‘cultural-fit’ avenue: Modesty as a dress attribute and the dress design attributes (like type, color, embroidery etc.). Modest dresses have often been linked to traditional Indian values while more revealing clothes have been linked to modern values (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, pp. 49, 52, 53). Hence, the inclusion of ‘modesty’ as a dress attribute is relevant for determining cultural-fit. Similarly, literature on identity relevant products points out that the cultural relevance of product attributes positively influences product attribute evaluations. Hence, bright colors and elaborate dresses with detailed embroidery work make a better fit with the Indian culture (Jay, 2015, p. 26).

### 2.4.3.1 Modesty of the dress

A lot of participants believed that Indian dresses are less revealing. Participants considered that this aspect was essential for the fit of a dress to Indian culture. Interview interactions also reveal preferences among Indian women for emerging fashions of the day but with the essential pre-requisites being modesty and elegance. Sakshi (27), sums up the same -

*“In my opinion, Indian culture places a lot of emphases on the decency of dressing, so, if I got to choose a dress I would make sure that it is not too exposing and it is decent and not too body hugging but a you know a comfortable fit.” (Sakshi, 27)*

Participants reflect in their views that modesty of a dress, they wear, relates to what body part/s it reveals, and to the specifics of Indian culture. The elements of their concern about modesty as a dress-attribute relate to a number of societal dimensions - decency (conformity to accepted norms of morality); conservatism (reflecting traditional aspects and not being too divergent from Indian culture); exposure of certain body parts like cleavage, belly button, thighs, etc.; and vulnerability in terms of public gaze.

*“I remember a few months back I think Jacqueline Fernandez wore a dress of Chanel and the model who wore it for the ramp. It had a very deep cut moving down towards your cleavage to your belly. It had a very deep cut and she wore it. But when Jacqueline had to wear it in India definitely she had to wear it covered full. So that makes the difference because you are in a society where people are not really open with having a clothing with styles and accepting it but they generally look at how much you are exposing.” (Callet, 22)*

One draws a perception from the qualitative data analysis that modest necklines, shoulders and legs not revealed, and no tight-fit are important norms, especially for traditional social occasions.

Participants' views confirm observations made by Schipper (2017) - “Shame pops up in people as soon as they deviate from required social behavior and leads to feelings of disapproval, ridicule or rejection. As none of us want to make a fool of ourselves, we tend to

adapt to our own group, especially in societies where survival depends on the support of fellow clan members” (Schipper, 2017, p. 7).

*“And obviously a dressing that is more conservative than what you look at the Western culture. For Indian audience, I think you need to, if it is for mass audience, Yes, we do need to look at the more conservative style like long kaftans, or high neck or not much crop top.....”* (Callet, 22)

One important observation from the interviews is that one does not opt for a bold dress also because of the general population (as per one participant – ‘broader audience’) one comes across, as one commutes from one place to another. It means, besides the outlook of the people in whose company one is going to be, even the perspective of the larger society forms a determinant for one’s dress-choice. The following verbatim reflects the same -

*“there are few clothes that I have, which I don’t mind wearing as such but I can’t wear on daily basis in India, but if I were to not be in India, If I were to stay in Europe or anywhere outside India, it’s lot more practical for me to be able to wear those dresses. Lot of reasons for that, one reason is the flexibility of the general crowd outside, another reason is the general hassles there are, for example say commute, I drive to work so it is not much on the show but if I were to take an auto or a train to work then it’s not really the kind of clothing I would wear in terms of comfort.”* (Akshaya, 26)

Discussing the perils of patriarchy in Indian society, Banerjee & Miller (2018) observe that much more restrictions are imposed on women than on men. They further add – “And men continue to take women’s clothing and self-presentation as the critical signifiers of their inner virtue.” At the same time, patriarchy also seeps through women’s ideas about “appropriate” clothing, as they reinforce such ideas upon each other (M. Banerjee & Miller, 2018, p. 105).

Pravina Shukla (2016), also asserts that women in India across ages believe that “a girl should feel *sharam* – shame.” She explains that Indian women would not be comfortable



wearing a dress that may make them look provocative in front of their family or outside of home (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 331). For ex., Shruti (33) mentions -

*“you know if you look at the broader audience, it’s still a conservative culture here in India. So, yes. To an extent, yes. It has to be fashioned according to Indian taste.” (Shruti, 33)*

Modest clothing has often been associated with traditional Indian values (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 49,52,53). Hence, modesty of clothes would affect their cultural-fit (Sandhu, 2015, p. 64).

#### **2.4.3.2 Product-attributes (like type, color, embroidery, etc.) affect the fit of a product to Indian culture**

Many participants believed that product-attributes such as color, prints, embroidery and other surface designs, and type of dress have an impact on the fit of a dress to Indian culture.

Participants give positive responses to identity relevant product-attributes, as illustrated in the following paragraphs –

##### **2.4.3.2.1 Color**

Participants suggested that bright colors such as orange and red are considered to be more appropriate for cultural/traditional functions. The colors always have specific cultural references. Bright and vibrant colors symbolize Indian culture.

*“Ok, so with respect to the colors, Indians generally prefer bright colors as you know for cultural events and black is generally not regarded as an auspicious color so I would go in for a bright color and culturally specific bright colors for India are pink, orange, and red and also golden...” (Sakshi, 27)*

*“Because I have seen that the brands which are global they do have a lot of black, greys, blues and browns. Okay. And if you look at Indian audience, it’s more of Red, Oranges, then its yellow and it’s something like bright and cheerful what we look at. We really want to have bright and cheerful kind of clothes to wear.” (Callet, 22)*

*“Indian garments I think have more colors compared to others. They are more colorful. They are more bright and loud at times.” (Garima, 26)*

The selections in shades of red, green, pink, yellow or orange are the traditional festive colors of India. The seasonal and regional variations in India’s tropical climate allows individuals to keep to their cultural obsession with bright colors at social occasions. Red has been the traditional color for a bride’s dress. Besides, the traditional bright colors, there is now a trend for pastel colors also. White or black are the colors to be avoided for all the important festive occasions as these colors symbolize sorrow (Jay, 2015; Kumar, 2018, pp. 38–40; Pravina Shukla, 2016; Tahiliani, 2018, p. 42,43).

India’s diversity – physical, social and religious – has given the diversity of colors and their varied interpretations.

#### **2.4.3.2.2 Prints, embroidery and other surface designs**

The heavy prints and embroidery, the two traditional defining elements of Indian dresses, are also reflected in the participants’ observations about the fit of a dress to Indian culture. The amount of embroidery and embellishments has always been an important decision variable for choosing a dress for an important occasion. This traditional variable for social acceptance and praise of one’s dress is reflected in the various interview-interactions.

*“yeah for sure like the print and embroideries which have the Jaipury touch in it or a peacock or maybe an elephant or a horse.. these things are very in nowadays.” (Neha, 29)*

*“Indians have a very authentic and very loud print if you can call it. For ages, we have been used to very loud prints and what you see in other brands are very soft, subtle colors, subtle prints like small floral motifs or small butterflies or you can see circled designs which are very small, subtle, very you know, which kind of doesn’t shout out loud on your face. But Indian for that matter, the prints if you see on FabIndia clothes or you can see Anita Dongre clothes, who does the Indian products you can see that its very loud kind of prints.” (Callet, 22)*

*“normally most of the Indian dresses would have embellishment if it doesn’t have any embellishment the general trend would be to wear as casual wear not as a formal one unless its to be worn in an office.” (Shalini, 48)*

Traditional dresses with intricate and detailed embellishments are preferred choices.

Dresses with heavy prints and embroidery are considered to be Indian. Earlier, dresses with embroidery and embellishments were considered to be more expensive and beautiful (Jay, 2015, p. 26). Embroidery is perhaps the most famous feature of Indian fashion (Narasimhan, 2016, p. 82).

#### **2.4.3.2.3 Type of dress**

It emerges from the qualitative data that certain traditional dresses such as sari, lehenga etc., or dresses inspired from them will always be perceived, to be more Indian than Western dresses, such as a gown. The consumption preferences for traditional dresses (like sari) for better cultural fit show the respect for traditions and ever-present glamour of certain dresses. An undercurrent observed in qualitative data is that the selection of a dress is much more than one’s individual choice.

*“I feel that like these dresses (Sari, lehenga) are associated with Indian culture since the birth of Indian culture, I guess.” (Neha, 29)*

*“obviously if you talk about, fit in for Indian culture it will have to be a little about what type of a dress it is, uh, for example, if it is a, umm, like a flowy gown, then it is not Indian I feel, if it’s a gown with a little bit of embroidery becomes Indo-western and if it’s a strict Indian saree then it becomes Indian. So, I think the type of dress is what matters.” (Roushni, 29)*

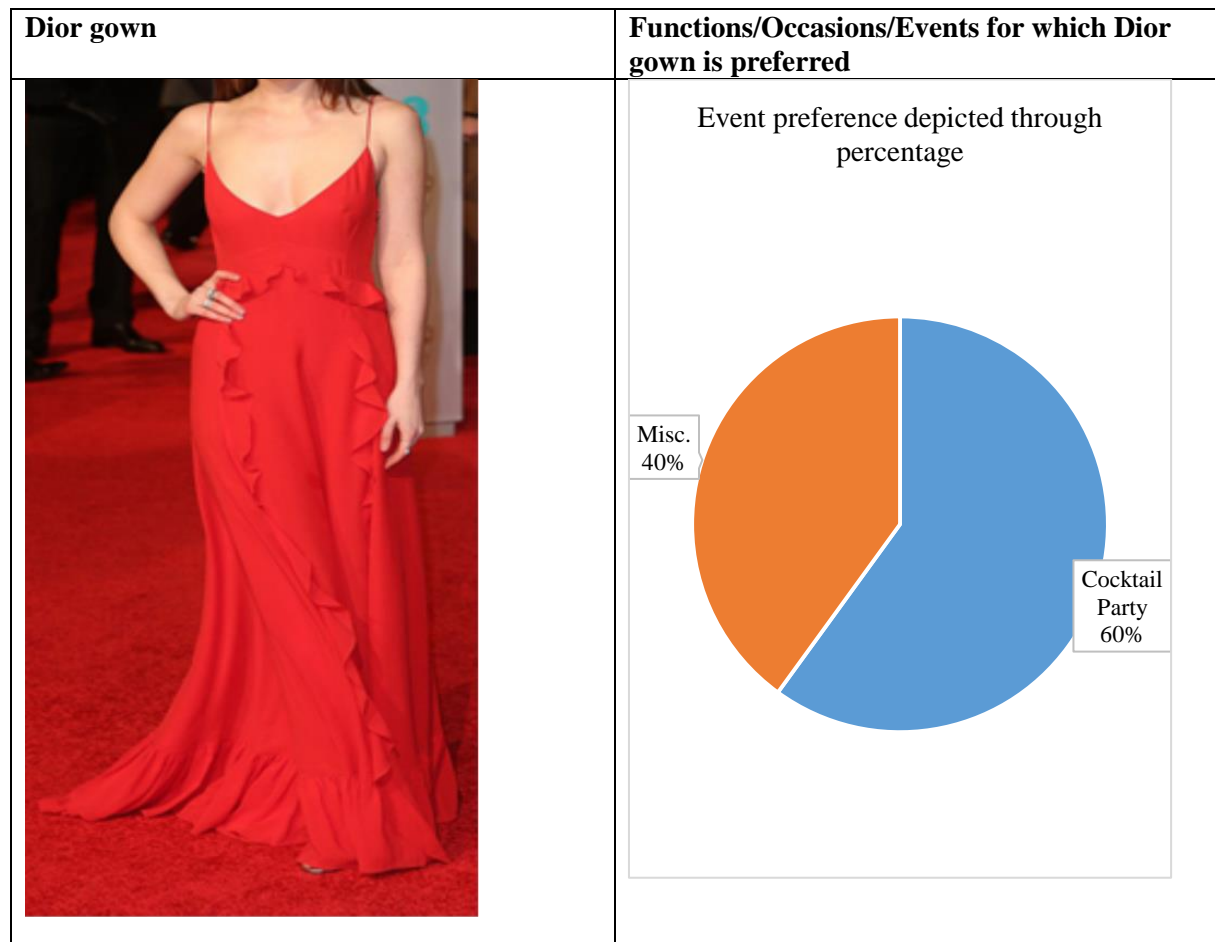
*“Yeah, it makes a difference. When you talk of Indian apparel there are different types of dresses that comes to your mind. You cannot think of a particular thing. There are different types of dresses that can catch you... you can say anarkali, you can say salwar, you can go with the lehenga, churidar, there are typical outfits one can think.” (Sujal, 22)*

What we wear can make us different or fit in at the same time (Mair, 2018, pp. 70–71). In the literature (S. Banerjee, 2008; Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Paurav Shukla, 2011), Indian consumers have often been termed as collectivists. In a collectivist society, especially at a social gathering, one tends to choose a dress, in general, acceptable to those who are important to them (Derné, 1995, p. 64,65; Millan & Reynolds, 2011; Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 383,384).

#### **2.4.4 Analysis of responses to 6 luxury dress stimuli**

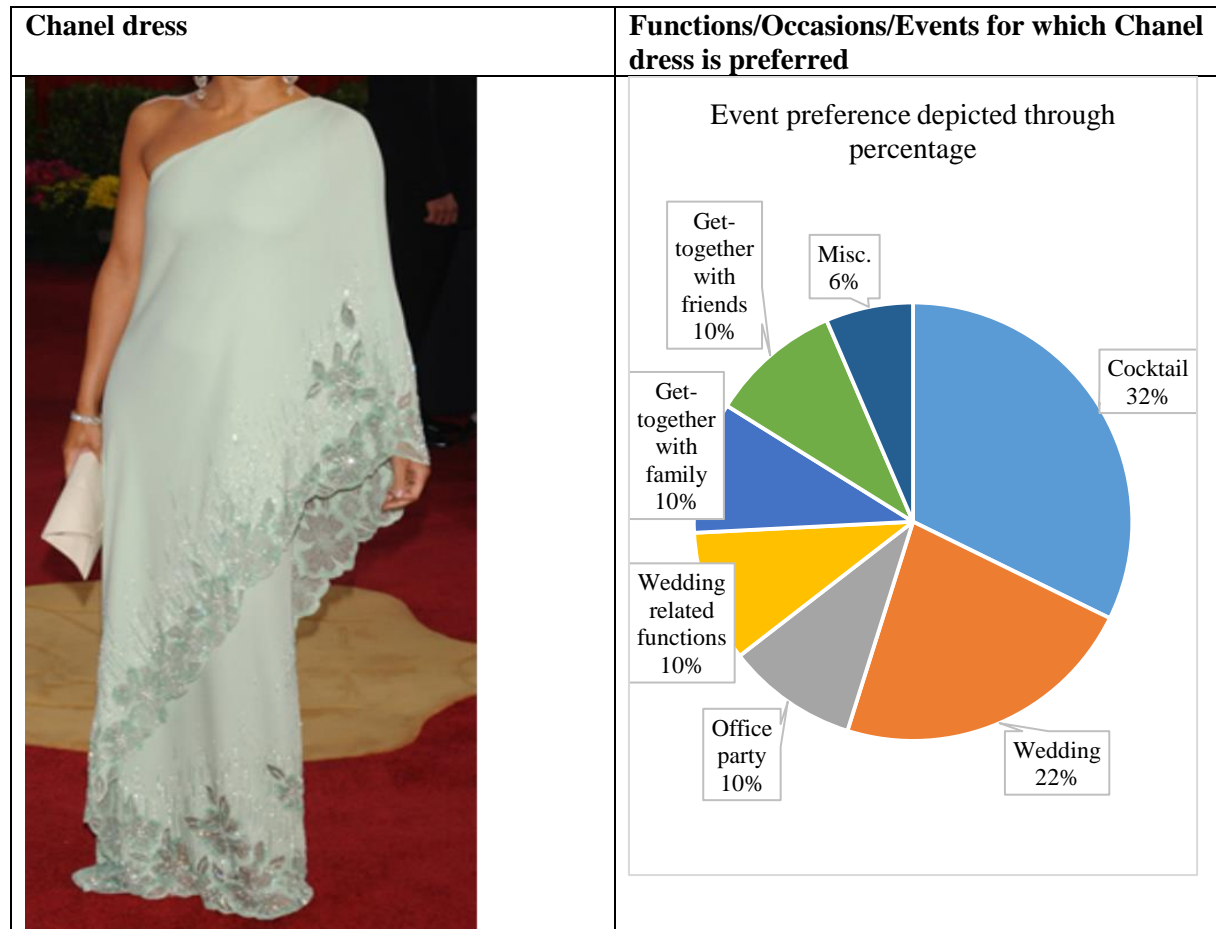
The respondents were shown 6 luxury dresses, and were given names of certain brands that were supposed to have created those dresses (these stimuli were not real i.e., in many cases, these dresses were not created by the brands mentioned). Dresses were chosen, based on their appropriateness to study and brands based on their popularity in India. The respondents were then asked to report that on what occasions would they like to wear each dress. The responses bear similarity to participants' observations about context-congruent consumption choices. There is a preference for Western and Indo-western dresses for non-traditional/modern social occasions and Indian/ethnic dresses for traditional social occasions. Moreover, their responses revealed that participants focused more on product-attributes than on brand. The responses have been depicted pictorially through a set of pie-charts. In each pie-chart, the total number of times a particular dress is preferred for different social occasions is represented as 100% (i.e. 360 degrees) and then sectoral divisions are done as per the number of times it is preferred for a particular social occasion. Those social occasions where the preference percentage is less than 10% of the total, have been clubbed together in the 'miscellaneous' category. The first broad impression which emerges (in sync with the findings of the qualitative study) is that while Indian dresses were most preferred for traditional functions, dresses with Western aesthetics were preferred in modern settings, and dresses with a fusion of Indian and Western aesthetics were chosen for a variety of social occasions in both traditional and non-traditional settings.

**Figure 2. 2: Stimulus No. 1: Perceived as Western and Revealing**



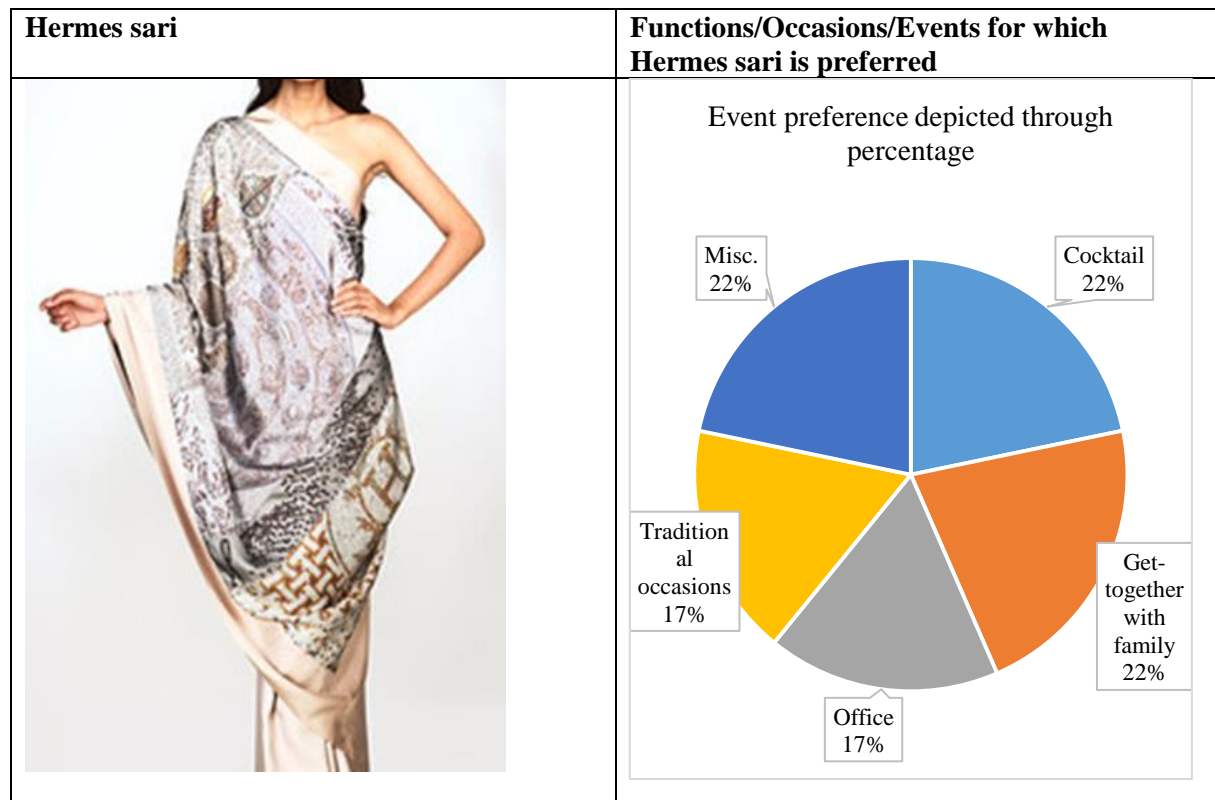
The first dress, a Dior gown, is a Western dress, and as per the participants' observations in qualitative study and literature review (chapter 1 - on Indian apparels and 'modesty' as a dress attribute), it would invite concerns regarding shame/sexuality as it is very revealing and as a result, is not perceived to be ideal/appropriate for most social occasions. The pie-chart shows that 60% of the times, the dress is preferred for cocktail – a modern social occasion for the Indian society. The rest 40% of the times, it is preferred for eight different social occasions (with 5% of the total number of times for each social occasion).

**Figure 2. 3: Stimulus No. 2: Perceived as Indo–western and Not revealing**



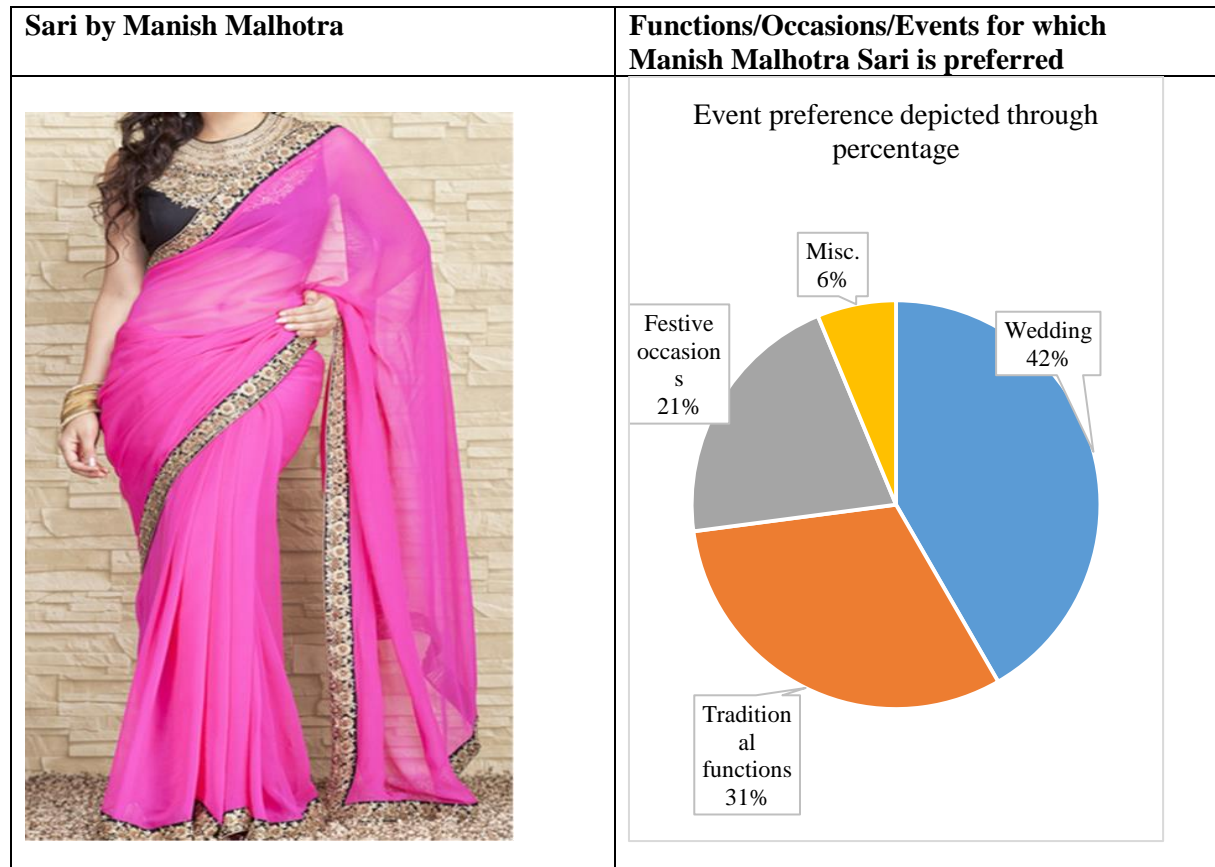
The second dress, a Chanel dress, represents a fusion of Indian and Western elements, categorized as Indo-western. Most of the respondents were young females (approximately 70% less than or equal to 33 years of age) and as per qualitative study analysis and literature review, young Indian consumers prefer experimentation with Western elements, but at the same time, are concerned about social conformity. The pie-chart shows that for about one-third of the times, it is preferred for cocktail, a modern occasion, and a little more than one-fifth of the times for a wedding, a traditional occasion. These responses in part relate to the fusion of Western and Indian elements, and the dress not revealing too much. The rest of the times, it is preferred for other social occasions with less than 10% of times for each occasion, and are shown as miscellaneous.

**Figure 2. 4: Stimulus No. 3: Perceived as Indo-western and Modest**



The third dress is a Hermes sari, which is basically an Indian apparel in a Western style. The data shows that the dress was preferred by the respondents for a variety of occasions. This is represented by the major part (78%) of the pie chart being shared by four types of social occasions – cocktail party (22%), get-together with family (22%), official events (17%) and traditional occasions (17%). The miscellaneous category with 22% share also further adds to the fact that the dress is preferred for many different types of social occasions. The pie chart display corresponds with literature review of contemporary trends in Indian apparels. The literature review, identifies eclectic style as one of the defining features of Indian fashion. The style represents the dynamics between traditional/ethnic and Western wear, with modesty being an important dress-attribute. Hybrid styles of clothing receive wider acceptance among young Indian females.

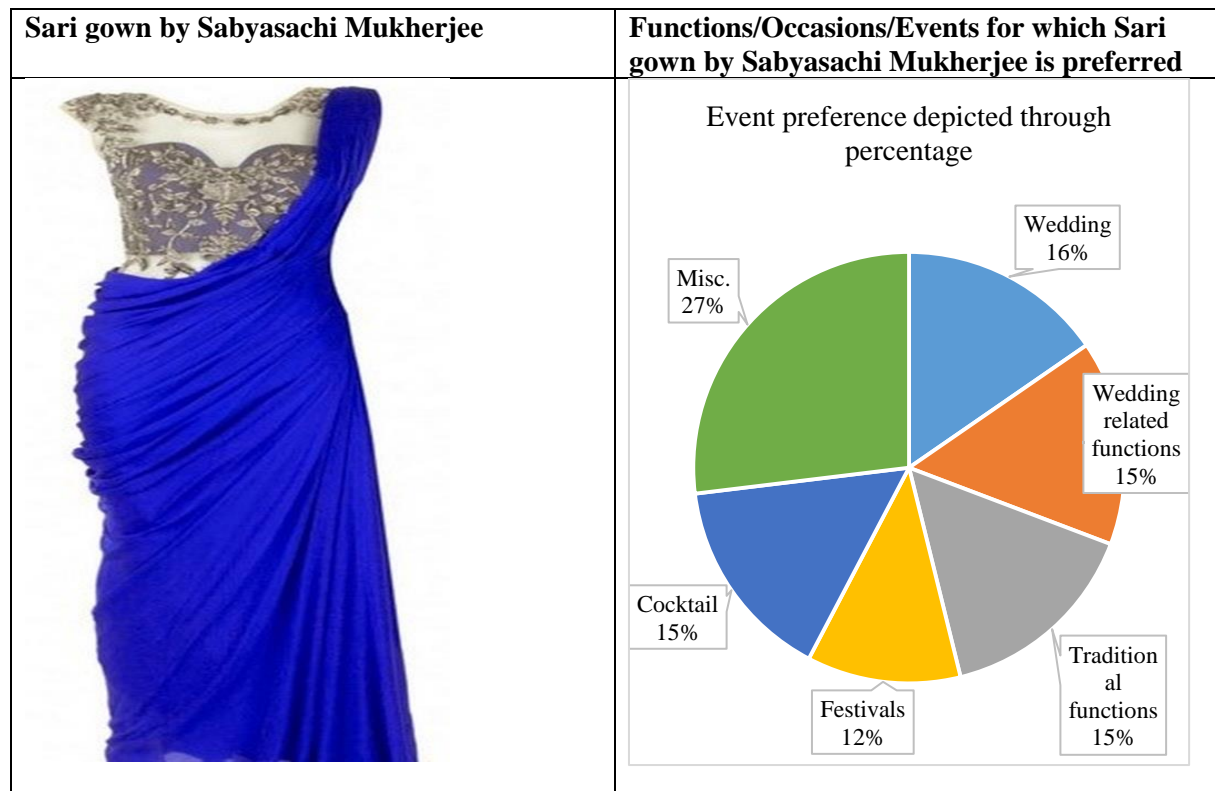
**Figure 2. 5: Stimulus No. 4: Perceived as Indian and Modest**



The fourth dress, a Manish Malhotra sari, is typically ‘Indian’ in terms of its product-attributes. The interview-interactions as well as literature review show that consumers’ choices are positively affected by culturally relevant product-attributes. The pie-chart represents that 42% of the times the dress is preferred for wedding, 31% of the times for other traditional functions, and 21% of the times for festival occasions. The pie pie-chart manifests that participants did not prefer the dress for modern social occasions like cocktail, as there is a lack of congruence of the dress with the social imperatives of the occasion. The typical Indian sari being predominantly preferred for occasions other than modern, suggests that young Indian females’ consumption behavior pivots around social approval. One important dimension of this social approval pertains to its attribute of modesty being within the acceptable limits. The same is very explicit in the participants’ submissions in their interviews.

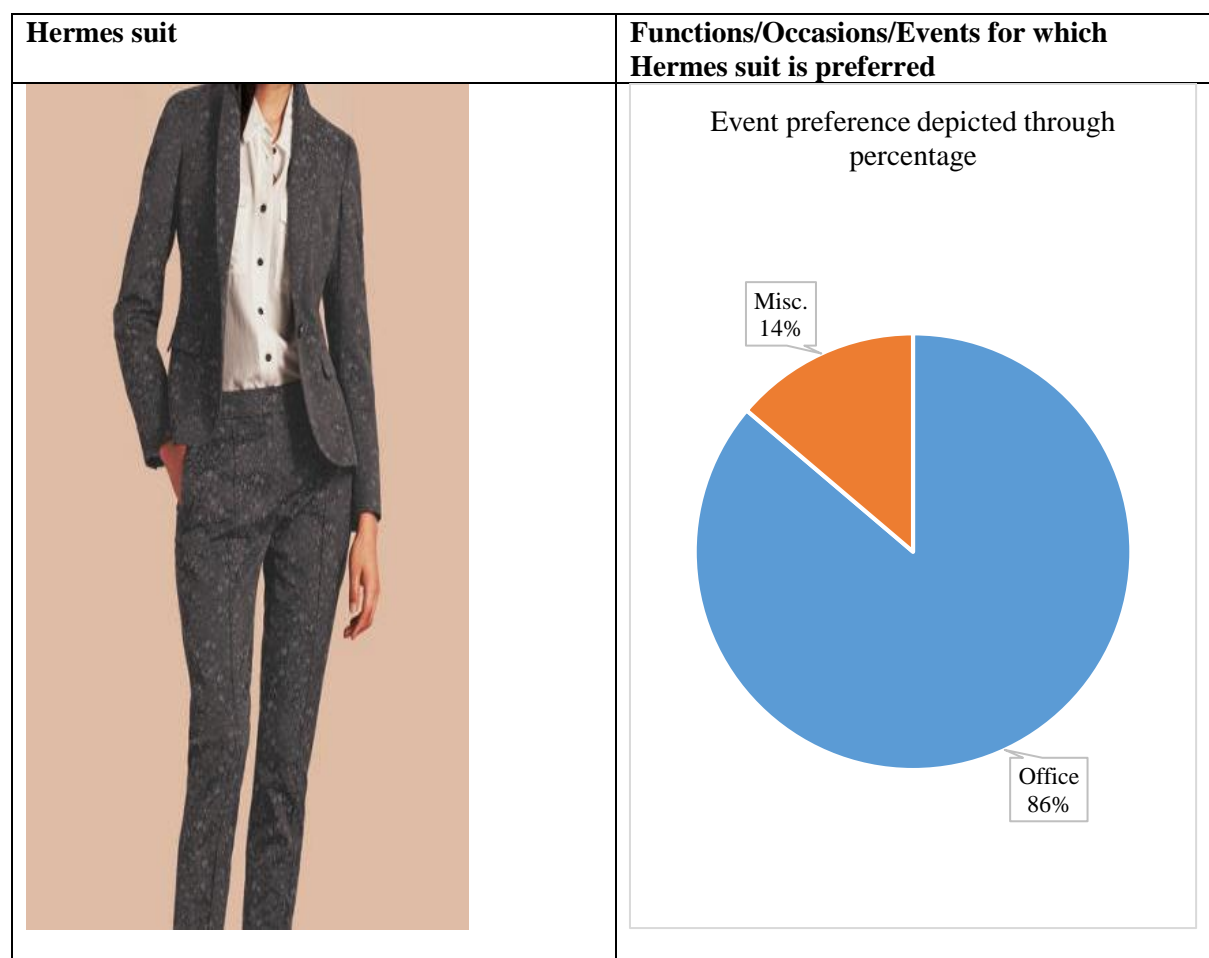


**Figure 2. 6: Stimulus No. 5: Perceived as Indo-western and Modest**



The fifth dress, a Sari-gown by Sabyasachi Mukherjee, represents a fusion of Indian and Western styles. For this dress, the major part of the pie-chart is covered by a variety of social occasions, suggesting that it is preferred for both traditional and non-traditional social occasions. This is in line with the contemporary trend in Indian apparel industry depicted by literature survey – the urge for experimentation with Western attributes and also holding on to the elegance and glamour of traditional dresses of India. The dress is almost equally preferred by the participants for wedding, a traditional event and for cocktail, a modern event. The dress is also preferred for festivals, a good number of times. Almost uniform division of the pie-chart for a variety of social occasions and the miscellaneous category also covering a large part of the pie-chart, both reflect the participants’ desire for Western elements and social-conformity as per the traditional frame-work. The dress appears to be a fine balance between modern and traditional elements. It is also modest as per the customs and usages reflected in the participants’ interview interactions.

**Figure 2. 7: Stimulus No. 6: Perceived as Western and Modest**



The sixth dress, a Hermes suit, is a Western dress, and as expected from the respondents' submissions in interviews, and from literature survey, it was predominantly preferred for one major social occasion – official event. The contemporary official or business situations are the modern elements in Indian culture and as noted in literature survey, modernization in India is largely seen as Westernization. The Western suit is a norm in general in official situations, both private and government, as it provides comfort and functional ease. Besides the official events, the dress is in general only preferred for non-traditional situations. Participants have shown no inclination for this dress in traditional social occasions or family get-togethers etc. The apparent reason being that it is not context-congruent for such occasions, though it has no negative concerns on the count of its attribute of modesty in terms of body cover.

***Overall comment about the six luxury dresses shown to participants in the qualitative study***

Participants' consumption-choices manifest that the perceived contextual-fit of the six luxury dresses, for the selected consumption-situations, varied along the dress-attributes of design and modesty (see Table No. 2.5).

For traditional social occasions, like a wedding or a festival, consumption-choices indicate the desire for fit of these dress-attributes with the Indian culture, and that explains the higher preference for Indian luxury dresses for such occasions.

For modern social occasions, like a cocktail party or an official meeting, participants exhibit higher preferences for Western dresses, which are generally perceived to be more revealing. Besides modern events, participants show preference for Western clothes for get together with friends.

Participants' consumption-choices reflect collectivist orientations as well as influence of acculturation with Western culture, as Indo-western dresses are preferred for both modern and traditional social occasions. For get-togethers with friends and family, in general, participants do not prefer luxury dresses.

**Table 2. 5: Consumer preference of dress design for different social occasions/situations**

Design Preference	Consumption Occasion/Situation					
	Traditional	Traditional	Modern	Modern	Traditional/Modern	
	Wedding	Festival	Official Meeting	Cocktail Party	Get together with friends	Get together with family
High cultural-fit (Indian culture) of dress	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
Indian Dress	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Casual
Western Dress	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Casual
Indo-Western Dress	+	+	+	Yes	+	+
Luxury Wear	Yes	+		Yes	No	No
'Yes' - preferred by a majority of respondents 'No' – not preferred by a majority of respondents '+' sign signifies that a few respondents preferred that option 'Casual' – Did not specify Indian or Western but luxury dresses were not preferred						

#### 2.4.5 Uncategorized Themes and Repeating Ideas

The qualitative study contains one theme and two repeating ideas, which were not relevant to our problematic. These insights were about the importance of local weather and the product being more important than brand (more information can be found in appendix of chapter 2 – appendix 2D, p 14).

#### 2.5 The specification of dependent and independent variables

The insights gained from the qualitative study and the learnings from the relevant literature review were employed to configure dependent and independent variables. These in turn affected our methodology for the quantitative study and its design. For the study, the following variables were finalized: As dependent variables, I retained Social Value Perception and Contextual-Fit. The analysis of interview-interactions clearly establishes that young Indian females opt for luxury consumption primarily for important social occasions. A number of studies have shown that among Indians, social value of luxury consumption is the most dominant value perception and studies relate this to the collectivist orientation of Indian society. This prompted me to identify the **social value perception** as the dependent variable in the study. The second dependent variable, I retained for the study was Contextual-Fit. The analysis of interview-interactions and literature review further suggest that young Indian females aspire social value through social conformity, and social conformity is perceived through wearing what is more appropriate in a given social situation. Therefore, I chose '**contextual-fit**' as another dependent variable through which the consumer desires to enhance social value perception in her decision-making.

As independent variables, I identified the following - Type of Event (Modern/Traditional), Characteristic of company (Peers/Elders), Perceived design origin (Indian/Western/Indo-western) and Modesty (Modest/Revealing). The views of the participants and literature review helped identify the defining elements of consumption-context as type of event and characteristic of company. Type of event variable has been categorized as modern or

traditional in this study, reflecting co-existence of tradition and modernity in India. Characteristic of the company, that is age of attendants/guests present at the occasion has been categorized as peers or elders. Even though in the qualitative study, multiple characteristics of company were identified such as attendants'/guests' age group, socio-economic status, value-system/out-look along with subject's level of familiarity with the guests at the occasion, only age of attendants/guests was considered in the quantitative study. The qualitative study as well as the literature review, showed that India represents a social-setup where tradition and modernization/westernization exist with contrary pulls as well as in assimilation.

From the aforesaid, it is clear that the consumption-context emerges as a critical determinant of luxury consumption-choice.

The analysis of interview-interactions as well as literature review highlight the positive responses from consumers to identity relevant product-attributes. The participants in qualitative study identified the following product-attributes to be crucial for a dress to fit in with Indian culture: type of dress, colors, surface decorative works (like heavy prints, embroidery etc.) and its modesty. As a result, I chose perceived design origin as an independent variable. Based on the participants' responses in the qualitative study and literature review of contemporary Indian apparels, I varied this variable at three levels – Indian, Western and Indo-western. Besides this, modesty (as a dress attribute – modest/revealing), was also chosen as an independent variable. In the qualitative survey, there exists ample evidence for modesty (as a dress attribute – modest/revealing), being one essential pre-requisite for appropriateness of a dress in public space.

A number of participants clearly illustrated, what is opined by Yodanis (2018) in her book "Getting Dressed": "getting dressed is not an individual experience; it's social". These participants confirmed that her analysis regarding what body parts should be covered, is a decision affected by a set of external forces, guiding what all is within acceptable limits (Yodanis, 2018, pp. 33, 36).

The participants' responses to the given six luxury dress stimuli, too, reflect what is well explained by S. Woodward (2007) in her research work – *Why Women Wear What They Wear*, and summed up by Yodanis (2018), “that women did not select their clothes based on individual desires, tastes, or comfort. These things were all social. Women liked their clothes, thought they looked good, and were comfortable when the clothing they selected matched the social expectations for what “should” be worn and what others should be wearing when they got to where they were going” (quoted in Yodanis, 2018, p. 65).

We have seen how the dress' perceived design origin and modesty drive its social fit to certain occasions (see analyses of 6 stimuli and table 2.6). A Western revealing dress was preferred by respondents for a modern occasion. An Indo-western modest dress was almost equally preferred for both modern as well as traditional occasions. Whereas, an Indian modest dress was preferred mostly for traditional occasions.

The product-attributes like colors, surface-decorative works (prints, embroidery, etc.) were not chosen as separate independent variables as perceived design origin is a comprehensive attribute, and to a large extent, covers the above-mentioned attributes (for ex., traditionally, heavy prints and embroidery have been the defining features of Indian apparels). Therefore, broadly speaking, the large-encompassing nature of the two product-attributes, perceived design origin and modesty, along with strong support from the relevant literature, constituted the main arguments for their selection as independent variables.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Qualitative study makes it explicit that among young Indian females, social value of luxury is the most dominant value perception, probably related to the collectivist orientation of the Indian society. The qualitative study confirms the high significance attached to conspicuous consumption by Indian consumers for important social occasions (e.g., wedding /festival).

Interview-interactions suggest that young Indian females tend to exhibit an identity through a particular dress-choice and with the change of social situation, their choice also

differs. Participants' observations indicate that their dress-choices are positively affected by culturally relevant dress attributes. The interviews also reflect that participants tend to fine tune their identities as per the perceived constructs of social situations, they have to be a part of.

The qualitative study shows that participants' choice of luxury dress depends on the type of event/social occasion. The study suggests that a particular social situation demands a specific identity that in turn necessitates a specific consumption-choice. Qualitative data analysis reveals congruence between dress-choice and cultural demand of the social situation.

The study implicitly indicates the presence of awareness among the youth about India's traditions and a feeling of pride about their traditions and tendency to preserve them, but at the same time they cherish the modern/Western elements in their lifestyles. This is exhibited in their dress-choices with adoption of Western elements and at the same time adherence to social norms of traditional setting, through context-wise negotiation.

Both interviews and literature review, establish the consumption-context as the pivot for consumption-choice. Social situation concomitant to an event, in terms of traditional/modern type and the presence of peers/elders, sets the pre-requisites for the dress-choice. What emerges as a pattern is the desire to fit in a given social situation, making it explicit that luxury dress-choice goes beyond the personal considerations of the individual consumer. Therefore, in the decision-making process for luxury dress-choice, there is a pivotal role played by the consumption-context and dress-attributes. In the qualitative study, the participants' responses reveal context-congruent consumption-choices. There is a preference for Western dresses during modern social occasions; Indian/ethnic dresses during traditional social occasions; and for fusion of Indian and Western aesthetics (Indo-western dresses) during a variety of social occasions, in both traditional and modern settings.

**With the aforementioned synthesis of learnings from literature review and qualitative study, the definition of Contextual-Fit is made more precise as – the match between the consumption-choice [(dress-attributes – perceived design origin (Indian or**

**Western or Indo-western) and modesty (modest or revealing)] and social imperatives of the occasion in terms of the type of event (modern or traditional) and the characteristic of people present (peers or elders).**

For the purpose of this research, Perceived Social Fit is defined as the measure of one's perceived social appreciation/acceptance by referent group in accordance with the degree of social conformity in one's behavior (in terms of the fit between attributes of a luxury dress for a social occasion and the social imperatives of the occasion).

### **Formulation of additional precise hypotheses**

The qualitative data analysis implicitly indicates that one's consumption-choices are the means to reflect one's attitude and values. Participants appear to be changing their consumption-choice as the context changes. When youngsters are with their peer group, they prefer to wear Western dresses, however, at events with elders, they prefer choosing traditional ones. This consumption-behavior pattern is supported by the existing literature on Indian society as well as on the inverse relationship seen between age and acculturation.

Considering the hierarchical nature of Indian society, where elders have authority over youngsters; and generally, are less acculturated than youngsters, one could assume that luxury apparel choices of young Indian consumers would differ in the presence of elders.

Therefore, I hypothesize that for an event where young Indian consumers will be in company of elders, they (young Indian consumers) would prefer an Indian luxury dress as it would have a higher perceived contextual-fit (and thus higher perceived social value) than an Indo-western luxury dress or a Western luxury dress. Moreover, for an event in which young Indian consumers are in company of their peer group, they would prefer a Western luxury dress over Indian or Indo-western luxury dress, as it would have a better perceived contextual-fit and hence, higher perceived social value.

**H7a: For an Indian female at an event with elders, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.**



**H7b: For an Indian female at an event with peer group, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.**

It is apparent from qualitative study that a given social context manifests, for a participant, a particular perceived life-style, broadly speaking a traditional or a modern one. It has been suggested that because of India's colonial past, modernization has been more in terms of Western elements, and has been associated with social elites (Singh, 2000). In qualitative study, it is understood that when youngsters are with peer group, they prefer to wear Western dresses, however, at events with elders, they choose traditional ones.

Participants in qualitative study opined that Western dresses reveal more than Indian dresses. Participants have explicitly shown that they prefer Western dresses for modern occasions and especially the ones, where elders are not present, for ex., a Dior gown for a cocktail party.

In general, members attempt to conform to societal ideals and thus invest time and energy for the same. As part of the social set-up, we wish to be accepted by others. One's effort in reaching the cultural ideal, illustrates that need (Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, pp. 91, 92).

Through qualitative study, there is a reflection of co-existence of rising individualism among young Indians and a dominance of society/significant others in individual's decision-making for consumption.

Hence, I hypothesize that for an event where young Indian consumers will be in company of elders, they (young Indian consumers) would prefer a modest luxury dress as it would have a higher perceived contextual-fit (and thus higher perceived social value) than a revealing luxury dress. For an event in which young Indian consumers are in company of their peer group, they would prefer a revealing luxury dress over a modest luxury dress, as it would be perceived to have a better contextual-fit and hence, higher perceived social value.

**H8a: For an Indian female at an event with elders, modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.**

**H8b: For an Indian female at an event with peer group, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.**

The following figure (Figure 2.8) updates the conceptual diagram and depicts all the hypotheses. Hypotheses (H1, H2a, H2b, H3a, H3b, H4, H5a, H5b, H6a and H6b) have been taken from chapter 1 (Literature Review). However, hypothesis H7 from chapter 1 has been made more specific through new hypotheses H7a, H7b, H8a and H8b. These new hypotheses have been derived by synthesizing the insights from the qualitative study into the general interactions derived from the literature review. We can hypothesize the following relationships between the pertinent variables- In this updated diagram, I hypothesize that age of other people attending an event will have an impact on whether one chooses to wear an Indian, Western or Indo-Western dress (H7a and H7b) and a revealing or modest dress (H8a and H8b).

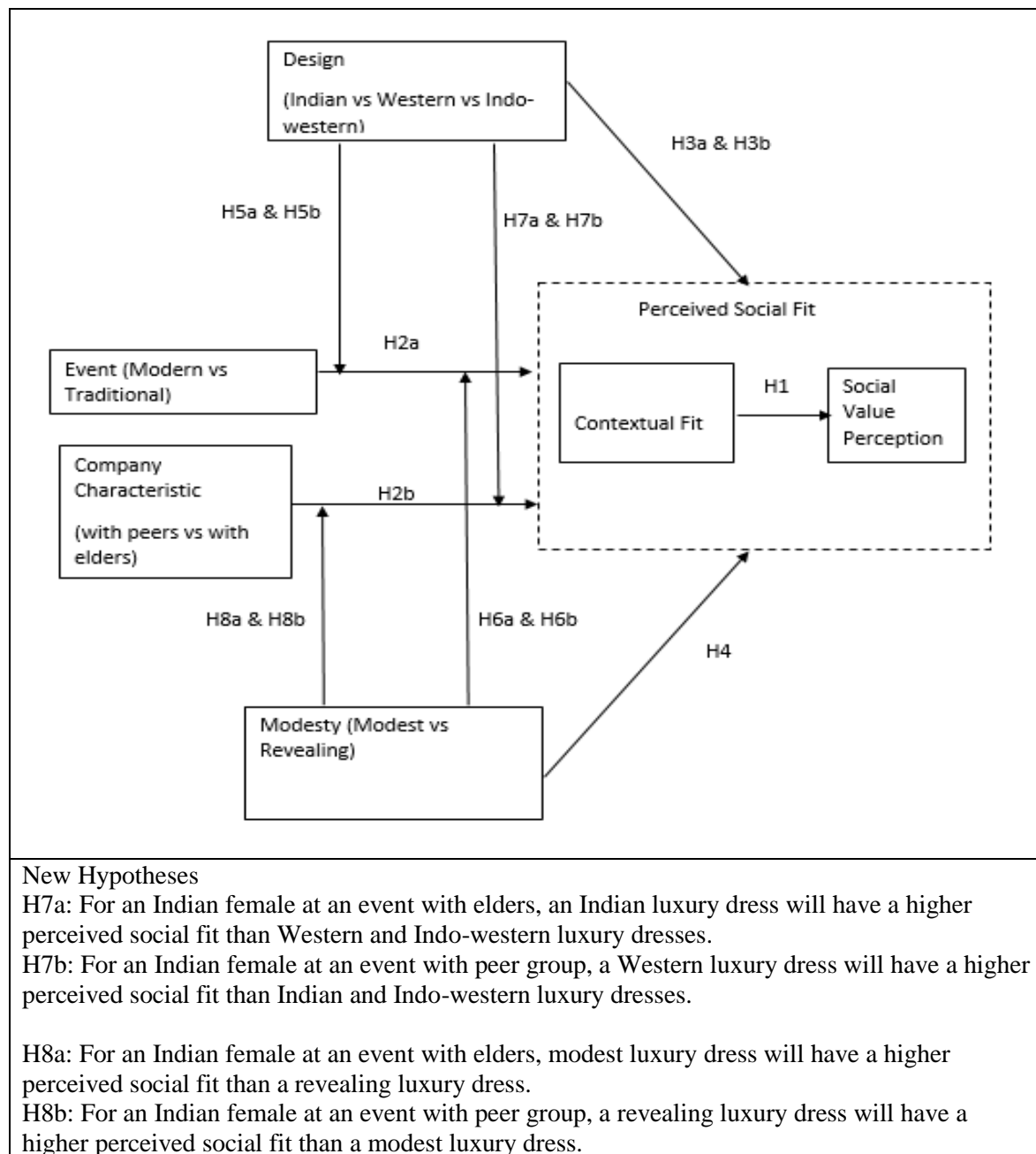
The interesting part of qualitative-research learning was the understanding of consumption decision-making process in more operative framework, broadly hinting at the sequence of cognitive steps in finalizing a luxury dress for a social occasion. The study really helped, as suggested often, in exploring the meaning of subjects' experience and comprehend the given phenomenon from their point of view (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 163–164).

The chapter has comprehensively summed up the explorative study and its results, providing the additional insights about decision-making process for the luxury dress-choices made by young Indian females.

The study suggests very explicitly that an individual's consumption-choice goes beyond the personal considerations. Consumption-context is the pivot for consumption-choice as concluded in the literature review and it is the starting point for consumption decision-making. Moreover, in India, consumer perceives the consumption-context through two major defining elements, the type of event and the characteristic of the company/people present. An event can be categorized as traditional or modern occasion. In traditional social occasions, the basic concern exhibited by the participants is the effort for attaining fit with Indian culture, whereas

in modern social occasions, the focus is found to be more on demonstrating modern/Western life-style elements.

**Figure 2. 8: Updated Conceptual Diagram - The interaction of social occasion (type of event and characteristic of people present) and dress-attributes (perceived design origin and modesty) on the social fit of a luxury dress**



For the fit with Indian culture, the study finds that the elements concerning modesty as a dress-attribute (not too revealing and social conformity) and perceived design origin (Indian) are the key dimensions for consumption-choice of a luxury dress for a traditional social occasion.

In both traditional and modern social occasions, the characteristics of the people in company (like age) are found to be affecting the consumption-choices of the participants.

The study shows that despite waves of modernization and globalization in different spheres of life, there is still a strong hold of undemocratic social norms pertaining to traditional hierarchical structure and patriarchal set-up of Indian society.

The study clearly demonstrates the dominance of social value perception in luxury consumption among Indian consumers through participants' increasing propensity to spend with the increasing importance of social occasions. Participants have exhibited their preference for luxury dress consumption for important occasions like weddings, and the desire to spend in proportion to how close they are to the bride or groom.

With the qualitative study, the major outlines of research project got concretized, and then pilot studies and pre-tests were conducted to set the pedestal for the quantitative analysis of the predicted hypotheses through experimental design method. The two pilot studies, three pre-tests, and the main experiment (design and its data analysis) are presented in the next chapter (chapter 3).



## **CHAPTER 3: QUANTITATIVE STUDY - GROUNDWORK AND MAIN EXPERIMENT**

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### **3.1 Introduction**

With the help of literature review and qualitative data, we have structured the study in terms of the identification of dependent and independent variables and the formulation of hypotheses. The next step was the testing of the hypotheses for the quantitative research using experimental design method. The present chapter starts with the pilot studies and pre-tests (see section 3.2) which were conducted to lay the foundation for the main experiment. Next, the design of the experiment is detailed in section 3.3. Finally, I test the hypotheses and provide results.

The reason for the selection of experimental design method in the present research gets summed up in what Montgomery (2013) writes while defining an ‘experiment’: “as a test or series of runs in which purposeful changes are made to the input variables of a process or system so that we may observe and identify the reasons for changes that may be observed in the output response. We may want to determine which input variables are responsible for the observed changes in the response, develop a model relating the response to the important input variables and to use this model for process or system improvement or other decision-making” (Montgomery, 2013, p. 1).

According to Neuman (2006), an experiment is a powerful way to focus sharply on causal relations and it closely fits the canons of positivist science. The method is popular primarily because of its logical rigor and simplicity, consistency with positivist assumptions, and relatively low cost (Neuman, 2006, p. 249).

### **3.2 Groundwork**

Coleman & Montgomery (1993) suggest the conduct of some pilot-runs before one conducts the main experiment as these runs throw light on the consistency of experimental material, help checking the measurement system, give a practice for the entire experimental technique and help finalizing – choice of factors/levels, experimental design, etc.

Following this suggestion, I carried out two pilot studies which helped finalize the four event stimuli used in the main experiment. For the enhancement of these stimuli, vignettes were developed with help from my supervisor to describe each event for enabling informed decision-making process by the respondents. Next, three pre-tests helped configure the main test – a within subject experiment in order to obtain the adequate length of survey and measurement of variables.

This section focusses on the groundwork conducted for finalizing the main experiment. In this section, the methodology and results of two pilot studies are discussed. It further introduces the vignettes developed to enhance the stimuli, which were used in pretests and experiments. Thereafter, the section focusses on the three pretests conducted for finalizing the main experiment.

### **3.2.1 Pilot study 1: choosing four events**

This study was conducted to choose 4 relevant private events and to classify them as Modern or Traditional. As discussed in chapter 2, private events are the ones which are based on ascriptive factors like birth, religion, class etc. Such events celebrate family issues and are organized by an individual/family. The events were further classified based on whether they were attended by elderly relatives or not. I selected four relevant private events for the main experiment, out of the list of 12 events, that were: Sangeet/Mehandi, Engagement, Reception, Cocktail, Bachelorette Party, House-warming, Mundan/Chaula (Tonsuring), New Year's Eve Party, Birthday Party, 25th Marriage Anniversary, Kitty Party and Godh Bharai Rasam (Indian Baby Shower). The study was conducted in November 2017.

#### **3.2.1.1 Methodology**

The study was conducted online using SurveyMonkey. Convenience and snowball sampling methods were used to select respondents for the study. All respondents were Indian females. 92 respondents attempted the study, however, after data cleaning, responses of only 70 respondents were analyzed. Responses of 22 respondents (out of 92) were removed before



performing data analysis. Out of these 22 respondents removed, 1 respondent was removed because she was not currently residing in India and 21 respondents were removed because they had left more than 10% of the questions unanswered. Table-3.1, exhibits the demographic information of the respondents for the study. The classification is in terms of the following criteria – gender, age, profession, and the city that the respondents belong to.

The sample comprised young Indian females, with the mean age of respondents being 26.9 years (Min = 19 years, Max = 37 years). The sample was bimodal, with 25 years and 26 years being the modal values of age. On the basis of the criterion ‘Profession’, the larger part of the sample was constituted by the ‘Student’ category (57% in table 3.1). The number of ‘Working’ females constituted 40% of the sample size. The major part of the sample (81%) was drawn from the city of Delhi.

**Table 3. 1: Demographic Data for pilot study 1**

Demographic variable	Sub categories – Frequency (N=70)		Percentage
Gender	Female	70	100
Age (in years)	Mean = 26.9		
	Mode = 25, 26		
Profession	Student	40	57.1
	Working	28	40
	House wife	2	2.9
City	Delhi	57	81.4
	Other	13	18.6

### 3.2.1.1.1 Measurement-instrument development

The private events can be classified as traditional and non-traditional/modern. The traditional events are part of Indian cultural heritage, whereas the modern ones are the new additions because of modernization/Westernization. To classify the private events as traditional or modern, 4 questions were asked for each event. I could not find any existing scale for such classification, therefore, I developed these questions of my own after perusal of existing literature on Indian society and traditions.

These four questions were: a) Folk/traditional songs are an integral part of this event, b) The event does not require the presence of a priest (reverse coded), c) There are restrictions on types of food items and beverages served, and d) This event was not prevalent during your grandparent's youth (reverse coded). The sources used for developing these questions have been mentioned below in table 3.2. The questions were answered on a Likert scale (Strongly Agree (5), ... , Strongly Disagree (1)). An event for which a participant agrees with statement a and statement c, would be classified as a traditional event. An event for which a participant agrees with statement b and statement d, would be classified as a modern event.

**Table 3. 2: Sources used for developing measurement instrument used in Pilot study 1**

<b>Questions – See Appendix 3A of chapter 3, p. 261</b>	<b>Sources used for developing questions</b>
Folk/traditional songs are an integral part of this event	Singh (1986, 2000), Lahiri-Roy (2016), Malik (2016)
The event does not require the presence of a priest	Lahiri-Roy (2016), Eriksen (2001), Singh (2000), Sharma (2012)
There are restrictions on types of food items and beverages served	Kakar & Kakar (2009)
This event was not prevalent during your grandparent's youth	Developed on my own

One more question was asked for each event. This question was used to further classify these events, based on whether they were attended by elderly relatives or not. The question was – ‘The older relatives/elders generally do not attend this event’. Likert scale was used to record responses to this statement - (Strongly Agree (5), ... , Strongly Disagree (1)).

### **3.2.1.2 Pilot study 1 - Results**

#### **Selection of stimuli for the Independent Variable – Event (Modern or Traditional)**

The events were classified as Modern or Traditional. Responses for the above mentioned 4 Likert statements were summated (out of these, 2 Likert statements were reverse coded– i. The event does not require the presence of a priest, ii. This event was not prevalent during your grandparent's youth). This led to total scores, for each event per respondent. A mean of total scores for each event was calculated. This led to 12 different means (one mean

per event). Thereafter, a median of these 12 different means was calculated. The median of means (9.15) was used to classify the events as modern or traditional. Events with a mean less than 9.15 were classified as Modern events, and events with a mean more than 9.15 were classified as Traditional events (refer table 3.3).

### **Selection of stimuli for the Independent Variable - Company characteristic (With Peers or With Elders)**

Mean for responses [on likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), ... , Strongly Disagree (1)] to the question (the older relatives/elders generally do not attend this event) was calculated for each event. This led to 12 different means – one mean per event. Thereafter, a median of these 12 means, was calculated. The median of means (1.78) was used to classify the events as – events attended by peers or elders. Events with a mean less than 1.78 were classified as events attended by elders, and events with a mean more than 1.78 were classified as events attended by peers (refer table 3.3 and table 3.4). Table 3.3 displays the relevant data for all the 12 events.

In reference to the company characteristic, I found that events that were perceived to be Modern, were also more likely to be attended by peers, and events that were perceived to be Traditional, were also more likely to be attended by elders.

In order to complete the design, I relied on my own perspective, and knowledge of Indian culture. Hence, out of all the events that were classified as modern and were likely to be attended by peers, I decided to select bachelorette party for this study, as within the Indian context, bachelorette party (apart from being a modern event, where luxury apparel was likely to be worn) was also least likely to be attended by elders. Out of the two events, that were classified as traditional events and likely to be attended by peers, I chose House-warming (for this study) instead of Sangeet, as House-warming was less likely to be attended by elders, when compared to Sangeet. Out of the two events, that could be classified as Modern as well as likely to be attended by elders, I chose Reception for this study as Indians are more likely to wear luxury apparel at a Reception. Similarly, out of the four events, classified as traditional events,

likely to be attended by elders, the Engagement would be the most preferred occasion to wear luxury apparel (see table 3.3).

**Table 3. 3: Data for all events (Mean of total scores is in ascending order)**

Events	Range of Total Score (1)	Mean of Total Score (2)	Std. Deviation (Total Score)	Mean (older relatives do not attend this event) (3)
<b>*Bachelorette Party</b>	<b>12</b> (Min = 4, Max = 16)	<b>6.20</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>4.56</b>
Cocktail	8 (Min = 4, Max = 12 )	6.23	2.39	3.69
New Year's eve Party	9 (Min = 4 , Max = 13)	6.71	2.65	2.99
Kitty Party	14 (Min = 4, Max = 18)	7.54	2.94	3.39
<b>*Reception</b>	<b>11</b> (Min = 4, Max = 15)	<b>8.89</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>1.37</b>
25th Marriage Anniversary	11 (Min = 4, Max = 15)	8.90	2.66	1.61
Birthday Party	11 (Min = 4, Max = 15)	9.40	3.10	1.74
<b>*House-Warming</b>	<b>16</b> (Min = 4 , Max = 20)	<b>11.64</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>1.99</b>
<b>*Engagement</b>	<b>14</b> (Min = 5, Max = 19)	<b>11.96</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>1.20</b>
Sangeet/Mehandi	11 (Min =7, Max = 18)	12.44	2.67	1.81
Indian Baby Shower	12 (Min = 8, Max = 20)	15.43	2.98	1.38
Mundan/Chaula (Tonsuring)	13 (Min = 7, Max = 20)	16.03	3.22	1.34
*Events in bold were selected as stimuli (1) Total score achieved through summation of 4 Likert items, hence - Min 4, Max 20 (2) Modern event if Mean < 9.15; Traditional event if mean is > 9.15 (3) Strongly Agree - 5, ... , Strongly Disagree - 1				

*To sum up, two modern events were chosen for the main experiment i) Bachelorette Party (modern event not attended by elders) and ii) Reception (modern event attended by elders). Two traditional events were chosen for the main experiment i) House-warming (traditional event not attended by elders) and ii) Engagement (traditional event attended by elders) (Refer table 3.4). Reliability of the 4 Likert items used for classifying events as Modern or Traditional has been presented in the appendix (for one of the events). However, the aim was not to create a scale, the aim was to create questions that could be used to classify some events as Modern or Traditional (appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3B, p. 275).*

**Table 3. 4: Four event stimuli selected for manipulation of independent variable – Event and independent variable – Company characteristic**

Event Stimulus	Level of independent variable - Event	Level of independent variable - Company characteristic
Bachelorette Party	Modern	With peers
Reception	Modern	With elders
House-warming	Traditional	With peers
Engagement	Traditional	With elders

### 3.2.2 Pilot study 2: choosing luxury dresses

This study was conducted to choose relevant dress stimuli. The aim of this study was to classify dresses on the basis of how Indian/Western and Modest/Revealing they were considered by Indian female respondents. Responses were collected from 40 female respondents. This was an online survey and Google Forms was used to conduct this study.

#### 3.2.2.1 Methodology

Judgement Sampling and convenience sampling were used to select respondents/participants. Table 3.5 exhibits the demographic information of a sample of 40 female respondents for the study. The classification is in terms of the following criteria – age, profession, and the city that the respondent belongs to. The sample comprised young Indian females, with the mean age of respondents being 28.6 years. The major part of the sample was constituted by ‘Working’ females (comprising 65% of the total sample size). The majority of respondents (30) were from Delhi and the rest from the other cities of India.

**Table 3. 5: Demographic Data for pilot study 2**

Demographic variable	Sub categories – Frequency		Percentage
Gender	Female	40	100
Age (in years)	Mean	28.68	
	Mode	26, 28	
Profession	Student	13	32.5
	Working	26	65
	House wife	1	2.5
City	Delhi	30	75
	Other	10	25

The dresses were selected from the websites of various Western brands (for example – Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Burberry, Hugo boss, etc.), Indian luxury designers/brands (for example – Anita Dongre, Manish Malhotra, Ritu Kumar, Gaurav Gupta, etc.), and/or e-shopping portals (for example – Yoox.com and Pernia's Pop up shop) offering dresses from these brands (sources of all the dresses have been mentioned in the Appendix 3C, p. 276). Further, to make these images homogenous in terms of possible confounding factors, the following manipulations were made, whenever necessary – a) the skin tone was brought almost to the same for all the models wearing these dresses, b) faces of all the models were removed, and c) the background in each image was also homogenized. These manipulations were done with the help of a professional who used Adobe Photoshop to achieve the desired results.

#### **3.2.2.1.1 Measurement-instrument development**

The aim of this study was to classify dresses on the basis of how Indian/Western and Modest/Revealing they were considered by Indian female respondents.

Subjects were shown 42 photos of dresses. In this large set of dress, there were 24 dresses for private events (i.e. events chosen in Pilot study 1) and 18 dresses for official events, such as important business meeting within the organization, workshop for skill/information enhancement, corporate social responsibility event. For each photo, 3 questions were asked (see table 3.6, for the complete questionnaire see Appendix 3C, p. 276).

First, on a 7-point semantic differential item (where 1 = Revealing, and 7 = Modest), respondents were asked, how revealing or modest, each dress was perceived to be, by them. Second, the respondents were asked to classify the dresses, as Indian/Western. For this classification, another 7-point semantic differential item was used. In this, respondents were asked to rate the overall aesthetic features (color, pattern, and styling) of a dress, with 1 = Western, and 7 = Indian. Third, the respondents were asked, at what kind of an event, each

dress could be worn. The options given, for this question were: 1) Official events, 2) Private/social events, 3) Both of the above, and 4) None of the above

I decided to keep only private events for the study in order to keep the contours of the research within manageable limits. Besides, consumption decision-making process being different in the two situations, a more rational study for official events would need a different experiment design from the one in the case of private/social events.

**Table 3. 6: Sources used for developing measurement instrument used in Pilot study 2**

Questions – Appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3C, p. 276	Sources used for developing questions
Q1 The dress shown above seems to be (1 revealing, ... , 7 modest)	Developed on my own based on the data collected during qualitative interviews
Q2 Overall aesthetic features (color, pattern and styling) of the dress shown above seem to be (1 Western, ... , 7 Indian)	Adapted from a scale used by Kim & Arthur (2003)
Q3 The dress shown above can be worn at Official events Private/social events Both of the above None of the above	Developed on my own 1 2 3 4

### 3.2.2.2 Pilot study 2: Selection of dresses as a function of perceived design origin and degree of Modesty

Dresses were classified as Western/Indian based on mean score (m1), calculated through analysis of responses to the following question - ‘Overall aesthetic features (color, pattern and styling) of the dress shown above seem to be (1 Western, ... , 7 Indian)’. Dresses were classified as revealing/modest based on mean score (m2), calculated through analysis of responses to the question – ‘The dress shown above seems to be (1 revealing, ... , 7 modest)’.

Dresses with mean value (m1) between 1 and 3 (i.e.  $m1 \geq 1$  &  $m1 < 3$ ), were classified as Western. Dresses with mean value (m1) between 3 and 5 (i.e.  $m1 \geq 3$  &  $m1 < 5$ ), were considered as Indo-western, and with means between 5 and 7 (i.e.  $m1 \geq 5$  &  $m1 \leq 7$ ), were termed as Indian.

**Table 3. 7: Dresses chosen for Private events**

	Indian (mean (m1) between 5 and 7)	Western (mean (m1) between 1 and 3)	Indo-western (mean (m1) between 3 and 5)
<b>Modest (Mean (m2) more than median of means=5.53)</b>	<b>Dress A</b> (m1= 6.78, m2 = 6.83) 	<b>Dress C</b> (m1= 1.9, m2= 5.8) 	<b>Dress E</b> (m1= 4.18, m2= 4.45) 
<b>Revealing (Mean (m2) less than median of means=5.53)</b>	<b>Dress B</b> (m1= 5.55, m2=4.9) 	<b>Dress D</b> (m1= 1.38, m2= 2.65) 	<b>Dress F</b> (m1= 3.98, m2= 3.48) 
<p>*m1 - mean score based on responses to Q1 in table 3.6 – ‘Overall aesthetic features (color, pattern and styling) of the dress shown above seem to be: Western (1), Indian (7)’</p> <p>*m2 - mean score based on responses to Q2 in table 3.6 – ‘The dress shown above seems to be: Revealing (1), Modest (7)’</p>			

In order to classify dresses as revealing or modest, median of mean values m2 (of all dresses) was calculated. Thus, dresses with mean (m2) less than the median of means (5.53), were classified as revealing, and dresses with mean (m2) higher than 5.53, were classified as modest.



Based on careful analyses of these two means, 6 dresses were chosen. However, no dress from the current pool of dresses could be technically classified as “Indo-western and modest”, as the value of m2 (revealing – modest score) for all Indo-western dresses was below 5.53, hence, I chose a dress for this category based on my own subjective criterion. The 6 dress stimuli chosen for the main experiment are shown in table 3.7.

### **3.2.3 Conclusion of Pilot study 1 and Pilot study 2**

Thus, data analyses of pilot study 1, led to selection of **4 event stimuli** for the main experiment that will be used to manipulate independent variables - Event and Company characteristic, as shown in Table 3.4.

**Pilot study 2** led to selection of **6 dress stimuli** that would aid in manipulation of independent variable – the perceived design origin (Indian or Western or Indo-western) and independent variable – modesty (Modest or Revealing) (Refer to table 3.7).

### **3.2.4 Enhancement of stimuli for social occasions – vignettes development for description of traditional and modern events**

“Like self-standing monologues for the stage, vignettes are portraits in miniature. ...As representations of participant action, reaction, and interaction, vignettes provide readers vivid, prosaic, “video clips” of social life to better understand the phenomenon investigated” (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 252).

In the present research, there is a use of vignette methodology to describe the scenarios of four social occasions to which respondents are exposed, to seek their opinions on various dress stimuli.

Once the events to be used as stimuli had been selected (after analyzing the data collected through pilot study 1), I, with the help from my supervisor, developed vignettes to describe each event. The purpose of vignettes was to help enable the participants for informed decision-making process in the selection of luxury dresses for the social occasions.

**Table 3. 8: Vignettes used in the main experiment**

<b>Modern event, without elders</b>
<p><b>Suppose you are invited to a bachelorette party.</b> A description of a typical bachelorette party (in India) has been provided below. Please read the description carefully.</p> <p>A Bachelorette Party is typically a new-age party thrown for a woman who is about to get married. <b>It is generally attended only by women, mostly those of more or less the same age as the bride-to-be (her friends, sisters, cousins).</b> It is, then, a pre-marriage party, recognizing and celebrating the end of singlehood, and is the one last celebration for the bride-to-be with her female friends before the marriage nuptials. These parties are often based on certain themes, and have music, dancing, alcohol, food, and games.</p>
<b>Modern event, with elders</b>
<p><b>Suppose you are invited to a reception party (marriage related event).</b> A description of a typical reception party (in India) has been provided below. Please read the description carefully.</p> <p>A reception party is a post-wedding event and is generally held immediately (within a few days) after the marriage ceremony. This event is most often organised by the groom's family. The purpose is to introduce the bride to the groom's extended family and his friends. <b>The party is attended by guests of all ages, including family elders.</b> The event has a very festive aura to it, since it is basically an extension to the wedding to celebrate the new accord and welcome the new member to the family. This ceremony does not include any rituals. Generally, there is a buffet of lavish dishes, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks on offer to the guests. This event often has elaborate entertainment with music and dance performances.</p>
<b>Traditional event, without elders</b>
<p><b>Suppose you are invited to a house-warming ceremony.</b> A description of a typical house-warming event (in India) has been provided below. Please read the description carefully.</p> <p>House-warming ceremony is typically a religious ceremony and is performed to facilitate the flow of positive energy into the new house. The sacred rituals are performed by a priest to bless the family with good health, wealth, peace and prosperity. Traditionally, during the house-warming ceremony, people pray for God's grace and seek a sense of security and comfort in the new house. The ceremony takes a few hours to complete and after rituals, food is served to the guests. <b>You have been informed that the hosts' parents and other relatives are at their home town and will not be able to grace the occasion. The ceremony will be attended only by common friends of your age.</b></p>
<b>Traditional event, with elders</b>
<p><b>Suppose you are invited to an engagement ceremony (marriage related event).</b> A description of a typical Indian engagement ceremony has been provided below. Please read the description carefully.</p> <p>The engagement ceremony is a pre-wedding ritual that could be held either months or even a few days before the actual wedding. It is a very vibrant, elaborate event, characterized by a number of rituals. It involves close friends and relatives, with a priest performing a number of rituals and is considered as a formal announcement of the impending nuptials. <b>The ceremony is attended by guests of all ages, including family elders.</b> Families from both the sides meet to bless the couple and pray for the couple's peace and happiness. The couple exchanges rings. Exchanging good wishes, gifts, and sweets forms an important part of the event. These engagement rituals are significant as they are supposed to strengthen the bond between the soon to be bride and groom.</p>

The vignettes were given as typical scenario for each of the four social occasions, to be used as stimuli in the experiment. The vignettes were used to manipulate two independent variables – type of event (modern or traditional) and company characteristic (peers or elders). It was basically, an attempt to sum up the defining elements of the selected social occasions. The brief evocative description was largely based on the nature of the event (modern or traditional), theme and main objective, main activities, kind of entertainment (if any), the type of food served, and attendance (peers only/with elders).

The traditional nature of an event was suggested by the event being a part of the Indian culture over the generations; the religious orientation with the presence of a priest/s and performance of rituals; restrictions on the food items to be served and the norm of no alcoholic drinks; and the main purpose being, seeking blessings from the elders and/or prayers to God for being blessed with safety, good health and happiness.

The modern nature of an event was suggested by the event being a new addition to Indian culture as a result of modernization/Westernization; music, dance and games for the entertainment of the guests; absence of restrictions on food items being served (with the inclusion of alcoholic drinks); and the main purpose being, to welcome someone/celebration of some status/rite de passage. Often such events were attended by one's peers.

### **3.2.5 Pretests conducted before the main Experiment**

In order to control for individual differences, I used a within subject experiment. I discuss, the benefits and drawbacks of within subjects in more detail under the methodology section of main experiment (p 175). However, the within design's questionnaire included the test of six dresses for each of the four events. It was necessary to check if the respondents would complete the questionnaire, given its duration.

#### **3.2.5.1 Pretest 1**

The main aim of conducting this pretest was to check if respondents would complete an experiment that contained 108 questions (9 questions related to demographics + 96 questions

related to experimental manipulation + 3 questions related to acculturation). All independent variables were within subject variables. This pre-test was conducted in April 2018, and created on SurveyMonkey.

The experimental design of this pretest was - 2 (Event: Modern or Traditional) x 2 (Company characteristic: with peers or with elders) x 2 (Perceived design origin: Indian or Western) x 2 (Modesty: Modest or Revealing).

### **3.2.5.1.1 Pretest 1 - Methodology**

#### **Sampling**

Convenience and snowball sampling was used. 64 participants took part in the study. Out of the 64 respondents to the online experiment, only 41 completed the experiment or at least responded to more than 90% of questions. Their mean age was 27.4 years. Out of these 41 respondents, 40 respondents got categorized on the basis of their profession into four groups – ‘Student’, ‘Working’, ‘Self-employed/Business’ and ‘House-wife’, with the number of respondents in each as 16, 12, 6 and 6, respectively. All respondents had a university degree - either Bachelor’s or Master’ (More demographic data regarding this sample is available in the appendix, Appendix 3F, p. 346).

#### **Measurement-instrument development (see table 3.9 and 3.10)**

Scales for individual value (2 items) and social value (2 items) have been adapted from Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, (2009) and Hennigs et al., (2012). Hennigs et al., (2012), used 7 items to measure the importance of social value dimension in their study. Out of the 2 items, I used, to measure the construct of social value perception of a luxury item in this study, one item (This dress will help me in making a good impression on others at this occasion) was adapted from one (I like to know what luxury brands and products make good impressions on others) of the 7 items used by Hennigs et al., (2012) to measure the importance of social value dimension in their study. The second item (This dress does not go really well with what people expect for this occasion) used to measure the construct of social value, in this study was

developed on my own. The individual value construct in this study was measured through 2 items. The 2 items (item 1: Wearing this dress for this occasion will not make me feel good, item 2: This dress will help me express my identity for this occasion) measuring the construct of individual value in this study, were adapted from three items grouped under the Self-Identity Value factor of individual value dimension, in a study by Wiedmann et al., (2009). I also developed, the 2 items (item 1: This dress is really appropriate for this occasion, item 2: I would avoid wearing this dress for this occasion), used for measuring contextual fit of clothes for different social occasions.

**Table 3. 9: Scales used in Pretest 1 (questions asked after each dress stimulus)**

<b>Scales</b>		<b>Sources</b>
Contextual-Fit	Item 1: This dress is really appropriate for this occasion	Developed on my own
	Item 2: I would avoid wearing this dress for this occasion *	Developed on my own
Individual Value Perception	Item 1: Wearing this dress for this occasion will not make me feel good *	Wiedmann et al., (2009)
	Item 2: This dress will help me express my identity for this occasion	Wiedmann et al., (2009)
Social Value Perception	Item 1: This dress will help me in making a good impression on others at this occasion	Hennigs et al., (2012)
	Item 2: This dress does not go really well with what people expect for this occasion*	Developed on my own
Likert scale used with all these statements– Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Don't know (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1) *Item to be reverse scored		

Respondents were asked 3 questions to measure acculturation. The 3 item scale (see table 3.10) used for measuring acculturation was adapted from Gupta's (2013) acculturation scale. I used 1 item (What type of dress do you prefer to wear?) of the behavioral acculturation of consumer culture, and 2 items (How do you identify yourself?; Rate yourself on how much you believe in Western values) of the attitudinal acculturation of consumer culture.

Each respondent was asked 8 demographic questions in the beginning, and was then assigned to the four - event x company characteristic conditions in a randomized order. For each (event x company characteristic) condition, 4 stimuli – photos of dresses, were shown to

them. The order of the stimuli was also randomized for each participant. The dress stimuli represented manipulations of two factors related to product attributes (see Table 3.11).

For each dress stimulus, respondents had to answer 6 questions related to contextual-fit, individual value dimension of luxury products, and social value dimension of luxury products (see the questions in table 3.9, p 148).

The subject then moved on to the next event x company characteristic (age) condition, and proceeded to respond to questions related to contextual-fit, individual value perception and social value perception for 4 dress stimuli. In totality, there were 4 (event x company characteristic) conditions.

Each subject had to go through all the 4 conditions, one by one. For each dress stimulus, questions related to contextual-fit, individual value dimension, and social value dimension were repeated.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked 3 questions to measure acculturation, and 1 question regarding their monthly income (Complete questionnaire can be found in the Appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3E, p. 322).

**Table 3. 10: Acculturation Scale used in Pretest 1 (questions asked at the end of the experiment)**

Scale	Item	Source used for developing item
Acculturation	What type of dress do you prefer to wear? Only Indian dresses (5), Mostly Indian dresses (4), Indian and Western dresses equally preferred (3), Mostly Western dresses (2), Only Western dresses (1)	Gupta, (2013)
	How do you identify yourself? Very Indian (5) Mostly Indian with some Western/foreign influence (4) Bicultural–equal Indian and Western/foreign influence (3) Mostly Western/foreign with some Indian influence (2) Very Westernized (1)	
	Rate yourself on how much you believe in Western values 1(Do not believe), 2, 3, 4, 5 (Strongly believe)	

**Table 3. 11: Dress stimuli used for Pretest 1**

Indian Modest dress	Indian Revealing Dress
	
Western Modest Dress	Western Revealing Dress
	

### 3.2.5.1.2 Pre-test 1 Results

Out of the 64 participants that responded to this online experiment, only 41 participants completed the experiment or at least responded to more than 90% of questions. The completion rate of the pretest was 64%. **As the completion rate was low, I decided to conduct more pretests in order to raise the completion rate.**

### 3.2.5.2 Pretest 2

Aim: As the previous pre-test proved that the experiment was too long and many participants were unable to complete the experiment, I decided to shorten the experiment by

using 1 item scales for measuring contextual-fit (item used - This dress is really appropriate for this occasion), individual value perception (item used - Wearing this dress for this occasion will make me feel good), and social value perception (item used - This dress will help me in making a good impression on others at this occasion), instead of two item scales. This reduced the number of questions to 60 (9 questions related to demographics + 48 questions related to experimental manipulations + 3 questions related to acculturation).

The experimental design of this pretest was - 2 (Event: Modern or Traditional) x 2 (Company characteristic: with peers or with elders) x 2 (Perceived design origin: Indian or Western) x 2 (Modesty: Modest or Revealing). All independent variables were within subject variables. The pretest was conducted online and created on SurveyMonkey.

### **3.2.5.2.1 Pretest 2 - Methodology**

#### **Sampling**

For pretest 2, a sample of 20 young Indian females was selected through Convenience and Snowball sampling.

The mean age of the 18 respondents, who completed the experiment or at least responded to more than 90% of the questions, was 28 years. On the basis of their profession, they got categorized in three groups – ‘Student’, ‘Working’ and ‘Self-employed/business’. All the respondents held a bachelor degree or above.

#### **Design**

In this second pretest, all the experimental conditions, stimuli, and questions related to demographics and acculturation, are the same as the ones used in pretest 1.

However, after every dress stimulus in each event x company characteristic condition, instead of 6 questions (as done in Pretest 1), only three questions were asked. One question for each of the three measurements, namely contextual-fit, individual value dimension, and social value dimension of luxury products (See the questionnaire in the appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3G, p. 347).



### **3.2.5.2.2 Pretest 2 - Results**

The reduction in number of questions resulted in significantly improved completion rate - 90% of the respondents answered more than 90% of the questions. Out of the 20 participants, 18 participants had completed the experiment or at least responded to more than 90% of the questions.

However, single item scales are less reliable than multiple item scales (Loo, 2002). Hence, it was decided that a third pretest needed to be conducted with a two item scale to measure social value perception.

### **3.2.5.3 Pretest 3**

In order to have a more reliable social value perception scale as well as limit the number of questions, it was decided to only focus on contextual-fit (through a one item scale) and social value perception (through a 2-item scale). The dependent variable of individual value perception was dropped, because for Indians, social value perception should be more important than individual value perception, considering that India is a collectivist country. The experimental design was also altered. The independent variable perceived design origin was made a three-level variable (Indian or Western or Indo-western), instead of a two-level variable (Indian or Western) as this would lead to more diversity of dresses. Thus, now along with Indian and Western dresses, the respondents were also shown Indo-western dresses. Moreover, in India, with the coexistence of tradition and modernity, Indo-western dresses seem to be an important category to include.

The experimental design for this pretest was - 2 (Event: Modern or Traditional) x 2 (Company characteristic: with peers or with elders) x 3 (Perceived design origin: Indian or Western or Indo-western) x 2 (Modesty: Modest or Revealing). All the independent variables were within subject variables.

Thus, the dress stimuli in this pretest were increased from 4 to 6, however, the number of questions asked per stimulus were kept the same (as in pretest 2 - three questions per dress stimulus). This pretest was conducted online and was created on SurveyMonkey.

### **3.2.5.3.1 Pretest 3: Methodology**

#### **Sampling**

For pretest 3, a sample of 20 young Indian females was selected through Convenience and Snowball sampling.

Out of them, 18 respondents completed the experiment or at least responded to more than 90% of the questions. The mean age of the respondents was 28 years. All of them were from the city of New Delhi and almost all had higher educational qualifications.

#### **Measurement-instrument development**

Apart from the changes presented above (6 dresses instead of 4, 2 items of social value perception and 1 item of contextual-fit), this pretest had the same structure and procedure for the participants as the two preceding ones (See the questionnaire in the appendix of chapter 3, appendix 3I, p. 372).

### **3.2.5.3.2 Pretest 3 – Results**

Despite a slightly longer questionnaire than pretest 2 (number of questions increased from 60 to 84), the completion rate was still significantly high.

20 participants took part in this study. After data cleaning, it was found that 18 participants had completed the experiment or at least responded to more than 90% of the questions. Hence, this version of questionnaire (with minor modifications) was used for the main experiment.

#### **Reliability of scale used for Social value perception in Pretest 3:**

The two items used to measure social value perception correlated well over the 24 experimental conditions. Table 3.12 provides Pearson's correlation value for all the different

treatments of the experiment (different treatments of the experiment are explained in Table 3.14, p. 158). For most of the treatments,  $r$  was higher than 0.5, except for treatment no. 4, 7, 16, 21 and 22.

**Table 3. 12: Pretest 3 – Reliability of social value perception scale (2 items)**

Experimental Condition No.	Pearson's correlation	Experimental Condition No.	Pearson's correlation
1	.55	13	.51
2	.87	14	.80
3	.57	15	.71
4	.14	16	.44
5	.91	17	.81
6	.93	18	.98
7	.22	19	.71
8	.88	20	.83
9	.93	21	.48
10	.77	22	.47
11	.89	23	.51
12	.79	24	.97

The acculturation scale of three items used in pretest 3 (see table 3.10) got a low Cronbach's alpha (0.55), however, the scale's reliability analyses also revealed that removing the third item of the scale would improve its reliability (Cronbach's Alpha if item 3 is deleted = 0.65). This led to the removal of the 3rd item of the scale, when the main study was conducted [Items kept in the main experiment – item 1: What type of dress do you prefer to wear? (Only Indian dresses (5), ... , Only Western dresses (1)), and item 2: How do you identify yourself? (Very Indian (5), ... , Very Westernized (1))].

To test the normality of contextual-fit and social value perception scale items – (See Appendix 3J, pp. 404-406) – the Shapiro Wilk test was used as there were less than 50 respondents (Mayers, 2013). It was found that the data was significantly different from normal distribution for most experimental treatments.

Hence, for the main experiment, slight changes to the wording of scales used for measuring contextual-fit and social value perception were made in order to reach a more balanced distribution of answers. Table 3.13 displays these changes.

**Table 3. 13: Changes made to the items of contextual-fit and social value perception scales**

Scale	Items in Pretest 3	Items used in the main experiment
Contextual-Fit	This dress is really appropriate for this occasion	This dress is really ideal for this occasion
Social Value Perception	This dress will help me in making a good impression on others at this occasion	This dress will help me make a really good impression on others at this occasion
	This dress does not go really well with what people expect for this occasion *	This dress looks somewhat inappropriate as per what people expect for this occasion *
Likert scale used with all these statements– Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Don't know (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1) *Item to be reverse scored		

#### 3.2.5.4 Conclusion of groundwork

The two pilot studies, development of vignettes, and the three pretests provided the necessary stimuli for manipulations of independent variables. These manipulations formed the requisite design configurations for the smooth conduct of the quantitative study, discussed in detail in the next section.

Based on the learnings from the pretests, it was decided that the main experiment should mirror the experiment design used in the pretest 3. Pretest 3 provided a high completion rate, and also allowed for more diversity in the perceived design origin as the independent variable, with three levels – Indian, Western, and Indo-western (reflecting the co-existence of tradition and modernity in India). In addition, it also measured social value perception with correct reliability by a 2-item scale.

The next section, comprehensively discusses the main experiment – a complex factorial design with repeated measures i.e. with-in subjects design.

### 3.3 The main experiment

The main experiment is a within subject experiment with four independent variables and two dependent variables. The experiment had the following design - 2 (Event: Modern or Traditional) x 2 (Company characteristic: with peers or with elders) x 3 (Perceived design

origin: Indian or Western or Indo-western) x 2 (Modesty: Modest or Revealing). Two dependent variables in the main experiment are contextual-fit and social value perception.

### **3.3.1 Main experiment – Methodology**

The experiment designed for this study is a **within subject** experiment. Within subject experiment is a type of experimental design in which all participants are exposed to every treatment or condition or different levels of independent variable(s). Within subject studies have some inherent benefits, such as the need for fewer respondents as each respondents is exposed to all the experimental conditions; and reduced possibility of individual differences influencing the results (A. Myers & Hansen, 2012), because within subject studies are better for controlling the variability caused due to individual differences. As a result of the differences in experience, training, or background, the differences in the responses of different people to the same treatment may be quite large under some experimental situations and if this variability is not controlled, it may become part of the experimental error. This has the potential, in some cases, to significantly inflate the error mean square and making the detection of real differences between the treatments difficult. The control of this variability is possible by employing a repeated measures design in which each of the treatments is applied to each person/subject (Broota, 1989, p. 115).

Since in my research, I was to look at the simultaneous effects of more than one independent variable, I employed a complex factorial design. I created the treatment/manipulation with the combination of categories of independent variables. My aim was to test hypotheses and to look for the main effects and the interaction effects of the treatments on the dependent variable (Neuman, 2006). Factorial design is “a statistical experimental design used to measure the effects of two or more independent variables at various levels and to allow for interactions between variables” (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2010, p. 392).

Factorial designs are useful as they make it easier to find an effect, and are efficient too, as multiple independent variables can be manipulated in a single experiment instead of

conducting multiple small experiments. Besides, they are perhaps the only ways of discovering the interaction effects between variables. Two- (or more-) way ANOVA is the basic tool for analysis of data from a factorial design (Metsämuuronen, 2017, p. 307). Experiments involving multi-factorial designs are more realistic. A larger number of independent variables enhance the external or ecological validity of the experiment. A multi-factorial design not only studies the effect of each independent variable, it also captures their interactions. “A theory that successfully predicts an interaction is a more successful theory, because it is generally more difficult to predict an interaction than to predict a main effect” (Abdi, Edelman, Valentin, & Dowling, 2009, p. 283).

### **Procedure for each respondent**

Each respondent was first asked demographic questions (questions 1 to 8), out of which three questions at the beginning were filter questions (for example – a. Are you an Indian national?, b. Are you currently residing in India?, and c. Gender). The aim was to include only female respondents who were Indian nationals and residing in India (The complete questionnaire for this experiment can be found in appendix of chapter 3 – Appendix 3K, p. 407).

Then, they were randomly assigned to one of the four: Event (Modern or Traditional) X Company characteristic (with peers or with elders) conditions. Once they answered questions related to one condition, they moved on to the next condition. The order of conditions was randomized. Within each – Event X Company characteristic condition, they were randomly shown six dress stimuli – based on manipulation of product attributes. 6 dress stimuli (refer to table 3.15) were a result of manipulation of Perceived design origin (Indian or Western or Indo-western) and Modesty (Modest or Revealing).

For each dress stimulus, questions related to Contextual-Fit, and Social Value Perception were asked. Here, too, the order of stimuli was randomized. The above-mentioned manipulations, resulted in 24 different experimental treatments, presented in table 3.14.

As explained above manipulation of event and company characteristic led to four different social occasions. The respondents were randomly assigned to one such occasion. For example, let's assume they are assigned to the Bachelorette party in the beginning (i.e., Modern event with peers). Next, they were shown and asked to read a vignette prepared for the bachelorette party. After this, they were shown the 6 dress stimuli (A, B, C, D, E and F) in a random order (refer table 3.15). After viewing each dress stimulus, they were asked three questions (1 question related to Contextual-Fit, and 2 questions related to Social Value Perception). For example, for Bachelorette party, these six stimuli would represent Treatment No.1 to 6 in table 3.14. Convenience and Snowball sampling was used. 994 participants took part in the study. Qualtrics was used to conduct this experiment.

**Table 3. 14: Different experiment conditions/scenarios**

Condition No.	Treatment explanation
1	Bachelorette Party - modern event with peers, <b>Dress A</b> -Indian Modest
2	Bachelorette Party - modern event with peers, <b>Dress B</b> -Indian Revealing
3	Bachelorette Party - modern event with peers, <b>Dress C</b> -Western Modest
4	Bachelorette Party - modern event with peers, <b>Dress D</b> -Western Revealing
5	Bachelorette Party - modern event with peers, <b>Dress E</b> -Indo-western Modest
6	Bachelorette Party - modern event with peers, <b>Dress F</b> -Indo-western Revealing
7	Reception Party - modern event with elders, Dress- Indian Modest
8	Reception Party - modern event with elders, Dress- Indian Revealing
9	Reception Party - modern event with elders, Dress- Western Modest
10	Reception Party - modern event with elders, Dress- Western Revealing
11	Reception Party - modern event with elders, Dress- Indo-western Modest
12	Reception Party - modern event with elders, Dress- Indo-western Revealing
13	House-warming Ceremony - traditional event with peers, Dress- Indian Modest
14	House-warming Ceremony - traditional event with peers, Dress- Indian Revealing
15	House-warming Ceremony - traditional event with peers, Dress- Western Modest
16	House-warming Ceremony - traditional event with peers, Dress- Western Revealing
17	House-warming Ceremony - traditional event with peers, Dress- Indo-western Modest
18	House-warming Ceremony - traditional event with peers, Dress- Indo-western Revealing
19	Engagement Ceremony - traditional event with elders, Dress- Indian Modest
20	Engagement Ceremony - traditional event with elders, Dress- Indian Revealing
21	Engagement Ceremony - traditional event with elders, Dress- Western Modest
22	Engagement Ceremony - traditional event with elders, Dress- Western Revealing
23	Engagement Ceremony - traditional event with elders, Dress- Indo-western Modest
24	Engagement Ceremony - traditional event with elders, Dress- Indo-western revealing

**Table 3. 15: Dress stimuli used in the main experiment**

	<b>Indian</b>	<b>Western</b>	<b>Indo-western</b>
<b>Modest</b>	Dress A 	Dress C 	Dress E 
<b>Revealing</b>	Dress B 	Dress D 	Dress F 

### Measurement-instrument development

Following the third pretest, one item scale was used for measuring contextual-fit (This dress is really ideal for this occasion) and a two item scale (item 1: This dress will help me make a really good impression on others at this occasion; item 2: This dress looks somewhat inappropriate as per what people expect for this occasion) was used for measuring social value perception (refer table 3.16).



**Table 3. 16: Scales used in Main experiment (questions asked after each dress stimulus)**

Scale	Item	Source used for developing item
Contextual-Fit	This dress is really ideal for this occasion	Developed on my own
Social Value Perception	This dress will help me make a really good impression on others at this occasion	Hennigs et al., (2012)
	This dress looks somewhat inappropriate as per what people expect for this occasion *	Developed on my own
Likert scale used with all these statements– Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Don't know (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1) *Reverse coded		

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked 2 questions to measure acculturation (Table 3.17), and 1 question regarding their monthly income.

**Table 3. 17: Acculturation Scale used in the main experiment (questions asked at the end of the experiment)**

Scale	Item
Acculturation	Item 1 - What type of dress do you prefer to wear? Only Indian dresses (5) Mostly Indian dresses (4) Indian and Western dresses equally preferred (3) Mostly Western dresses (2) Only Western dresses (1)
	Item 2 - How do you identify yourself? Very Indian (5) Mostly Indian with some Western/foreign influence (4) Bicultural – equal Indian and Western/foreign influence (3) Mostly Western/foreign with some Indian influence (2) Very Westernized (1)

The Pearson's correlation for the two items of the acculturation scale was  $r = 0.40$

## Sampling

“Sampling is the design task of deciding *which* elements in a population will be chosen and how those will be chosen” (Loseke, 2012, p. 101).

For the purpose of this research, young Indian females in the age group of 20 to 40 years formed the target population. For ease, and due to the need for a large sample size, I employed a mix of Convenience and Snowball sampling. For ensuring that the female respondents chosen are from economically well-off families (consumers of luxury products/potential consumers of

luxury in future), I contacted respondents, who have been aspirants for higher-end jobs for the past decade. I reached to them online through their education consultants in Delhi. These females hailing from various major urban centers of India, had been residing in Delhi for the past few years in hope of achieving their aspirations through top competitive examinations. The commonly held view is that these aspirants are generally from economically well-off families as the stay in Delhi and availing guidance for the competitive examinations involves a good amount of expenditure. This means that the selected respondents at the first level, through convenience sampling were a good mix of females who were in different high level jobs (private/government) and students/aspirants for high-end careers. Through these respondents, I also reached out to their friends of the same age group and similar interests, as well as their sisters/mothers/aunts etc. As a result, I could reach out to a large sample of our target population of young (ages 20-40) Indian females, belonging to a range of professions and well-scattered across India. Through the procedures of convenience and snowball sampling, besides ease and economics in cost for gathering a large sample from various urban centers of India, I could locate females with interests in luxury dresses and easily convince them to positively respond to a long questionnaire.

994 participants took part in the experiment. Out of 994 participants, 65 respondents didn't meet the demographic requirements of the study based on their responses to the 3 filter questions at the beginning of the study. These include male respondents (32), respondents not living in India at present (25), and respondents who are not Indian nationals (8). Such respondents were not allowed to complete the survey. Their data was taken out of the database during data cleaning. Out of the respondents (N=929) who were allowed to complete the survey, 195 respondents had left more than 10% of questions unanswered. Their data was also taken out of the database while data was being cleaned. This left me with 734 respondents.

Table 3.18 exhibits the demographic information (along with socio demographic coding used in this study) of a sample comprising 734 female respondents for the main study. The

classification is in terms of the following criteria – age, profession, education, the type of city that the respondent belongs to, monthly income, and marital status.

Out of 734 respondents, 726 (98%) respondents indicated their age. The respondents were young females with the mean age of 25.8 years. The modal age of the respondents was 25 years. The young age group is found to be highly receptive to the idea of luxury. The group is expected to constitute all kinds of luxury consumers – the actual, new and potential. A large number of young in India, below the age of 30 years have new-age lucrative jobs with large expendable incomes. Some of these also have wealthy parentage. “What makes them a good target for luxury is their outlook towards life and their mind-set, which is distinct from the traditional Indians. Brought up largely in the post-economic-liberalization era, these consumers belong to the ‘no-strings’ generation of India” (D. Sinha, 2012, p. 9).

Data about the respondent’s profession was coded as per the classification provided by INSEE (List of professions and socio-professional categories) (<https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/2406153>). Out of the total sample, 707 respondents got categorized accordingly. About half of them (364 respondents comprising 51.5%) were students. About one-sixth (117 respondents comprising 16.5%) categorized themselves in the “executives and higher intellectual professions” group.

In all, 730 respondents indicated their education levels. Except for a small number, most had attained higher education levels. The respondents who held a Bachelor’s degree were 335 in number and constituted 45.9% of the total. 357 respondents, comprising 48.9% of the total, had a Master’s degree or above. Most of the respondents being with higher education standards, were either already in higher-end private and government jobs with good salaries or aspiring for the same. The selected respondents being young and with higher education are found to be more confident and acculturated to Western ways of life. “All they are trying is to break free from a life confined to limited choices to experience one that is open to risk and experimentation, albeit with a sense of meaning” (Titus, 2015, p. 10).

The cities that the respondents belonged to, were grouped into 3 categories on the basis of population size as per Census 2011 data (The census was conducted by government of India). 721 respondents were categorized accordingly. A large majority of these 721 respondents (506 in number, comprising 70.2%) belonged to the mega cities (Mumbai, Delhi etc.) with population greater than 5 million. All respondents being from urban centers, with overwhelming percentage from mega cities have been exposed to Western lifestyles with easy availability of global luxury brands and diversity of social contexts for multiple identities. As a result, the selected sample is highly probable to be comprising the actual as well as potential luxury consumers. Atwal & Jain (2012), writing about luxury market in India, opine – “the combination of a large young working population, rising income levels, overwhelming consumer optimism and increasingly urbanized lifestyles is driving consumption growth in India” (Atwal & Jain, 2012, p. 1). Sinha (2012) also adds that many luxury consumers are emerging from the upcoming smaller urban centres and the suburbs of big cities (D. Sinha, 2012, p. 8).

On the basis of ‘monthly income’ (in INR), five categories were created for 659 respondents who chose to reveal their economic status. Only 40 of these respondents (comprising 6.1%) belonged to the highest income category (INR above 260,000). About two-third of the respondents (436 in number, comprising 66.2%) had an income of INR below 65,000. About one-third of the respondents, have income levels with the possibility to aspire for and experience new luxury lifestyles. The larger part of the sample, though with lower income levels, because of their higher education (and aspiring for higher end professions), urban exposure and in some cases wealthy parentage can be perceived as potential luxury consumers.

Titus (2015) writing on consumption and lifestyle choices of young Indians, comments that they are characterized by “no-holds-barred consumption enthusiasm” and further adds – “Anything conspicuous contributes to an image, and that includes the use of products and

services” (Titus, 2015, pp. 7, 26). Of the 732 respondents, who mentioned their marital status, about 80% were unmarried, which put them in the category of potential luxury consumers, as literature survey and qualitative study, both establish marriage-related functions to be the occasions for high propensity to spend for luxury (Kuldova, 2016, p. 38).

**Table 3. 18: Demographic Data of Main Experiment**

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Sub-categories - Frequency</b>		<b>Valid Percentage</b>	<b>Coding</b>
Gender	Female 734		100	
Age (in years)	Responded – 726 (98.9%) Mean- 25.88, Mode – 25			
Profession	Student	364	51.5	1
	Miscellaneous	76	10.7	2
	Entrepreneur	22	3.1	3
	Housewife	33	4.7	4
	Employee	0	0	5
	Intermediate professions	95	13.4	6
	Executives and higher intellectual professions	117	16.5	7
	Total	707		
Education	Senior School Certificate (12th standard) or lower	23	3.2	2
	Bachelor’s Degree	335	45.9	3
	Master’s Degree or above	357	48.9	4
	Other	15	2.1	7
	Total	730		
City (based on population as per census 2011 data)	Less than 1 million	115	16	1
	1 to 5 million	100	13.9	2
	Greater than 5 million	506	70.2	3
	Total	721		
Monthly Income	Below INR 65,000 (Below 826 Euro)	436	66.2	1
	Between INR 65,000-130,000 (Between 826 Euro - 1,652 Euro)	137	20.8	2
	Between INR 130,000 – 195,000 (Between 1,652 Euro - 2,480 Euro)	30	4.6	3
	Between INR 195,000 – 260,000 (Between 2,480 Euro - 3,304 Euro)	16	2.4	4
	Above INR 260,000 (Above 3,304 Euro)	40	6.1	5
	Total	659		
Marital status	Married	147	20.1	1
	Unmarried	585	79.9	0
	Total	732		

### 3.3.2 Data Cleaning

Data was cleaned and first coded in Microsoft excel. Whenever recoding of certain variables (socio demographic variables – such as education, profession) was required, it was achieved directly in SPSS. All the missing values for every participant were replaced with 999 (except in case of respondents who were filtered out after first three questions i.e., respondents who were not Indian nationals, respondents who were Indian nationals but were not residing in India, and male respondents - missing values in such cases were replaced with 777).

### 3.3.3 Hypotheses Testing

Analysis of the impact of the perceived contextual fit of a luxury dress, on its perceived social value (Hypothesis H1).

**H1: For an Indian female, the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress will positively impact its perceived social value for a particular social occasion.**

Different levels of the 4 independent variables of this study lead to 24 different experimental conditions. Table 3.14 provides brief information about each experimental condition/scenario. In condition 1, respondents imagined themselves to be invited to a Bachelorette Party (modern event, without elders), and were shown an image of an Indian, modest dress. In condition 2, the event remained the same, however, this time respondents were shown a different dress – a dress with Indian design that was more revealing, and so on.

To test hypothesis H1, simple linear regression was performed. Simple linear regression helps in analyzing the amount of variance in dependent variable that be explained by a predictor variable (Mayers, 2013, p. 398). **Contextual-fit was considered the independent variable (predictor variable) and Social value perception was considered the dependent variable.** The two items of social value perception (Item 1: “This dress will help me make a really good impression on others at this occasion” and reversely coded item 2: “This dress looks somewhat inappropriate as per what people expect for this occasion”) were averaged to create a single score of social value for each experiment condition. Table 1 (in appendix 3L, p. 438) exhibits

the results of simple linear regression for all the experiment conditions. R square provides an idea about the extent of variance in the dependent variable (social value perception) that can be explained by predictor variable (contextual-fit) and B represents the gradient of linear regression line. In all the scenarios, the regression model is significant. In 20 out of 24 scenarios, more than 50% of variance in Social value perception is predicted by contextual-fit (Min R square = 0.35, Max R square = 0.69).

**Results shown in table 1 (in appendix 3L, p. 438) confirm hypothesis H1 (For an Indian female, the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress will positively impact its perceived social value for a particular social occasion).**

Shukla et al. (2015), suggest that an Indian's luxury consumption choices are significantly affected by others' notions, and as a result, consumers seek societal approval. This implies that getting dressed is not an individual, but a social experience (Yodanis, 2018, p. 6). The imperative of social conformity relates to the need for social identity and they both involve adopting collective beliefs and attitudes (Mair, 2018, p. 93).

After this, the data was restructured using the Restructure option in data menu. 'Restructure selected variables into cases' option was chosen. This resulted in an SPSS file, in which 24 rows belonged to each respondent. Here, each row represented a unique experiment treatment for a respondent. As the experiment has 24 different treatments/conditions, hence, each respondent got 24 rows of data.

**Table 3. 19: Correlation Matrix**

	Contextual-Fit	Social Value Perception item 1	Reverse coded Social Value Perception item 2
Contextual-Fit	1.00		
Social Value Perception item 1	0.83	1.00	
Reverse coded Social Value Perception item 2	0.64	0.62	1.00

The correlation between contextual-fit and social value perception (for 2 items) is above .60 (see table 3.19), therefore, factorial analysis was conducted using 3 scores (1 item of

contextual-fit and 2 items of social value perception), with no rotation and eigenvalue cut off of 1.0 to reduce these three items/scores to 1 score (regression score) for each of the 24 experiment scenarios. Output related to factor analyses is in the appendix (appendix 3L, p. 439). Factor analysis revealed one component that had eigen value greater than 1 and explained 79.9 % of variance. The lambda values on component 1 as per the component matrix are .927 for contextual-fit, .920 for social value perception item 1 and .831 for reverse coded social value perception item 2 (SPSS output available in appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3L, p. 439).

Due to results of factor analysis, it was decided to merge the two variables (contextual-fit and social value perception) and create a single variable. In order to reduce 3 different scores (1 item of contextual-fit and 2 items of social value perception) into 1 score, individual factorial score was used.

After this, the data was once again restructured into its previous format using ‘restructure selected cases into variables’ option. This led to division of raw factorial scores into 24 different columns (1 column for each experimental condition).

These raw factorial scores were further standardized through calculation of controlled factorial scores (controlled factorial score for each individual  $i = (\text{raw factorial score for } i - \text{mean factorial score for this individual } i \text{ over the 24 conditions}) / \text{Standard deviation of the raw factor across the 24 conditions}$ ). This led to creation of 24 new columns of controlled factorial scores. From now on, I will refer to these controlled factorial scores as **‘Perceived social fit scores’** in this thesis.

The perceived social fit scores used for conducting repeated measures ANOVA, were found to be significantly different from a normal distribution (see appendix of chapter 3, appendix 3L, p. 440). Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used as number of subjects are greater than 50 (Mayers, 2013).



Table 3.20 below, shows the reliability of the new scale if we consider 1 item of contextual-fit and 2 items of social value perception as one scale (containing 3 items). In most of the experimental scenarios, the Cronbach's alpha was higher than 0.7.

**Table 3. 20: Reliability of the new scale (3 items considered together = 1 item of contextual-fit + 2 items of social value perception)**

<b>Experiment Treatment No.</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Experiment Treatment No.</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
1	0.81	13	0.76
2	0.86	14	0.84
3	0.83	15	0.83
4	0.80	16	0.80
5	0.84	17	0.84
6	0.87	18	0.85
7	0.67	19	0.69
8	0.83	20	0.83
9	0.82	21	0.82
10	0.80	22	0.80
11	0.82	23	0.80
12	0.84	24	0.85

**Rest of the hypotheses of this study have been analyzed through repeated measures multi factorial ANOVA.** “A repeated-measures multi-factorial ANOVA examines outcomes from a single (parametric) dependent variable, across two or more categorical independent variables, each represented by two or more within-group conditions (all conducted across a single group)” (Mayers, 2013, p. 248). **Perceived social fit scores were used to conduct repeated measures multi factorial ANOVA.**

### **3.3.3.1 Main Effects - Analysis of the roles of ‘Consumption-Context’ and ‘Product-Attributes’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit**

The hypotheses (H2, H3 and H4) reported under this section deal with main effects. “A main effect describes whether there is a significant difference in the dependent variable scores across the groups – we investigate this for each of the independent variables” (Mayers, 2013, p. 220). If there is more than one independent variable in an experiment, then the individual effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable is known as the main effect of that particular independent variable on the dependent variable (Nestor & Schutt, 2014).

Type III sum of squares have been used in further analyses as it is the most commonly used type of sum of squares. It can be used for both balanced and unbalanced models, provided the model has no empty cells (IBM, 2016). Type III sum of squares is also preferred when there is an interaction effect among variables (Herr, 1986).

### 3.3.3.1.1 Analysis of the role of ‘Consumption-Context’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit (H2a & H2b)

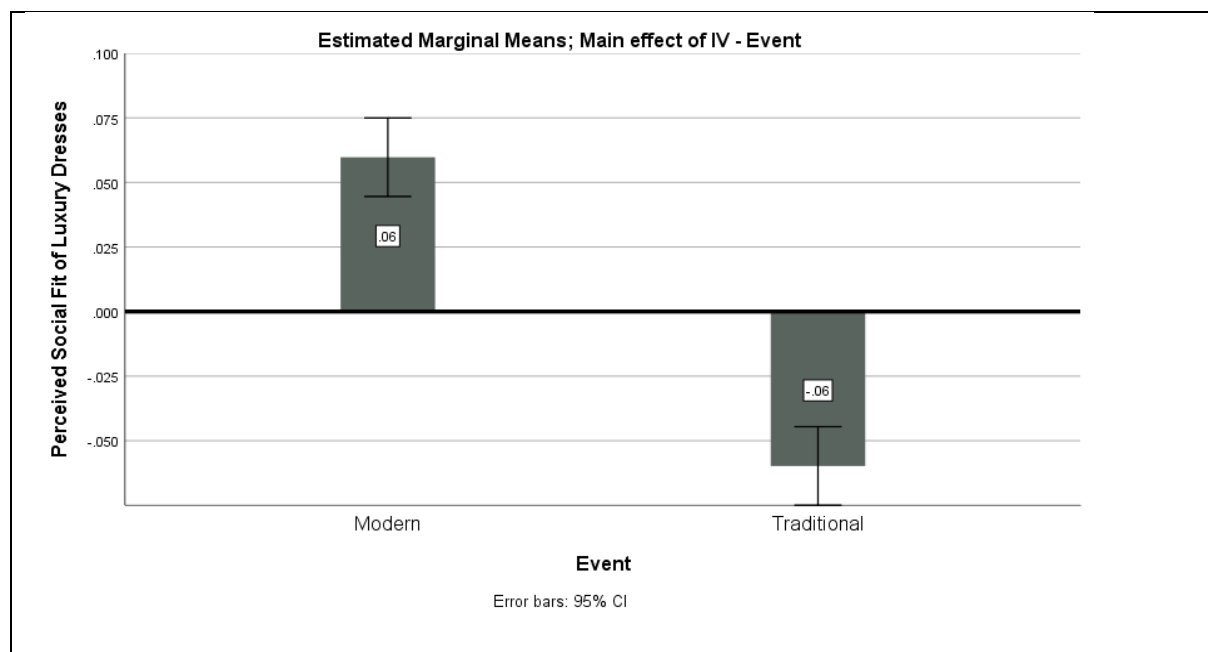
**Hypothesis H2a** (The traditional or modern characteristics of a social occasion result in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female), is supported through the presence of a significant main effect of event variable.

As shown in Table 3.21, the event variable (e.g., modern or traditional) has a significant impact on perceived social fit of a luxury dress –  $F(1, 635) = 59.6, p < .001$  (Appendix 3M, p. 441).

**Table 3. 21: Test of within subject effect of event on perceived social fit - N=636**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
event	54.5	1	54.5	59.6	0.000	0.09

**Figure 3. 1: Main effect of Event’s modernity ( $F(1, 635) = 59.65, p < .001$ ) on Perceived Social Fit of Luxury Dresses**



As per table 3.22, the difference between modern and traditional event is significant (mean difference = .12,  $p < .001$ ). These results suggest that the dresses chosen for this study have a better perceived social fit for modern events than for traditional events.

**Table 3. 22: Pairwise Comparisons of perceived social fit for different levels of Independent Variable – Event; N=636**

(I) event	(J) event	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
Modern	Traditional	.12*	0.015	0.000

Considering a main effect of event variable has been found, this means that the type of event will significantly affect the perceived social value of a luxury dress for an Indian female. Hence, hypothesis H2a is supported through the data.

The confirmation of this hypothesis supports the literature review which states that consumers evaluate ethnically pertinent product-attributes more favorably during an ethnically congruent situation than during a non-ethnic situation, as shown, among others, by Chattaraman et al., (2009). It is, at the simplest level, a reflection of social conformity by choosing a context-congruent luxury dress.

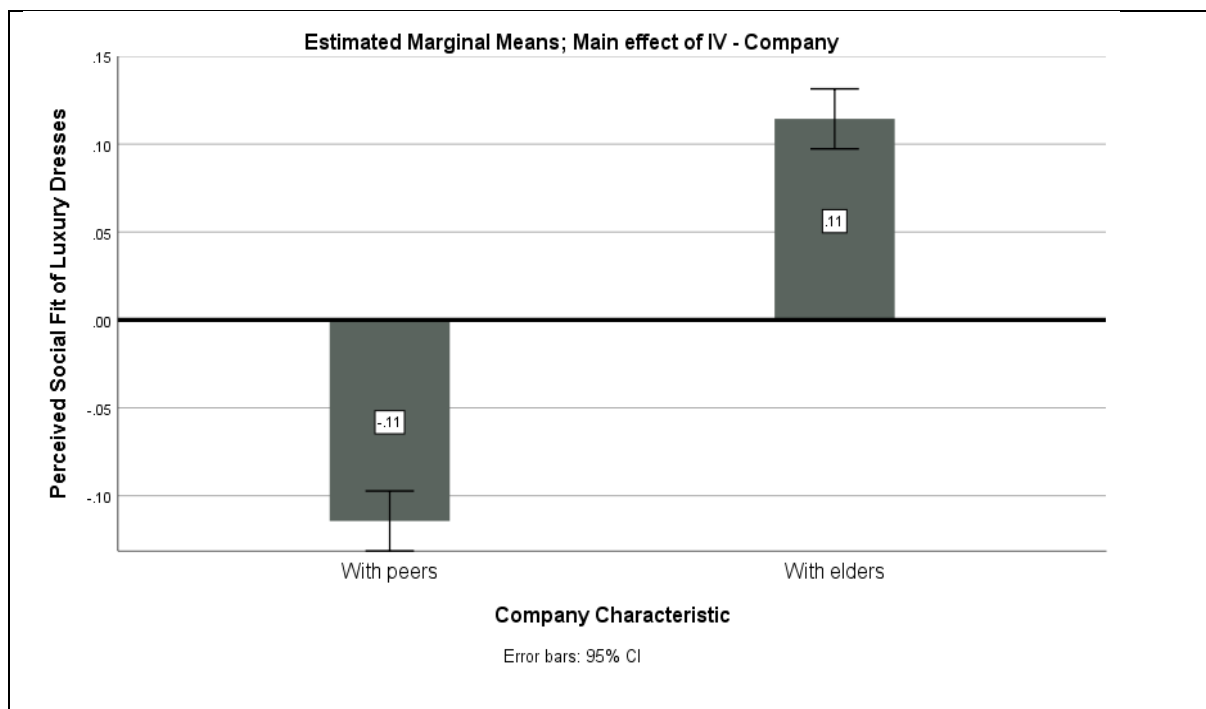
**Hypothesis H2b** [The characteristic of the company/people present at the occasion (with peers or with elders) results in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female] is supported through a significant main effect of company characteristic.

The company characteristic variable (with peers or with elders) has a significant impact on perceived social fit –  $F(1, 635) = 173.7$ ,  $p < .001$  (see table 3.23 below, spss output - Appendix 3M, p. 441).

**Table 3. 23: Test of within subject effect of company characteristic on perceived social fit – N=636**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Company Characteristic	199.6	1	199.6	173.7	0.000	0.22

**Figure 3. 2: Main effect of IV – Company Characteristic ( $F(1, 635) = 173.74, p < .001$ ) on Perceived Social Fit of luxury dresses**



The difference between event with peers and event with elders is significant (mean difference  $-0.22, p < .001$ ) (refer table 3.24). These results suggest that the dresses chosen for the study have a better perceived social fit for events with elders than for events with peers.

**Table 3. 24: Pairwise Comparisons of perceived social fit for different levels of Independent Variable – Company Characteristic; N=636**

(I) Company Characteristic	(J) Company Characteristic	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
With Peers	With elders	-.22*	0.017	0.000

Considering a main effect of company characteristic variable has been found, this means that the type of people present (peers or elders), will significantly affect the perceived social value of a luxury dress for an Indian female. Hence, hypothesis H2b is supported through the data.

The confirmation of this hypothesis finds its support in literature review in the works of Stayman & Deshpande (1989) & Wooten (1995), which state that the ethnic composition of consumption situation will also have an effect on product choice.

These hypotheses are also supported through the analyses done in section 3.4 of this chapter, where multiple linear regression (enter method) has been performed with perceived social fit scores as the dependent variable. Nine independent variables were considered (Age, Profession, Education, City, Monthly Income, Marital Status, Acculturation Scale item 2, Dummy variable for traditional events, and Dummy variable for events with elders).

Hence, H2a and H2b are supported.

### **3.3.3.1.2 Analysis of the role of ‘Perceived Design Origin’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit (Hypothesis H3)**

I hypothesize that:

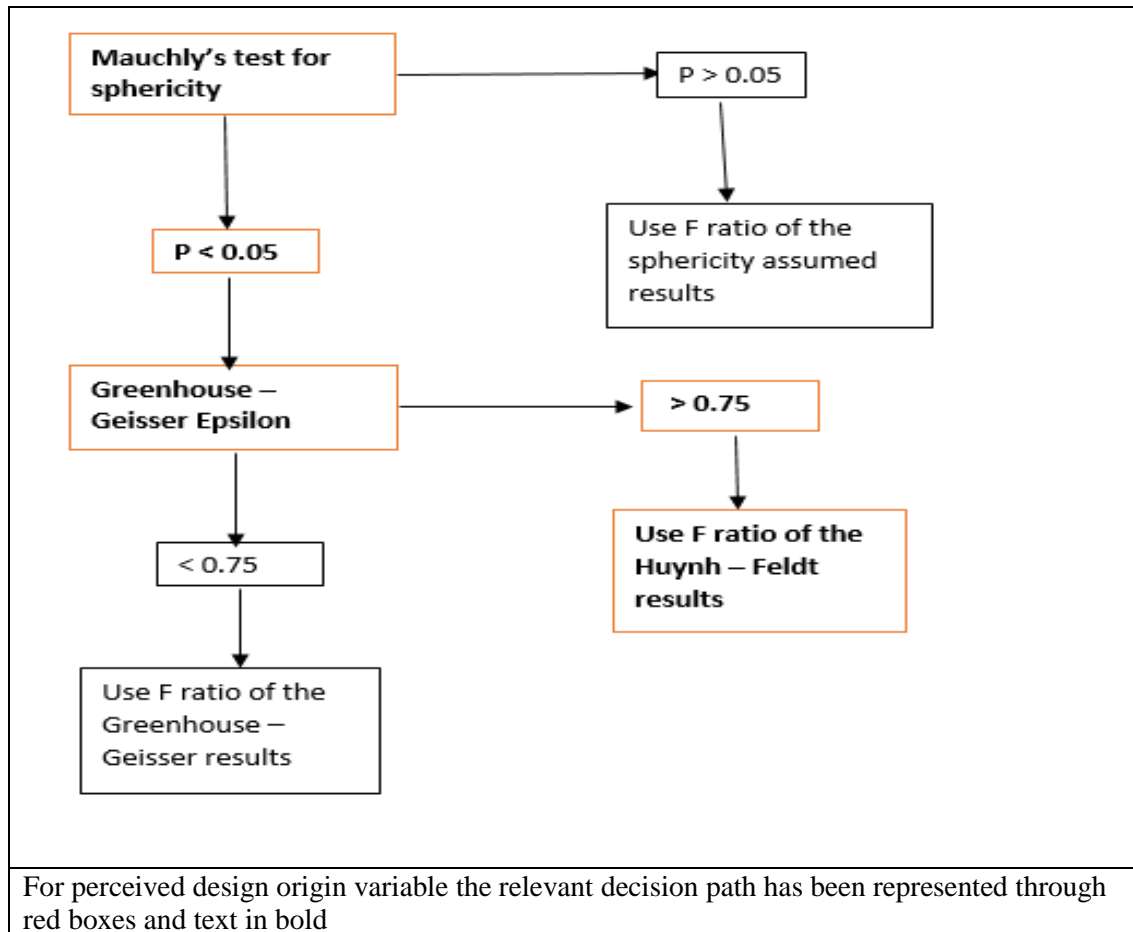
**H3 a.** For an Indian female, Indian luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Indo-western and Western luxury dresses.

**H3 b.** For an Indian female, Indo-western luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Western luxury dresses.

These hypotheses are supported through the presence of a significant main effect of perceived design origin of luxury dresses on their perceived social fit. As this independent variable has 3 levels, I test for sphericity. “If an independent variable has three or more conditions, we need to check that we have ‘equality of within-group variances’ across pairs of conditions” (Mayers, 2013, p. 255). To measure sphericity, one uses Mauchly’s test of sphericity. The test is performed automatically by SPSS when one conducts repeated measures ANOVA. “This test indicates whether those variances are significantly different between the pairs of conditions – to assume sphericity, we need the outcome to be non-significant” (Mayers, 2013, p. 255). Whether Mauchly’s test is significant or non-significant will have an impact on, which F ratio, one uses. If Mauchly’s test is not significant then one can use the F ratio belonging to the ‘sphericity assumed’ row. If Mauchly’s test is significant, then one needs to check the Greenhouse-Geisser epsilon value - if it is less than 0.75 then one can report the F ratio belonging to Greenhouse Geisser row, however, if the Greenhouse- Geisser epsilon value

is greater than 0.75, then we use the F ratio belonging to Huynh–Feldt row (found in the ‘test of within subjects’ table produced by SPSS) (Field, 2013) (Example - See figure 3.3).

**Figure 3. 3: Decision tree for reporting results with repeated measures ANOVA (Field, 2013)**



The Mauchly's test is significant for the perceived design origin variable and the Greenhouse Geisser epsilon value is greater than 0.75 (.97). Hence, sphericity can't be assumed and F ratio belonging to Huynh–Feldt row will be reported (Refer table 3.25) (SPSS output available in appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3N, p. 443).

**Table 3. 25: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity for perceived design origin; N=636**

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon <sup>b</sup>		
					Greenhouse -Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
Perceived design origin	0.97	18.57	2.00	0.000	0.97	0.98	0.50

The perceived design origin variable has a significant effect on perceived social fit,  $F(1.95, 1238.10) = 439.12, p < .001$  (refer table 3.26).

**Table 3. 26: Test of within subject effect of perceived design origin on perceived social fit – N=636**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Perceived design origin	834.83	1.95	428.17	439.12	0.000	0.41

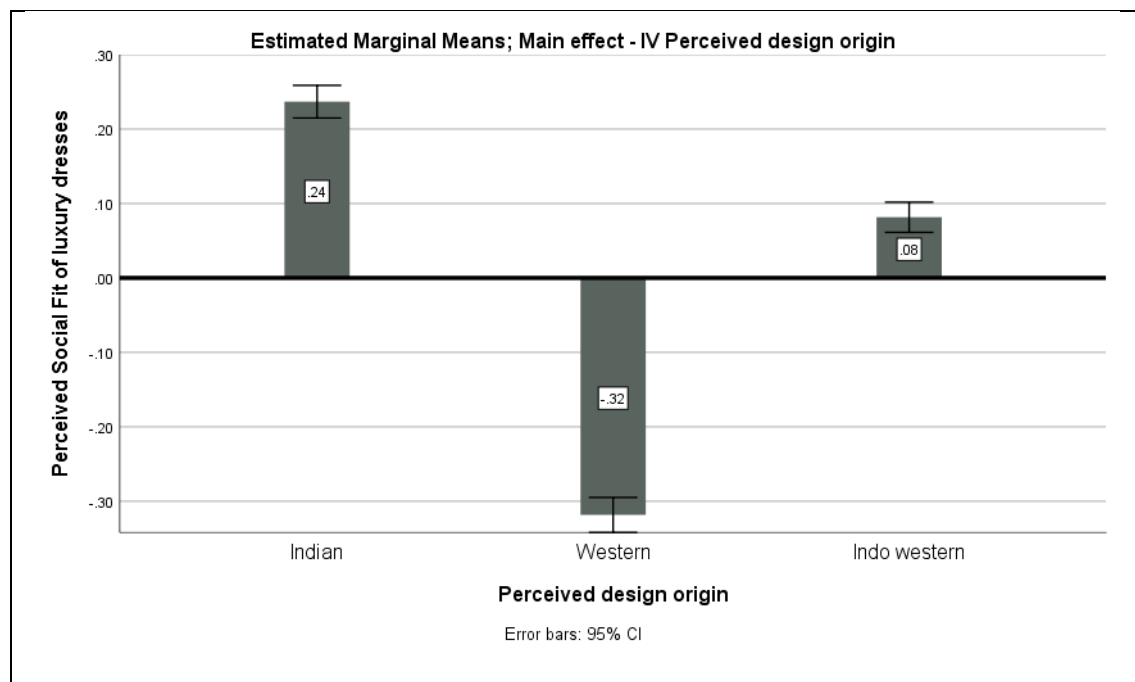
A pairwise comparison (table 3.27) (SPSS output - Appendix 3N, Table 3, p. 444) further reveals that the difference between products with Indian and Western design is significant (Mean difference = .55,  $p < .001$ ), the difference between Indian and Indo-western products (Mean difference = .15,  $p < .001$ ) is significant, and the difference between Indo-western and Western products (Mean difference = .40,  $p < .001$ ) is significant.

**Table 3. 27: Pairwise comparison of perceived social fit for different levels of perceived design origin to locate main effect – N = 636**

(I) Perceived design origin	(J) Perceived design origin	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
Indian	Western	.55 <sup>*</sup>	0.021	0.000
	Indo-western	.15 <sup>*</sup>	0.018	0.000
Western	Indian	-.55 <sup>*</sup>	0.021	0.000
	Indo-western	-.40 <sup>*</sup>	0.019	0.000
Indo-western	Indian	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	0.018	0.000
	Western	.40 <sup>*</sup>	0.019	0.000

Confirming H3a, the results reveal that dresses with Indian designs have the best perceived social fit, followed by dresses with Indo-western designs (H3b), and dresses with Western designs have the lowest perceived social fit. The results are congruent with literature review that points out that consumers prefer identity/ethnically/culturally relevant products (Craig et al., 2005; Kim & Arthur, 2003; Laroche et al., 1998).

**Figure 3. 4: Main effect of IV – Perceived Design Origin ( $F(1.950, 1238.102) = 439.120$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on the Perceived Social Fit**



The confirmation of these hypotheses is in line with the literature which has established that the cultural relevance of product-attributes positively influences product evaluations (Chattaraman et al., 2009). These results get further reflected in what is emphasized by Kuldova (2016, p. 12), that the Indianness is the key theme of present day fashion in India and what is opined by Sandhu (2015, p. 19), that liberalization in India has made people more interested in preserving their identity amidst the global influences.

The confirmation of H3b reflects what is observed by Titus (2015, pp. 149 & 150), regarding the young Indian psyche. As per Titus (2015), a young mind is an assemble of synthetic cultural exposure. It also echoes the fact highlighted by Vittal (2010), that Indian consumers appreciate the fusion of Indian and Western styles in their clothing. The hypothesis finds support in Narasimhan's (2016) analysis, that in the present century, India has embraced as well adapted the global influences into the traditional canvas to produce hybrid styles (Narasimhan, 2016, p. 84).



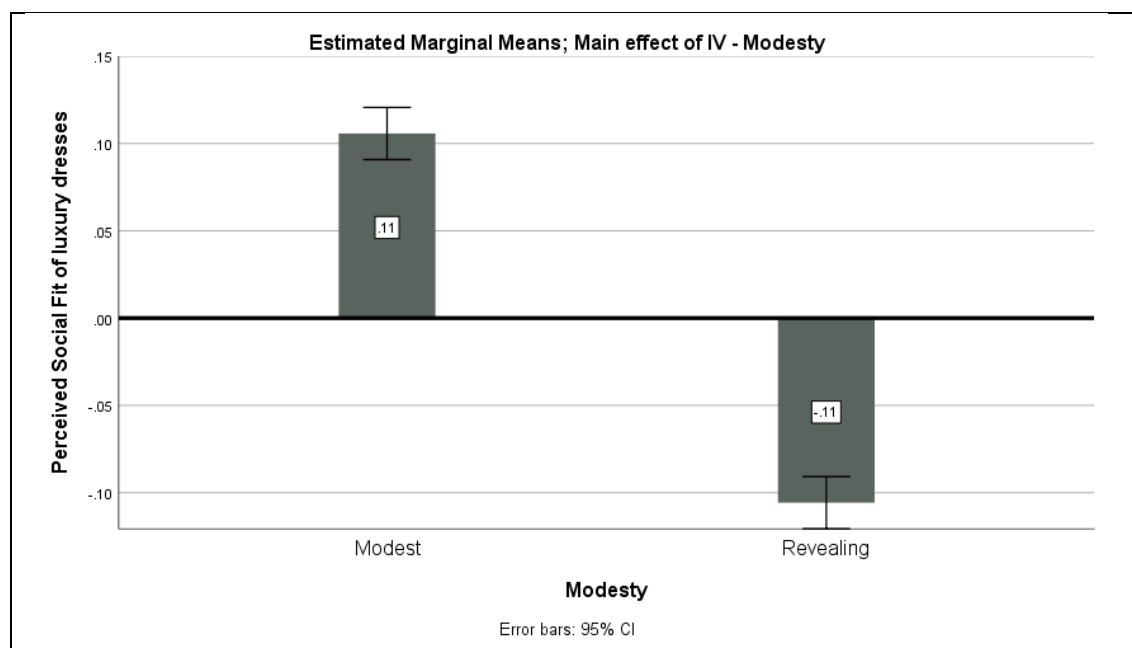
### 3.3.3.1.3 Analysis of the role of product attribute – ‘Modesty’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit (H4)

**Hypothesis H4** (For an Indian female, modest luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses) is supported through presence of a significant main effect of independent variable – Modesty ( $F(1, 635) = 193.16, p < .001$ ) (refer table 3.28) (SPSS output available in Appendix 3O, p. 445).

**Table 3. 28: Test of within subject effect of Modesty on Perceived Social Fit – N=636**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Modesty	170.57	1	170.57	193.16	0.000	0.23

**Figure 3. 5: Main effect of IV – Modesty ( $F(1, 635) = 193.16, p < .001$ ) on Perceived Social Fit**



The difference between modest and revealing dresses is significant (mean difference .21,  $p < .001$ ) (refer table 3.29) (SPSS output available in Appendix 3O, p. 445). Confirming H4, the results suggest that modest dresses have higher perceived social fit than revealing dresses.

**Table 3. 29: Pairwise Comparison of perceived social fit for different levels of Independent Variable – Modesty; N=636**

(I) Modesty	(J) Modesty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
Modest	Revealing	.21*	0.015	0

This finding is in line with literature that points out the importance of modesty in the Indian context (Sandhu, 2015; Pravina Shukla, 2016). Moreover, confirmation of this hypothesis finds support in the view that women are seen as emissaries of Indian tradition and are expected to sustain the values of the family and the home (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2008, p. 153).

### **3.3.3.2 Analyses of Interaction effects**

The hypotheses (H5, H6, H7, H8) reported under this section, deal with interactions. “An interaction occurs when the outcome across one independent variable differs significantly across the groups of another independent variable” (Mayers, 2013, p. 220).

According to literature, interactions can be studied further through simple effects and contrasts. Simple effect analysis – “This analysis basically looks at the effect of one independent variable at individual levels of the other independent variable” (Field, 2013, p. 530). According to Field (2013, p. 530) and IBM's website (IBM, 2018) for SPSS related issues, simple effect tests can be used to further analyze significant interactions. However, Keppel & Wickens (2004, pp. 408, 414) along with Field (2013, pp. 524, 573) and Ho (2006, p. 130) suggest contrasts for further interpretation of interactions. Field (2013, p. 573) suggests use of standard contrasts like simple contrasts for within subject experiments.

I have used both, simple effects and simple contrast, to further analyze significant interactions. For each hypothesis under this section, first the simple effects analysis is conducted and then simple contrast is conducted.

### 3.3.3.2.1 Analysis of the interaction between ‘Type of Event’ and ‘Perceived Design Origin’ in influencing Perceived Social Fit (H5a and H5b)

The following two hypotheses state an interaction between the nature of event and the perceived design origin of the dress.

**H5a.** For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.

**H5b.** For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.

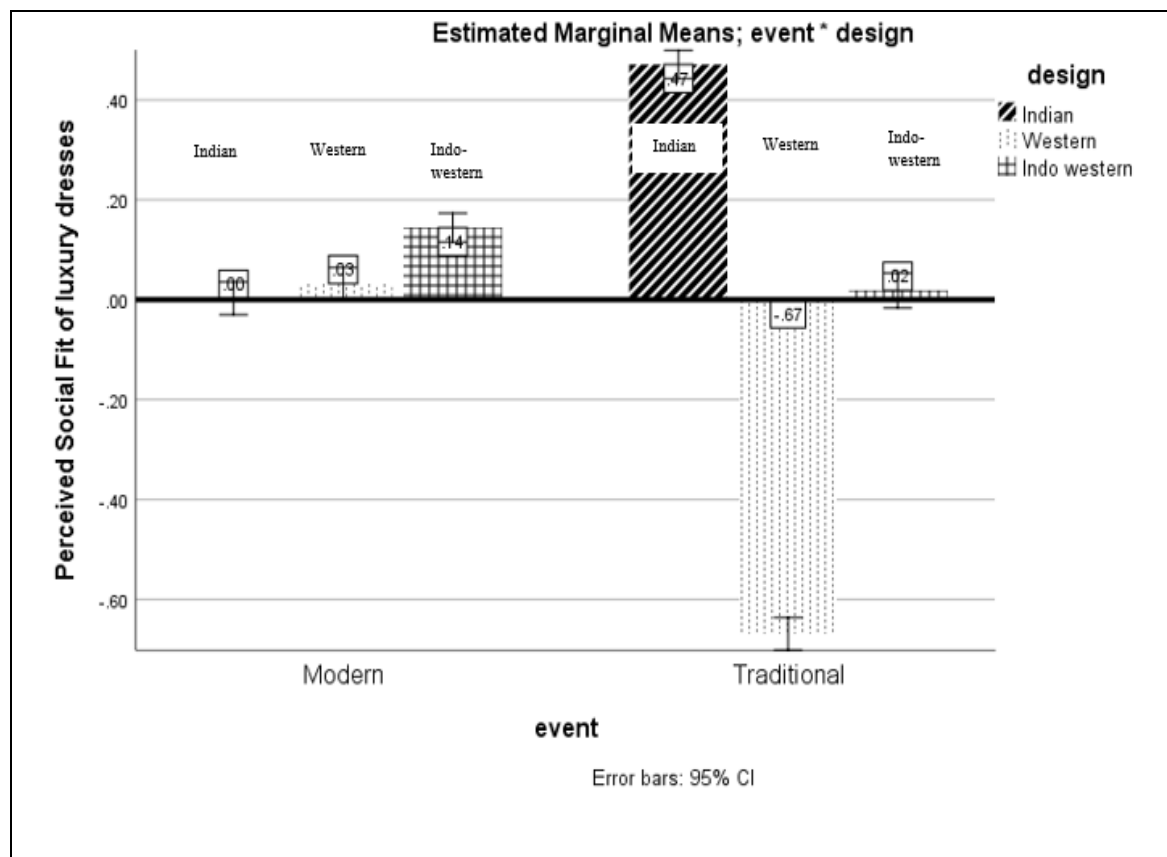
The perceived design origin variable has 3 levels, hence, one needs to check if Mauchly’s test is significant or not for this interaction. The Mauchly’s test is found significant for this interaction and the Greenhouse Geisser epsilon value is greater than 0.75 (0.947). Hence, sphericity can’t be assumed and F ratio belonging to Huynh–Feldt row will be reported (refer table 3.30) (SPSS output – Appendix 3P, Table 1, p. 446).

**Table 3. 30: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity for event \* perceived design origin; N=636**

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon <sup>b</sup>		
					Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
event * perceived design origin	0.944	36.821	2	0.000	0.947	0.949	0.500

The interaction between event and perceived design origin is significant –  $F(1.89, 1205.6) = 734, p < .001$  (Type III Sum of Squares = 869.48) (SPSS output available in appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3P, Table 2, p. 447). In table 3.31 (SPSS output - Appendix 3P, Table 3, p. 447) and figure 3.6, perceived social fit of Indo-western luxury (0.14) dresses is the highest for modern occasion (disconfirming H5a). Confirming H5b, Indian dresses have been found to have the highest perceived social fit (0.47) during traditional events. Literature on identity based consumption, also points to changes in consumer preference based on consumption-context.

**Figure 3. 6: Interaction of event and perceived design origin;  $F(1.89, 1205.65) = 734.09$ ,  $p < .001$**



**Table 3. 31: Estimates of perceived social fit for - Event \* Perceived design origin; N=636**

Event	Perceived Design Origin	Mean	Std. Error
Modern	Indian	0.00	0.02
	Western	0.03	0.02
	Indo-western	0.14	0.02
Traditional	Indian	0.47	0.01
	Western	-0.67	0.02
	Indo-western	0.02	0.02

**Simple effect analysis was used to breakdown this interaction**

Table 3.32 (SPSS output – Appendix 3P, Table 4, p. 448), looks at effect of perceived design origin at each level of event. In table 3.32, for a modern event, the difference between perceived social fit of Indian and Indo-western dresses is significant (-.142), and the difference between perceived social fit of Western and Indo-western dresses is significant (-.112). Hence, it seems for modern events, Indo-western dresses have the highest perceived social fit instead

of Western dresses. Contrary to the literature review and to the qualitative research, the present experiment does not confirm the attractiveness of Western design for a modern social occasion.

Possible explanation for the hypothesis not being supported, may be found in the argument – “the tension between adopting modern Western styles of dress and retaining Indian garments for the sake of identity resulted in hybridity, a process that is still affecting fashion in India today” (Welters & Lillethun, 2018, p. 143). In addition, it is also opined that consumers are at ease in adopting fashions that have more affinity to what they already have rather than experimenting with an entirely innovative style – people opt for gradational variations rather than sharp ones (Brenninkmeyer, 1973; Welters & Lillethun, 2018, p. 38).

**Table 3. 32: Pairwise comparison of perceived social fit for different levels of perceived design origin at each level of event through simple effect analysis – event \* design; N=636**

Event	(I) Perceived Design Origin	(J) Perceived Design Origin	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
Modern	Indian	Western	-0.029	0.028	0.291
		Indo-western	-.142*	0.021	0.000
	Western	Indian	0.029	0.028	0.291
		Indo-western	-.112*	0.024	0.000
	Indo-western	Indian	.142*	0.021	0.000
		Western	.112*	0.024	0.000
Traditional	Indian	Western	1.140*	0.025	0.000
		Indo-western	.452*	0.024	0.000
	Western	Indian	-1.140*	0.025	0.000
		Indo-western	-.688*	0.025	0.000
	Indo-western	Indian	-.452*	0.024	0.000
		Western	.688*	0.025	0.000

For traditional events, the difference between perceived social fit of Indian and Western (1.140), Indian and Indo-western (.452), and Western and Indo-western (-.688) is significant. Hence, the data suggests that for traditional events, Indian dresses have the highest perceived social fit. The hypothesis is supported by the data, and it reflects the special effect of the combination of type of social occasion/event and product-attribute (perceived design origin). The confirmation finds support in the qualitative research interview-interactions as well as in the literature review, establishing the preference for context-congruent consumption-choices; collectivist social set-up promoting social conformity; and “Indianness” being a key theme in

contemporary fashions, as one response to the ever increasing dominance of global influences (Kuldova, 2016, p. 12; Patel, 2014, p. 69; Sandhu, 2015, p. 19).

### **Simple contrasts are used to further interpret interaction of variables - event and perceived design origin**

In the simple contrasts table (refer table 3.33), first we have two levels of event variable (Modern vs Traditional) compared, when level 1 (Indian) of perceived design origin variable is compared to level 3 (Indo-western) of perceived design origin variable. This contrast is significant  $F(1, 635) = 474.9, p < .001$ . This finding suggests that change in perceived social fit, when an Indian dress is chosen instead of Indo-western dress, is different during a modern event compared to a traditional event (SPSS output available in appendix of chapter 3, Appendix 3P, Table 5, p. 449).

**Table 3. 33: Simple Contrasts – event \* perceived design origin; N=636**

Source	Event	Design	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
event * design	Modern vs. Traditional	Indian vs. Indo-western	224.3	1	224.3	474.9	0.000	0.428
		Western vs. Indo-western	210.4	1	210.4	357.7	0.000	0.360
Design stands for Perceived design origin								

The second interaction term considered in this table is - two levels of event variable (Modern or Traditional) compared, when level 2 (Western) of perceived design origin variable is compared to level 3 (Indo-western) of perceived design origin variable. This contrast is significant  $F(1, 635) = 357.7, p < .001$ . This finding suggests that change in perceived social fit, when a Western dress is chosen instead of an Indo-western dress, is different during a modern event compared to a traditional event.

### **3.3.3.2.2 Analysis of the interaction between ‘Type of Event’ and ‘Modesty’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit (H6a & H6b)**

The next two hypotheses, posit an interaction of event and modesty variables.

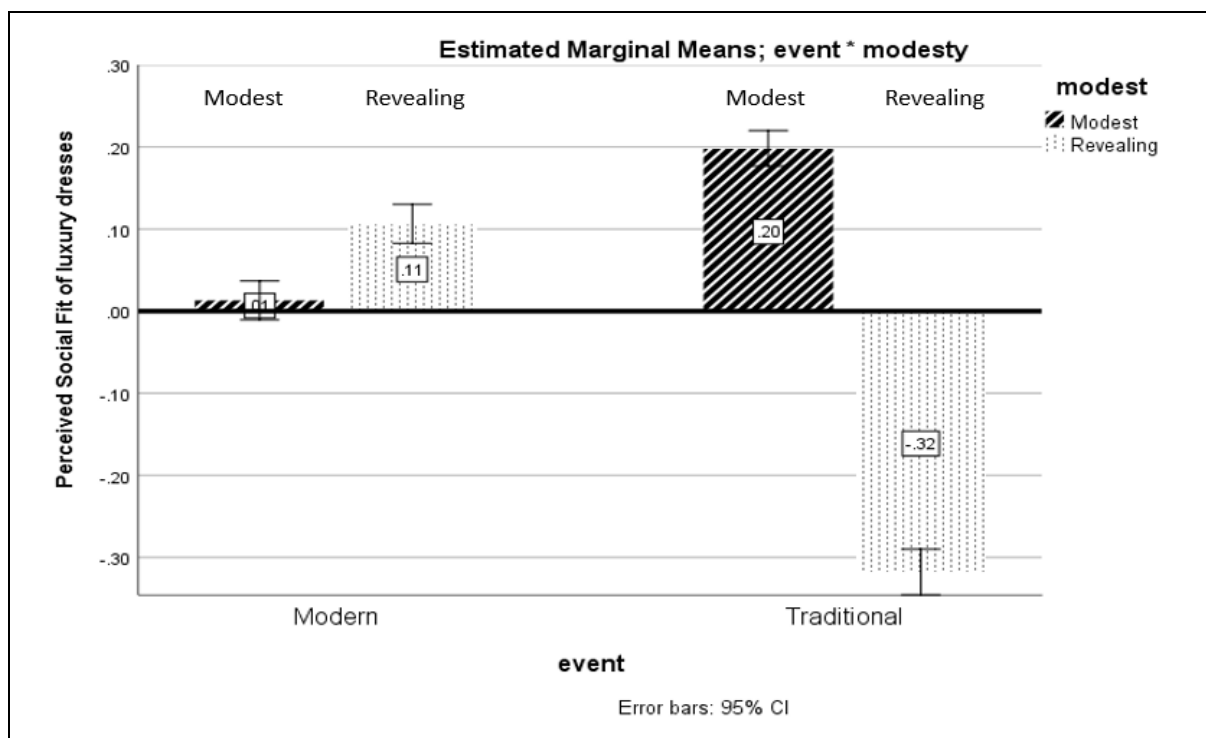
**H6a.** For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.

**H6b.** For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, a modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.

The interaction between variables event and modesty is significant,  $F(1, 635) = 650.3$ ,  $p < .001$  (Type III Sum of Squares = 354.3) (SPSS output - Appendix 3Q, Table 1, p. 450).

Confirming H6a, during a modern social occasion, a revealing luxury dress has higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress, whereas during a traditional event, a modest luxury dress has higher perceived social fit than a revealing dress (H6b) (See table 3.34 (SPSS output – Appendix 3Q, Table 2, p. 450) and figure 3.7).

**Figure 3. 7: Interaction of event and modesty;  $F(1, 635) = 650.39$ ,  $p < .001$**



**Table 3. 34: Estimates of perceived social fit - Event \* Modesty; N=636**

Event	Modesty	Mean	Std. Error
modern	modest	0.01	0.012
	revealing	0.11	0.012
traditional	modest	0.20	0.011
	revealing	-0.32	0.014

### Simple effect analysis was used to breakdown this interaction

Table 3.35 looks at the effect of modesty at each level of event (Appendix 3Q, Table 3, p. 451). In table 3.35, for modern event, the difference of perceived social fit of modest and revealing dress is significant (-.093). For a traditional event, the difference in perceived social fit of modest and revealing dress is significant (.516). Hence, for a modern event, a revealing dress has a higher perceived social fit and for a traditional event, a modest dress has a higher perceived social fit. The confirmation of these hypotheses, finds its reflections in literature supporting context-congruent consumption choices (Chattaraman et al., 2009; Patel, 2014, p. 43; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989; Wooten, 1995) with the objective to fit in a given social context. Young females, being more acculturated to global influences, aspire for a global identity and tend to adopt global lifestyles through fashion statements in dressing (Khare, 2014b). Popular culture in India has shown correlation of modest clothing with traditional values and of Western and revealing clothing with being modern/Western (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 49,52,53).

**Table 3. 35: Pairwise comparison of perceived social fit for modesty at each level of event through simple effect analysis - event \* modesty; N=636**

Event	(I) Modesty	(J) Modesty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
Modern	Modest	Revealing	-.093*	0.019	0.000
Traditional	Modest	Revealing	.516*	0.020	0.000

### Simple contrasts are used to further interpret interaction of variables-event and modesty.

The interaction term considered in the simple contrasts table is - two levels of event variable (Modern or Traditional) compared, when level 1 (Modest) of Modesty variable is compared to level 2 (Revealing) of Modesty variable. This contrast is significant  $F(1, 635) = 650.3, p < .001$  (refer table 3.36). This finding suggests that change in perceived social fit, when a modest luxury dress is chosen instead of a revealing luxury dress, is different during a modern event compared to a traditional event (SPSS output - Appendix 3Q, Table 4, p. 451).



**Table 3. 36: Simple contrasts – event \* modesty; N=636**

Source	Event	Modesty	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
event * modesty	Modern vs. Traditional	Modest vs Revealing	236.2	1	236.2	650.3	0.000	0.506

### 3.3.3.2.3 Analysis of the interaction between ‘Company Characteristic’ and ‘Perceived Design Origin’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit (H7a and H7b)

The following two hypotheses, posit an interaction of company characteristic and perceived design origin.

**H7a.** For an Indian female at an event with elders, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.

**H7b.** For an Indian female at an event with peer group, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.

The perceived design origin variable has 3 levels and hence, one needs to check if Mauchly’s test is significant or not for this interaction. The Mauchly’s test is found significant for this interaction, and the Greenhouse Geisser epsilon value is greater than 0.75 (0.93). Hence, sphericity can’t be assumed and F ratio belonging to Huynh–Feldt row will be reported (SPSS output - Appendix 3R, Table 1, p. 452).

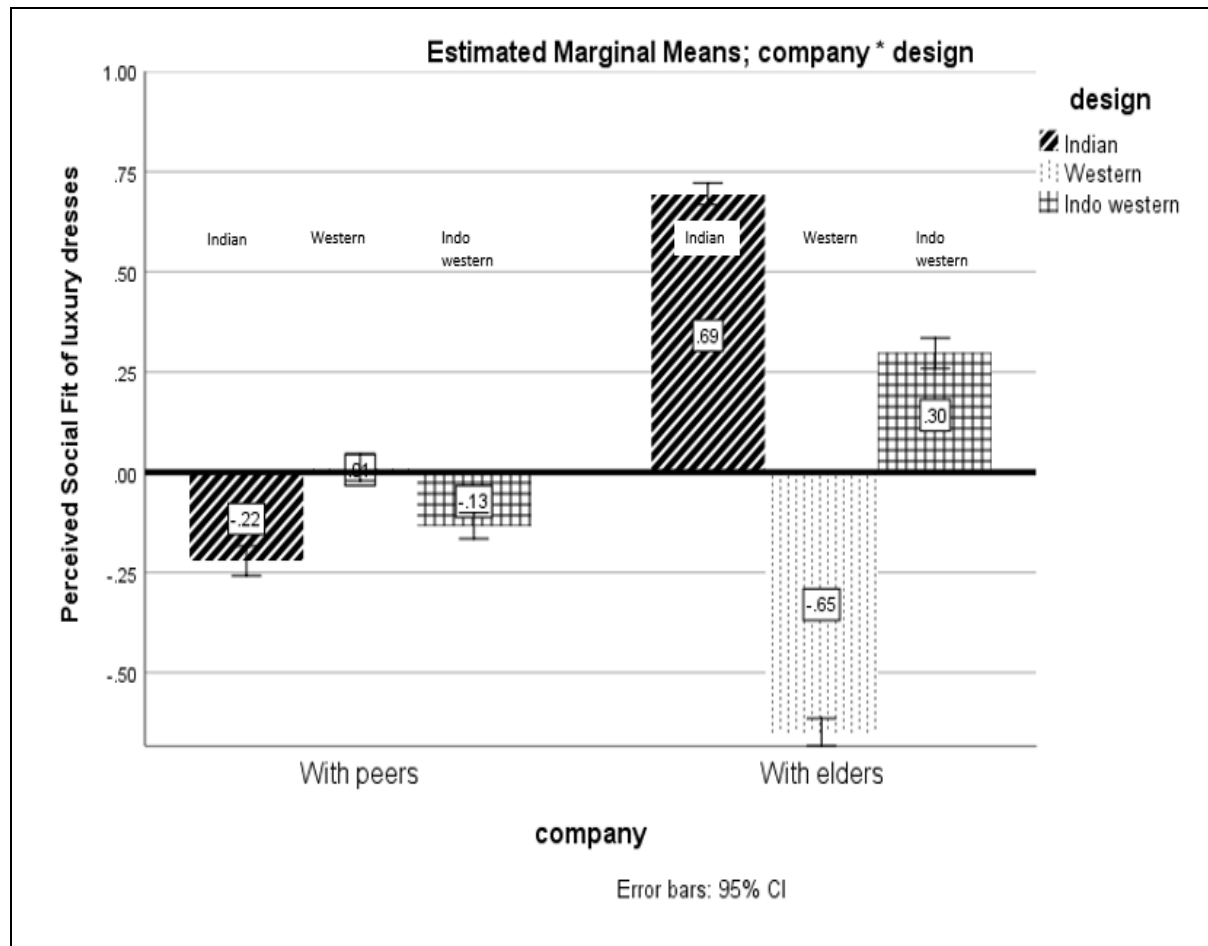
**Table 3. 37: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity for company characteristic \* perceived design origin; N=636**

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon <sup>b</sup>		
					Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
company characteristic * perceived design origin	0.925	49.331	2	0.000	0.930	0.933	0.500

This interaction is significant –  $F(1.866, 1184.8) = 1110, p < .001$  (Type III Sum of Squares = 1656.5) (SPSS output - Appendix 3R, Table 2, p. 453).

As per table 3.38 (SPSS output - Appendix 3R, Table 3, p. 453) and figure 3.8, confirming H7b, Western luxury dresses have higher perceived social fit during an event with peers than other dresses (Mean = .012), whereas Indian luxury dresses have higher perceived social fit (Mean = .694) for an event with elders (Confirming H7a).

**Figure 3. 8: Interaction of company and design;  $F(1.866, 1184.883) = 1110.131, p < .001$**



**Table 3. 38: Estimates of perceived social fit – Company Characteristic \* Perceived design origin; N=636**

Company characteristic	Perceived design origin	Mean	Std. Error
With peers	Indian	-0.221	0.019
	Western	0.012	0.017
	Indo-western	-0.134	0.016
With elders	Indian	0.694	0.014
	Western	-0.648	0.017
	Indo-western	0.297	0.019

### Simple effect analysis was used to breakdown this interaction

Table 3.39 (SPSS output - Appendix 3R, Table 4, p. 454) looks at the effect of perceived design origin at each level of company. For an event with peers, differences in perceived social fit of Indian and Western dresses (-.233), Indian and Indo-western dresses (-.087), and Western and Indo-western dresses (.146) are significant (see table 3.39). For an event with elders, differences in perceived social fit of Indian and Western dresses (1.343), Indian and Indo-western dresses (.397), and Western and Indo-western dresses (-.945) are significant. Thus, for an event with elders, Indian luxury dresses have the highest perceived social fit, and for an event with peers, Western luxury dresses have the highest perceived social fit.

**Table 3. 39: Pairwise comparison through simple effect analysis – company \* design; N=636**

Company Characteristic	(I) Perceived Design Origin	(J) Perceived Design Origin	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
With peers	Indian	Western	-.233*	0.031	0.000
		Indo-western	-.087*	0.023	0.000
	Western	Indian	.233*	0.031	0.000
		Indo-western	.146*	0.025	0.000
	Indo-western	Indian	.087*	0.023	0.000
		Western	-.146*	0.025	0.000
With elders	Indian	Western	1.343*	0.025	0.000
		Indo-western	.397*	0.024	0.000
	Western	Indian	-1.343*	0.025	0.000
		Indo-western	-.945*	0.027	0.000
	Indo-western	Indian	-.397*	0.024	0.000
		Western	.945*	0.027	0.000

In India, the attendance of elders means the stronghold of patriarchal moral attitudes of Indian society (Begum, 2018, p. 206; Dube, 1992), and inverse relationship of age and degree of acculturation to global culture (N. Gupta, 2013; S. Mathur, 2010). Reversely, the attendance of peers is impacted by increasing globalization, while economic reforms from early 1990s in India have injected young females with higher degrees of acculturation to Western culture than the elders in the society (Palackal, 2011, p. 14).

**Simple contrasts are used to further interpret interaction of variables - company characteristic and perceived design origin**

In the simple contrasts table (Table 3.40), first we have two levels of company characteristic variable (with peers or with elders) compared, when level 1 (Indian) of perceived design origin variable is compared to level 3 (Indo-western) of perceived design origin variable. This contrast is significant  $F(1, 635) = 269, p < .001$ . This finding suggests that change in perceived social fit, when an Indian luxury dress is chosen instead of Indo-western luxury dress, is different during an event with peers compared to an event with elders (SPSS output - Appendix 3R, Table 5, p. 455).

The second interaction term considered in this table is - two levels of company characteristic variable (with peers or with elders) compared, when level 2 (Western) of perceived design origin variable is compared to level 3 (Indo-western) of perceived design origin variable. This contrast is significant  $F(1, 635) = 970.1, p < .001$ . This finding suggests that change in perceived social fit, when a Western luxury dress is chosen instead of an Indo-western luxury dress, is different during an event with peers compared to an event with elders.

**Table 3. 40: Simple contrasts – Company Characteristic \* Design; N=636**

Source	Company	Design	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Company * design	With Peers vs. With Elders	Indian vs. Indo-western	149.2	1	149.2	269	0.000	0.298
		Western vs. Indo-western	757	1	757	970.1	0.000	0.604
Company stands for Company Characteristic Design stands for Perceived design origin								

**3.3.3.2.4 Analysis of the interaction between ‘Company Characteristic’ and ‘Modesty’ in influencing the Perceived Social Fit (H8a & H8b)**

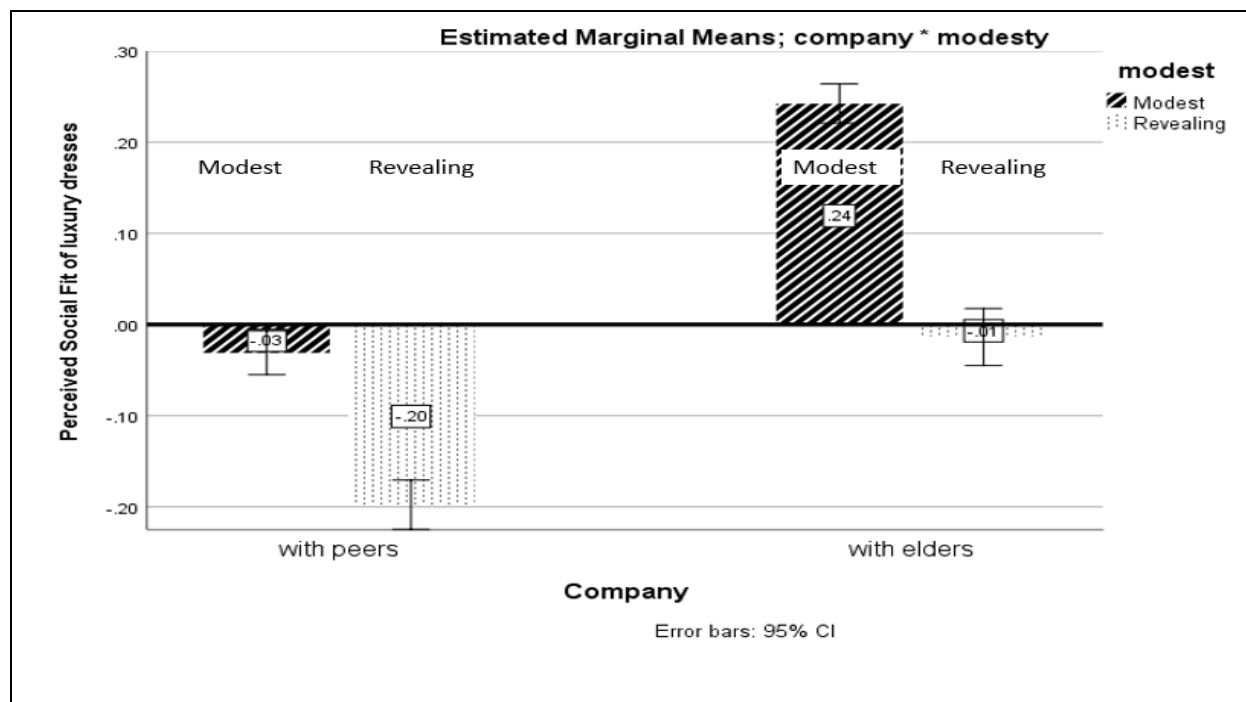
Last, I analyzed the interaction between variables – company characteristic and modesty in order to test the following two hypotheses.

**H8a.** For an Indian female at an event with elders, modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.

**H8b.** For an Indian female at an event with peer group, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.

This interaction is significant  $F(1, 635) = 11.09, p = .001$  (Type III Sum of Squares = 354.3) (SPSS output - Appendix 3S, Table 1, p. 456). Confirming H8a, for an event with elders, modest luxury dresses have higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses. Whereas, for an event with peers, it seems both the modest as well as revealing luxury dresses were not preferred, however, modest luxury dresses score better perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses, disconfirming H8b [see table 3.41 (SPSS output - Appendix 3S, Table 2, p. 457), and Figure 3.9].

**Figure 3. 9: Interaction of company and modesty;  $F(1, 635) = 11.096, p = .001$**



**Table 3. 41: Estimates perceived social fit - Company characteristic \* modesty; N=636**

Company	Modesty	Mean	Std. Error
With peers	modest	-0.031	0.012
	revealing	-0.198	0.014
With elders	modest	0.242	0.011
	revealing	-0.014	0.016

### Simple effect analysis was used to breakdown this interaction

Table 3.42 (SPSS output - Appendix 3S, Table 3, p. 457) looks at the effect of modesty at each level of company. For an event with peers, the difference in perceived social fit of modest and revealing dress is significant (.167). For an event with elders, the difference in perceived social fit of modest and revealing dresses is significant (.256).

Hence, as per the data, for an event with elders, modest luxury dresses have a higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses. The confirmation of this hypothesis, illustrates that the individual and the society are not necessarily in opposition. Youngsters tend to fit in through modest dress-choices (Yodanis, 2018, pp. 64–66).

However, contrary to H8b, for an event with peers also, modest luxury dresses have higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses.

**Table 3. 42: Pairwise comparison through simple effect analysis - company \* modesty; N=636**

Company Characteristic	(I) Modesty	(J) Modesty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
With peers	modest	revealing	.167*	0.019	0.000
With elders	modest	revealing	.256*	0.021	0.000

Literature has shown that youngsters are acculturated to global ways of life and tend to follow global lifestyles through fashion involvement (N. Gupta, 2013; Khare, 2014b; S. Mathur, 2010). Popular culture in India manifests distinct correlation of traditional values with modest clothing, and modern values with Western and revealing clothes (Derne & Jadwin, 2007, p. 49,52,53).

This led me to hypothesize that for an event with the peer group, a revealing dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest dress. However, this is not supported by the data, perhaps because youngsters' modernity views have been complicated by patriarchal orientations, which regard women as the guardians of traditional values (Begum, 2018, p. 206).

### **Simple contrasts are used to further interpret interaction of variables - Company characteristic and Modesty**

The interaction term considered in the simple contrasts table is - two levels of Company characteristic variable (with peers or with elders) compared when level 1 (modest) of Modesty variable is compared to level 2 (revealing) of Modesty variable. This contrast is significant  $F(1, 635) = 11, p=.001$  (refer table 3.43). This finding suggests that change in perceived social fit, when a modest luxury dress is chosen instead of a revealing luxury dress, is different during an event with peers compared to an event with elders (SPSS output - Appendix 3S, Table 4, p. 458).

**Table 3. 43: Simple Contrasts: Company characteristic \* modesty; N=636**

Source	Company	Modesty	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Company * modesty	With Peers vs With Elders	Modest vs Revealing	5.08	1	5.0	11.0	0.001	0.017
Company stands for company characteristic								

### **3.3.4 Conclusion**

Most of the hypotheses proposed on the basis of literature review and qualitative study were supported by the main experiment. I have updated the conceptual diagram. Hypotheses that are supported by data are in bold and have been underlined – Hypotheses that are not supported are in parenthesis (see figure 3.10).

Indeed, as proposed, for an Indian female, the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress was found to be positively impacting its perceived social value for a particular social occasion (Hypothesis H1).

The experiment also confirmed the role of ‘Consumption-Context’ in influencing the perceived social fit of a luxury dress through type of event (traditional or modern) (Hypothesis H2a) and characteristic of the company (with peers or with elders) (Hypothesis H2b).

Perceived design origin had an impact on perceived social fit of luxury dresses for Indian females. Indian dresses achieved higher perceived social fit than Indo-western and Western dresses (Hypothesis H3a). Similarly, Indo-western dresses achieved higher perceived social fit than Western dresses (Hypothesis H3b).

Experimental analysis also confirmed, as proposed, the role of 'Modesty' as a dress attribute in influencing the perceived social fit of a luxury dress in hypothesis H4. Modest dresses were found to have higher perceived social fit than revealing dresses.

Most of the interactions predicted by various hypotheses were also supported. Interaction between the 'Type of Event' and 'Perceived Design Origin' meant that at a traditional social occasion, an Indian luxury dress achieved higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses (Hypothesis H5b).

Interaction between the 'Type of Event' and 'Modesty' meant that for an Indian female, a revealing luxury dress had higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress for a modern social occasion (Hypothesis H6a); and at a traditional social occasion, a modest luxury dress had higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress (Hypothesis H6b).

Hypotheses H7a and H7b were also supported. These hypotheses were generated through interaction between "Company Characteristic" and "Perceived Design Origin". It was found that for an Indian female, at an event with elders, an Indian luxury dress had higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses (Hypothesis H7a); and at an event with peers, a Western luxury dress was preferred more than Indian or Indo-western luxury dresses (Hypothesis H7b).

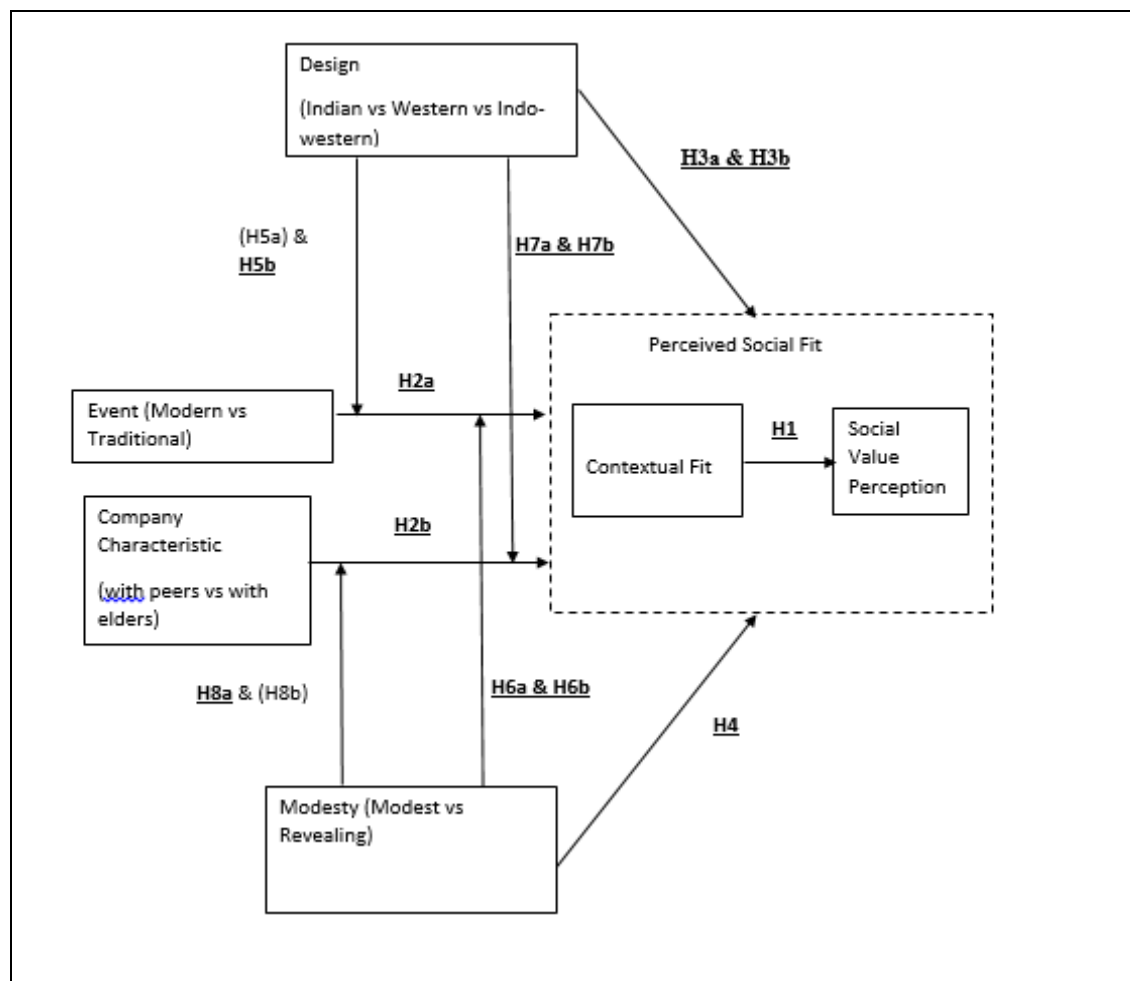
Hypothesis H8a was also confirmed, hence, Indian females preferred a modest luxury dress (instead of a revealing luxury dress) at an event with elders.

As mentioned above, hypotheses H5a and H8b were disconfirmed. Contrary to what is expected (H5a) from the literature, the study has not shown a higher perceived social fit of a Western luxury dress (than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses) for a modern social



occasion. The result, although, unexpected, is important because it leads us to the understanding that the respondents' differentiation of events for context-congruent behavior is more than just a dichotomous division into traditional and modern. The hypothesis test results also reflect that the social imperatives of the occasion are a product of interaction between the type of event and the characteristic of people present at the occasion (peers /elders). Indo-western luxury dresses are found to score better for modern social occasions, in general, perhaps, for the reason that these dresses get accepted by elders for their Indian product-attributes, and at the same time, the Western product-attributes serve the social imperatives pertaining to the peers, who are more acculturated with the Western culture. This result, indirectly also points out that the concerns relating the modesty as a dress-attribute, are culture-specific.

**Figure 3. 10: Conceptual Diagram - Hypotheses that are supported by data are in bold and have been underlined – Hypotheses that are not supported are in parenthesis**



The hypothesis that for an event with peer group, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress (H8b), was also not supported. A modest luxury dress achieved better perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress for an event with peers. This is rather unexpected as young Indians are described to seek conspicuous consumption, and one would believe that a revealing luxury dress would have the right appeal in peers' setting. This could be due to the fact that, the dress-attribute, 'modesty' is a key defining element in social-appropriateness of a luxury dress in India, and more importantly it suggests that modest clothing is perhaps emerging as a fashion product in contradiction to what has been conventionally perceived, that it is a product of religious sanctions only.

### **3.4 Decoding the impact of type of social occasion and demographic variables on each dress' perceived social fit**

The main aim of this section is to understand how a particular dress can have different perceived social fit depending on characteristics of events and company. The section also sheds light on the impact of demographic variables on perceived social fit of a dress. Section 3.4.1 provides a mean score (of perceived social fit) for each dress at different occasions, and broadly compares them to the consumption preferences of luxury dresses, reflected during the qualitative study. The difference in the mean perceived social fit scores, for the same dress during different social occasions, reveals that further analyses taking into account demographics and event characteristic needs to be done. Section 3.4.2 discusses the influence of demographic variables as well as type of occasion on perceived social fit of different dresses. Section 3.4.3 provides the results of Chow analyses.

#### **3.4.1 Mean scores of all dresses in different social occasions**

The mean scores (perceived social fit) for all dresses, for different social occasions, have been presented in Table 3.44. Broad comparisons of the consumption preferences of luxury dresses, reflected during the qualitative study (through interview-interactions and respondents' responses to six dress stimuli) and the mean scores (perceived social fit) of luxury dresses for

different social occasions obtained after the experimental study, lead to the following salient observations –

1. The qualitative study indicated context-congruent consumption choices by majority of respondents – Indian dress design was preferred for traditional social occasions – weddings and festivals. This is well supported in the experimental study analysis in which the Indian modest dress received high scores for both types of traditional events (with elders or with peers) - Engagement and House-warming. This finding is also in accordance with the literature, concerning the importance of congruity between context and product-attributes.

2. The qualitative study made it explicit that modesty as a dress-attribute is very essential for the appropriateness of a dress for a social occasion, especially when elders are also present at the occasion. A large number of participants held the notion that Indian dresses are less revealing. In the experimental study analysis, the Indian modest dress also received a high score (perceived social fit) for Reception. This might be due to the presence of elders at Reception as well as the fact that Reception, though a modern event, was rated to be less modern than a Bachelorette Party. Literature highlights the hierarchical nature of Indian society, where elders have authority over youngsters as well as have less preference for Western attire than youngsters. The Indian revealing dress was preferred for both Reception and Engagement. Perhaps the fact that this dress on one hand is Indian and on the other hand revealing, makes it the best fit for a function which is attended by elders but also in certain aspects is modern (Reception). Preference at Engagement (traditional function with elders), could be due to Indian design elements of the dress.

3. In the qualitative study, in line with context-congruence consumption, interviewees' preferences reflect the choice for Western dresses for modern social occasions. In their responses to the dress stimuli, too, the Western dress is preferred predominantly for modern social occasions. The Dior gown, a Western dress, being quite revealing as per the participants' observations in qualitative study and literature review (chapter 1 - on Indian apparels and

‘modesty’ as a dress attribute), was not perceived to be ideal/appropriate for most social occasions. It was predominantly preferred for cocktail, a modern social occasion for the Indian society. The results of experimental study analysis, too, illustrate a similar pattern. The Western modest dress was preferred for only one event, the Bachelorette Party. For every other event, it received a negative mean score. This dress was least preferred for a traditional function with elders (Engagement). Western modest dress is preferred at a Bachelorette Party due to congruity between consumption-context and product-attributes. On the other hand, this dress is not preferred at traditional events due to a lack of congruity between consumption-context and product-attributes. The presence of elders might be the reason behind the lack of preference at Reception (modern event with elders) along with the fact that Reception, though a modern event, was rated to be less modern than a Bachelorette Party. The Western revealing dress was also preferred for only one event, Bachelorette Party. In fact, it is the most preferred dress (out of the 6 dresses) for the Bachelorette Party. It is least preferred for Engagement, a traditional event with elders. These findings further point to the importance of congruity between consumption-context and product-attributes.

4. In the qualitative study, respondents’ responses to dress stimuli indicated that dresses with the fusion of Indian and Western elements, like a Sari-gown, were preferred for both traditional and non-traditional social occasions. Such preferences reflect the participants’ desire for Western elements and social-conformity as per the traditional frame-work. The Indo-western modest dress is slightly preferred for Reception (modern event with elders) and Engagement (traditional event with elders). Both these events are attended by elders, who as per the literature are less acculturated than youngsters and don’t share youngsters’ preference for Western clothes. Perhaps, this is the reason why an Indo-western modest dress is preferred at these events.

The Indo-western revealing dress is also slightly preferred for Reception and Engagement. Perhaps, the Indian elements of this dress make it somewhat suitable for events with elders.

However, both Indo-western modest dress and Indo-western revealing dress are not the most preferred dresses for these two events, as Indian modest dress and Indian revealing dress achieve a better mean than these dresses for Reception and Engagement.

5. In particular, two manifestations of experimental study analysis did not correspond well with the patterns observed in the qualitative study. Firstly, Western (modest) dress registering non-preference for Reception (modern event with elders), this did not match with the qualitative study's context-congruence consumption pattern and the concern of modesty in the presence of elders. It seems that a young Indian female's luxury dress consumption-choice looks for contextual-fit, not in a dichotomous division of modern and traditional, but along a continuum with extremes of modern and traditional occasions. Reception, though categorized as a modern event but was rated lower than Bachelorette party and perhaps for this reason a Western modest dress was not preferred for Reception. Secondly, only slight preference for Indo-western (revealing) for Bachelorette Party (modern event with peers), was also not exactly along broader understanding of the qualitative study that for a modern event with peers, one would prefer Indo-western (revealing) dress. The fusion of Indian and Western elements, perhaps, makes the dress less congruent for bachelorette party, an event rated higher on modernity.

**Table 3. 44: Mean standardized scores (perceived social fit) of all dresses in different scenarios (a circle has been used to mark unexpected results)**

Dress	Type of event			
	Bachelorette Party (Modern, with peers)	Reception (Modern, with elders)	House-warming (Traditional, with peers)	Engagement (Traditional, with elders)
Indian Modest	-0.81	0.92	0.91	1.09
Indian Revealing	-0.53	0.42	-0.45	0.34
Western Modest	0.28	-0.46	-0.31	-0.73
Western Revealing	0.86	-0.55	-0.78	-0.86
Indo-western modest	-0.25	0.38	-0.01	0.24
Indo-western revealing	0.07	0.38	-0.34	0.19

### 3.4.2 Decoding the role of demographic variables and events in variation of dress' perceived social fit

In this sub-section, we aim at measuring the impact of event and company, when controlling for demographics.

Multiple linear regression (enter method) was performed with the perceived social fit as the dependent variable. Nine independent variables were considered (Dummy variable for traditional events, Dummy variable for events with elders, Acculturation Scale item 2, Age, Profession, Education, City, Monthly Income, and Marital Status). The SPSS outputs are displayed in the appendix of chapter 3 (p 459).

**Table 3. 45: Independent variables - their categories and coding in SPSS**

Age	Continuous
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	<b>1</b> Very Indian <b>2</b> Mostly Indian with some Western/foreign influence <b>3</b> Bicultural – equal Indian and Western/foreign influence <b>4</b> Mostly Western/foreign with some Indian influence <b>5</b> Very westernized
Income	<b>1</b> Below INR 65,000 <b>2</b> Between INR 65,000 - 130,000 <b>3</b> Between INR 130,000 – 195,000 <b>4</b> Between INR 195,000 – 260,000 <b>5</b> Above INR 260,000
City population	<b>1</b> Less than 1 million <b>2</b> 1 to 5 million <b>3</b> Greater than 5 million
Marital Status	<b>0</b> Unmarried <b>1</b> Married
Traditional event	<b>1</b> Traditional event <b>0</b> Modern event
Event with elders	<b>1</b> Event with elders <b>0</b> Event with peers
Education	<b>0</b> Lower than Master's degree <b>1</b> Master's Degree or above
Profession	<b>0</b> All other categories <b>1</b> Executives and higher intellectual professions

#### 3.4.2.1 Explaining Indian Modest dress' perceived social fit

Table 3.46, displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indian Modest dress (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 42% variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 2158) = 172.88$ ,

$p < .001$ . Five predictors significantly contributed to the model. For the Indian modest dress, perceived social fit scores increase during traditional event and event with elders (all predictor variables and their coding is available in Table 3.45). Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?) significantly contributed to the model. As per this item's coding, it appears that people who identify themselves as more Westernized would give an Indian modest dress a lower perceived social fit score. Moreover, older respondents would give an Indian modest dress a higher perceived social fit score. This finding is supported by literature review as older respondents are less acculturated, and hence, should prefer an Indian modest dress. Increase in city population should also lead to decrease in perceived social fit score of an Indian modest dress. This is perhaps due to the fact that metropolitan cities in India happen to be more Westernized and populous.

**Table 3. 46: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indian Modest dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>27.26</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>27.94</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)</b>	<b>-0.08</b>	<b>-3.11</b>	<b>0.002</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>0.029</b>
Income	-0.01	-0.92	0.358
<b>City population</b>	<b>-0.06</b>	<b>-2.43</b>	<b>0.015</b>
Marital Status	0.02	0.29	0.769
Education	0.00	-0.02	0.984
Profession	-0.07	-1.47	0.141
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.42$ , $F(9, 2158) = 172.88$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = -0.35			

### 3.4.2.2 Explaining Indian Revealing dress' perceived social fit

Table 3.47, displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indian Revealing dress (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 25.1% variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 2158) = 80.25$ ,  $p < .001$ . Only two predictors significantly contributed to the model. Event with elders contributes significantly to the model. Indian revealing dress appears to get a better perceived

social fit score during events with elders (as compared to events with peers). This result is partly unexpected due to the revealing nature of the dress. However, perhaps the increase in scores is due to elders' preference of Indian dresses. Age significantly contributes to the model. Increase in age leads to an increase in the perceived social fit score of an Indian Revealing dress. This result is unexpected as normally age is inversely related to acculturation. Hence, older people are less acculturated than youngsters and hence, their preference for revealing clothes is less.

**Table 3. 47: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indian Revealing dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
Traditional event	0.00	0.12	0.907
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>26.60</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	-0.02	-0.84	0.401
<b>Age</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>0.004</b>
Income	0.01	0.74	0.459
City population	-0.01	-0.44	0.661
Marital Status	-0.09	-1.77	0.077
Education	0.03	0.97	0.334
Profession	0.05	1.11	0.268
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.25$ , $F(9, 2158) = 80.25$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = -0.80			

### 3.4.2.3 Explaining Western Modest dress' perceived social fit

Table 3.48, displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Western modest dress (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 15.8 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 2158) = 44.85$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Only two predictors significantly contributed to the model - traditional event and event with elders. During traditional events and events with elders, a Western modest dress will receive lower perceived social fit score than during modern events and events with peers respectively. Effects of traditional event and event with elders are consistent with existing literature.



**Table 3. 48: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Western Modest dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>-0.40</b>	<b>-11.19</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>-0.59</b>	<b>-16.55</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	-0.02	-0.64	0.524
Age	0.00	-0.46	0.646
Income	0.01	0.32	0.752
City population	0.01	0.39	0.695
Marital Status	0.02	0.42	0.678
Education	-0.07	-1.75	0.080
Profession	0.02	0.40	0.690
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.15$ , $F(9, 2158) = 44.85$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = 0.27			

#### 3.4.2.4 Explaining Western Revealing dress' perceived social fit

Table 3.49, displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Western revealing dress (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 36.3 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 2158) = 136.50$ ,  $p < .001$ . Only four predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event, event with elders, acculturation item 2, and age.

**Table 3. 49: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Western Revealing dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>-0.95</b>	<b>-27.19</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>-0.76</b>	<b>-21.66</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>0.013</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-2.31</b>	<b>0.021</b>
Income	0.00	-0.05	0.958
City population	0.03	1.13	0.258
Marital Status	0.08	1.44	0.150
Education	-0.05	-1.48	0.140
Profession	0.03	0.68	0.495
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.36$ , $F(9, 2158) = 136.50$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = 0.61			

Traditional event and event with elders would lead to lower perceived social fit scores for a Western revealing dress. These results are expected and consistent with literature. Higher level of westernization of respondents would also lead to higher perceived social fit scores for

Western revealing dress. Increase in age leads to lower perceived social fit scores for Western revealing dress.

### 3.4.2.5 Explaining Indo-western Modest dress' perceived social fit

Table 3.50, displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indo-western modest dress (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 7.4 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 2158) = 19.22$ ,  $p < .001$ . Only one predictor significantly contributed to the model – event with elders.

Indo-western modest dress seems to receive better perceived social fit scores during an event with elders. This is expected as elders would appreciate a modest dress with Indian design elements.

**Table 3. 50: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indo-western Modest dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
Traditional event	0.06	1.63	0.103
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>12.88</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	0.01	0.35	0.729
Age	0.00	-0.34	0.731
Income	0.00	-0.26	0.796
City population	0.03	1.47	0.141
Marital Status	0.02	0.46	0.648
Education	0.05	1.41	0.160
Profession	-0.01	-0.15	0.879
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.07$ , $F(9, 2158) = 19.22$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = -0.24			

### 3.4.2.6 Explaining Indo-western Revealing dress' perceived social fit

Table 3.51 displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indo-western revealing dress (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 9.5 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 2158) = 25.10$ ,  $p < .001$ . Only two predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event and event with elders.

Indo-western revealing dress receives lower score during a traditional event (as compared to a modern event). This result could be attributed to the revealing nature of the dress.

This dress also receives a better score at events with elders (in comparison to event with peers). This result is unexpected as elders often prefer, modest dresses.

**Table 3. 51: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indo-western Revealing dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>-0.30</b>	<b>-8.36</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>11.98</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	0.04	1.65	0.100
Age	-0.01	-1.75	0.080
Income	0.00	0.17	0.863
City population	0.00	-0.11	0.914
Marital Status	-0.05	-0.85	0.395
Education	0.04	0.94	0.346
Profession	-0.02	-0.53	0.599
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.091$ , $F(9, 2158) = 25.10$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = 0.13			

### 3.4.2.7 Explaining Modest dresses' perceived social fit

Table 3.52 displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for modest dresses (variables with significant effect have been put in bold).

**Table 3. 52: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Modest dress; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>8.36</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>11.32</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	-0.03	-1.64	0.101
Age	0.00	0.66	0.508
Income	0.00	-0.41	0.685
City population	0.00	-0.29	0.774
Marital Status	0.02	0.56	0.577
Education	-0.01	-0.21	0.834
Profession	-0.02	-0.58	0.561
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.029$ , $F(9, 6494) = 22.67$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = -0.11			

The model explains 3% variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 6494) = 22.67, p < .001$ . Only two predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event and event with elders.

Increase in perceived social fit scores during traditional events and events with elders (when compared to modern events and events with peers, respectively) is logical and expected as for such events, modest dresses are preferred.

### 3.4.2.8 Explaining Revealing dresses' perceived social fit

Table 3.53, displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for revealing dresses (variables with significant effect have been put in bold).

The model explains 5.9 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 6494) = 45.20, p < .001$ . Only two predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event and event with elders.

Decrease in perceived social fit scores during traditional events (when compared to modern events) is logical and expected as for such events, modest dresses are preferred. However, increase in perceived social fit scores during event with elders (when compared to event with peers) is unexpected.

**Table 3. 53: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Revealing dresses; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	P
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>-0.42</b>	<b>-18.17</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>8.38</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	0.03	1.73	0.084
Age	0.00	-0.70	0.486
Income	0.00	0.43	0.669
City population	0.00	0.30	0.762
Marital Status	-0.02	-0.59	0.557
Education	0.01	0.22	0.825
Profession	0.02	0.61	0.540
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.058$ , $F(9, 6494) = 45.20, p < .001$ , Constant = -0.02			

### 3.4.2.9 Explaining Indian dresses' perceived social fit

Table 3.54 displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indian dresses (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 26.6 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 4326) = 173.76, p < .001$ . Only four predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event, event with elders, acculturation item 2, and age.

Increase in perceived social fit scores during traditional events and events with elders is logical and expected, as for such events Indian dresses are preferred. Acculturation item 2 significantly contributed to the model. As per this item's coding it appears that westernization of respondents in general, would lead to decrease in perceived social fit scores for Indian dresses. As age increases, the perceived social fit scores for Indian dresses also increase. This result is expected as age is inversely related to acculturation and hence, Indian dresses are preferred by Indians of higher age group.

**Table 3. 54: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indian dresses; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>17.77</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>34.93</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)</b>	<b>-0.05</b>	<b>-2.55</b>	<b>0.011</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Income	0.00	-0.13	0.897
City population	-0.03	-1.86	0.063
Marital Status	-0.04	-0.93	0.354
Education	0.02	0.60	0.551
Profession	-0.01	-0.26	0.798
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.264$ , $F(9, 4326) = 173.76$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = -0.58			

### 3.4.2.10 Explaining Western dresses' perceived social fit

Table 3.55 displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Western dresses (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 24.9 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 4326) = 159.24, p < .001$ .

Only three predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event, event with elders, and education. During traditional events and events with elders, Western dresses will receive lower perceived social fit scores than during modern events and events with peers, respectively.

Higher educational qualification is also lowering the perceived social fit scores of Western dresses. This result is unexpected as normally higher education should lead to more acculturation and Westernization.

**Table 3. 55: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Western dresses; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>-0.68</b>	<b>-26.65</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>-0.67</b>	<b>-26.58</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	0.02	1.28	0.200
Age	-0.01	-1.92	0.055
Income	0.00	0.19	0.853
City population	0.02	1.06	0.290
Marital Status	0.05	1.29	0.198
<b>Education</b>	<b>-0.06</b>	<b>-2.25</b>	<b>0.024</b>
Profession	0.02	0.75	0.453
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.247$ , $F(9, 4326) = 159.24$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = 0.44			

### 3.4.2.11 Explaining Indo-western dresses' perceived social fit

Table 3.56 displays the linear regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indo-western dresses (variables with significant effect have been put in bold). The model explains 7.3 % variance in dependent variable and the model is significant  $F(9, 4326) = 37.61$ ,  $p < .001$ . Only two predictors significantly contributed to the model – traditional event and event with elders.

Indo-western dresses seem to receive higher perceived social fit scores during an event with elders (in comparison to an event with peers). They also seem to receive lower perceived social fit scores during traditional events (in comparison to modern events).

**Table 3. 56: Linear Regression analysis of perceived social fit scores for Indo-western dresses; N=542**

Predictor Variable	Gradient	t	p
<b>Traditional event</b>	<b>-0.12</b>	<b>-4.98</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Event with elders</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>17.45</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself?)	0.02	1.43	0.152
Age	-0.01	-1.51	0.132
Income	0.00	-0.05	0.961
City population	0.02	0.92	0.358
Marital Status	-0.01	-0.31	0.757
Education	0.04	1.64	0.101
Profession	-0.02	-0.49	0.627
Model Performance: Adj. $R^2 = 0.071$ , $F(9, 4326) = 37.61$ , $p < .001$ , Constant = - 0.06			

### 3.4.2.12 Conclusion

The literature well establishes the importance of context-congruence in consumption choices. For example, Begum et al. (2018, p. 9) mention that “South Asian youth of both genders use ‘code-switching’ appearance management techniques to dress differently for familial domains or social scenes, switching between traditional clothes for the home and family events and Western clothing for school or the workplace”. Pravina Shukla (2016), too, in her study in the city of Banaras observes that women do wear modern Western clothes but on occasions that involve religious rituals, they stick to traditional clothes (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 416).

Hence, importance of attaining context-congruence through consumption choices leads to the same dress achieving different perceived social fit scores during different events. As the consumption-context changes (through type of event – modern/traditional and characteristic of company - with peers/with elders), a luxury dress achieves different score based on how well its attributes match the consumption-context. Moreover, besides event related variables, demographic variables (of respondents) such as acculturation item 2 (How do you identify yourself – Indian or Western), age, city one resides in, and education also affect the social value perception of some dresses.

Company characteristic variable (dummy variable for event with elders) was a significant contributor to the regression model in all the cases. A company with elders improved significantly, the perceived social fit scores of Modest luxury dresses. Elders' company also improved significantly, the perceived social fit scores of Indian luxury dresses (both modest and revealing) as well as the Indo-western luxury dresses (both modest and revealing). A company with peers improved significantly, the perceived social fit scores of Western luxury dresses (both modest and revealing).

Type of event variable (dummy variable for traditional event) was a significant contributor in nine cases (out of a total of eleven). Attending a traditional event, increased significantly, the perceived social fit scores of Modest and Indian luxury dresses. Attending a modern event, increased significantly, the perceived social fit scores of Revealing luxury dresses; Western luxury dresses (both modest and revealing); and Indo-western luxury dresses.

Age of respondents also contributed significantly, in four cases. The analysis reveals, older the respondent, higher the perceived social fit scores she assigns, for Indian luxury dresses (both modest and revealing); and younger the respondent, higher the perceived social fit score, she assigns, for Western revealing luxury dresses.

The level of acculturation to Western culture, was also a significant contributor, in three cases. The analysis reveals, more rooted an Indian female respondent is, in the Indian culture, the higher perceived social fit score, she assigns for Indian luxury dresses, especially the modest ones. More the acculturation with Western culture, the higher perceived social fit scores, she assigns for Western revealing luxury dresses.

Both, city of residence and education, contributed significantly to the model, only once. The analysis indicated (unexpectedly), more educated the female, the lower perceived social fit scores, she assigns to Western luxury dresses. Larger the population of the city of residence, lower the perceived social fit scores, she assigns to the Indian modest luxury dresses.



Therefore, the above analysis, controlling for the demographics and acculturation, further enhances the importance of characteristic of company/people present and the type of event.

Among all regressions, R squared value for Indian Modest dress is the highest and for Western Revealing dress, it is the second highest. The perceived social fit scores of these two “extreme” types of luxury dresses are well predicted by the variables – type of event, the characteristic of company, the level of acculturation, and the age of the respondents. Specifically, for Indian modest luxury dress, the perceived social fit scores are higher for traditional events, events with elders, and with older respondents; and the scores are lower for those who have higher levels of acculturation, and those respondents, who are from cities with larger population sizes. For Western revealing luxury dress, the perceived social fit scores are higher for modern events, events with peers, for younger respondents, and respondents with higher levels of acculturation.

For Indian and Western luxury dresses, higher R squared values were recorded than for Indo-western luxury dresses. Hence, as per my data, change in the type of event, characteristic of company, acculturation, age, and in a few cases, demographic variables, like city of residence and education, explain higher percentage of variance in perceived social fit scores of Indian luxury dresses and Western luxury dresses, however, the same cannot be said in the case of Indo-western luxury dresses. Indian luxury dresses’ perceived social fit scores are positively related to traditional event, event with elders, and age of the respondents; and are negatively related to level of acculturation. Western luxury dresses’ perceived social fit scores are positively related to modern event and event with peers; and are negatively related to traditional event and event with elders.

R squared values for Revealing and Modest luxury dresses were the lowest. Moreover, only type of event and characteristic of company have a significant effect on perceived social fit scores of Indo-western, Modest and Revealing luxury dresses.

### 3.4.3 Results of Chow Test

Chow test is an econometric test used to determine if one should run a single pooled regression on all the observations of a sample or if it would be better to run separate regressions on each sub-group of the sample. Suppose one's data can be divided into two sub-samples A and B. If  $RSS_p$  is the sum of squared residuals from the combined data and  $RSS_A$ ,  $RSS_B$  are the sum of squared residuals from sub-samples A and B respectively, then the Chow statistic is calculated by the formula displayed in Table 3.57. In this formula,  $n$  represents the total number of observations and  $k$  represents the number of parameters (including the intercept). If the Chow statistic value is greater than the critical value of  $F(k, n-2k)$ , then that signifies that breaking up the sample would lead to significant improvement in fit. Hence, in that case separate regressions should be run on each sub-sample, instead of a single pooled regression on the combined sample (Dougherty, 2006, p. 245).

**Table 3. 57: Chow Test Statistic in case of two sub-samples**

$F(k, n - 2k) = \frac{\text{improvement in } RSS/\text{degrees of freedom used up}}{\text{remaining } RSS/\text{degrees of freedom remaining}}$ $= \frac{(RSS_p - RSS_A - RSS_B) / k}{(RSS_A + RSS_B) / (n - 2k)}$
Source- Dougherty (2011, p. 245)

Similarly, the test for three sub-samples (A, B, and C) is conducted, with the Chow test statistic, given as in table 3.58.

In this formula, the new term,  $RSS_C$ , is the sum of squared residuals from sub-sample C. In this case, if the Chow statistic value is greater than the critical value of  $F(2k, n-3k)$ , then that signifies that breaking up the sample would lead to significant improvement in fit and separate regressions should be run on each sub-sample, in place of pooled regression.

**Table 3. 58: Chow Test Statistic in case of three sub-samples**

$F(2k, n - 3k) = \frac{(RSS_P - RSS_A - RSS_B - RSS_C)/2k}{RSS_A + RSS_B + RSS_C/n - 3k}$
Source- (DeMaris, 2004, pp. 152, 153)

In order to conduct the Chow test, long format of the data file was used in SPSS. In this format 24 rows belong to each respondent. Here, each row represents a unique experiment treatment for a respondent. As the experiment has 24 different treatments/conditions, hence, each respondent gets 24 rows of data. The sum of squared residuals were calculated using multiple linear regression. The dependent variable was perceived social fit. Nine independent variables were considered (Respondent's Age, Profession, Education, City, Monthly Income, Marital Status, Acculturation Scale item 2, Dummy variable for Traditional Events, and Dummy variable for Event with elders). Hence, the value of k is 10, as k is equal to number of parameters including the intercept (i.e., number of independent variables + 1). The sum of squared residual values were later used to calculate the Chow statistic in Excel.

As per the formulae introduced above, for the relevant F (df1, df2) statistic: in the case involving 2 dresses (i.e., 2 sub-samples), df1 is k (i.e., 10); and in the case of 3 dresses (i.e., 3 sub-samples), df1 is 2k (i.e., 20); df2 is (N – 2k) i.e., (N – 20) in the analyses involving 2 dresses (i.e., 2 sub-samples) and in the case of 3 dresses (i.e., 3 sub-samples), df 2 is (N – 3k) i.e., (N – 30); where N is the total number of observations in all the sub-samples. [Note:  $N = \{(\text{the total number of respondents (734)}) - (\text{the number of cases where information is missing in reference to the variables used})\} \times \text{Number of dresses} \times \text{Number of social occasions}$ ] (Becker, 2013; DeMaris, 2004, p. 153; Dougherty, 2006, p. 245).

I conducted the Chow test on the following samples (please see Table 3.59 for results). The SPSS outputs are displayed in the appendix of chapter 3 (p 481):

a) **Sample of modest dresses:** This sample contained observations related to dress 1, dress 3, and dress 5 (please see Table 3.60 for a description of all dresses). The sub-samples in

this case were observations related to dress 1, observations related to dress 3, and observations related to dress 5. In this case, degrees of freedom are calculated by the number of observations pertaining to these three dresses (1,3, and 5) for four different social occasions (traditional/modern, and with peers/elders): [(the total number of respondents (734)) – (the number of cases where information is missing in reference to the variables used)] X the number of dresses (3) X different social occasions (4). The Chow statistic obtained (149.11) was greater than the critical value of F with 20, 6474 degrees of freedom (1.57). Hence, breaking up the sample and conducting regressions on each sub-sample would significantly improve the fit in the case.

b) **Sample of revealing dresses:** This sample contained observations related to dress 2, dress 4, and dress 6. The sub-samples in this case were observations related to dress 2, observations related to dress 4, and observations related to dress 6. In this case, degrees of freedom are calculated by the number of observations pertaining to these three dresses (2, 4, and 6) for four different social occasions (traditional/ modern, and with peers/elders): [(the total number of respondents (734)) – (the number of cases where information is missing in reference to the variables used)] X the number of dresses (3) X different social occasions (4). The Chow statistic obtained (93.92) was greater than the critical value of F with 20, 6474 degrees of freedom (1.57). The results imply that breaking up the sample and conducting regressions on each sub-sample would significantly improve the fit in the case.

c) **Sample of Indian dresses:** This sample contained observations related to dress 1 and dress 2. The sub-samples are observations related to dress 1 and observations related to dress 2. In this case, degrees of freedom are calculated by the number of observations pertaining to these two dresses (1, and 2) for four different social occasions (traditional/ modern, and with peers/elders): [(the total number of respondents (734)) – (the number of cases where information is missing in reference to the variables used)] X the number of dresses (2) X different social occasions (4). In this case also the Chow statistic (95.83) was higher than critical

value of F with 10, 4316 degrees of freedom (1.83). Hence, conducting regression on each sub-sample is a better option than conducting a single pooled regression.

d) **The sample of Western dresses:** This sample contained observations related to dress 3 and dress 4. The sub-samples are observations related to dress 3 and observations related to dress 4. In this case, degrees of freedom are calculated by the number of observations pertaining to these two dresses (3, and 4) for four different social occasions (traditional/ modern, and with peers/elders): [(the total number of respondents (734)) – (the number of cases where information is missing in reference to the variables used)] X the number of dresses (2) X different social occasions (4). In this case also the Chow statistic (14.43) was higher than critical value of F with 10, 4316 degrees of freedom (1.83). Hence, conducting regression on each sub-sample is a better option than conducting a single pooled regression.

e) **The sample of Indo-western dresses:** This sample contained observations related to dress 5 and dress 6. The sub-samples are observations related to dress 5 and observations related to dress 6. In this case, degrees of freedom are calculated by the number of observations pertaining to these two dresses (5, and 6) for four different social occasions (traditional/ modern, and with peers/elders): [(the total number of respondents (734)) – (the number of cases where information is missing in reference to the variables used)] X the number of dresses (2) X different social occasions (4). In this case also the Chow statistic (6.05) was higher than critical value of F with 10, 4316 degrees of freedom (1.83). Hence, conducting regression on each sub-sample is a better option than conducting a single pooled regression.

The R square value (please see table 3.59) for combined sample of all modest dresses is very low (.03). Same is the case for combined sample of all revealing dresses (R square = .059). The R square values for samples of Indian dresses, Western dresses and Indo–western dresses are slightly better (.267, .251 and .073 respectively). Hence, as per the results of the Chow test and multiple regressions, it would be better to consider and analyse the effect of demographic variables and event variables on each dress separately. However, the Chow test

was lowest for Indo-western dress, then for Western dress. Another option would be to analyse the effect of the independent variables on dependent variable for sub-groups of Western dresses and Indo-western dresses. In the case of separate regressions of Indo-western and Western dresses, the F values, though are higher than the ones in pooled regressions, the differences are not much. This indicates that in the case of Indo-western and Western dresses, the separate regressions do not offer significant improvements, compared to pooled regressions.

**Table 3. 59: Results of Chow Test; N=542**

Pooled Sample	Sub-samples	Chow Test Statistic	R square
Modest Dresses	Pooled	149.11 *	.03
	Dress 1 (Indian Modest)		.42
	Dress 3 (Western Modest)		.16
	Dress 5 (Indo-western Modest)		.07
Revealing Dresses	Pooled	93.92 *	.06
	Dress 2 (Indian Revealing)		.25
	Dress 4 (Western Revealing)		.36
	Dress 6 (Indo-western Revealing)		.09
Indian Dresses	Pooled	95.83*	0.27
	Dress 1 (Indian Modest)		0.42
	Dress 2 (Indian Revealing)		0.25
Western Dresses	Pooled	14.43 *	.25
	Dress 3 (Western Modest)		.16
	Dress 4 (Western Revealing)		.36
Indo-western Dresses	Pooled	6.05 *	.07
	Dress 5 (Indo-western Modest)		.07
	Dress 6 (Indo-western Revealing)		.09
Variables used in Multiple Linear Regression Dependent Variable – controlled factorial scores (perceived social fit) Independent Variables – 9 variables were used - Age, Profession, Education, City, Monthly Income, Marital Status, Acculturation Scale item 2, Dummy variable for Traditional Events, and Dummy variable for Events with Elders  * Signifies that the value of chow test statistic was greater than critical value of F with k and (n – 2k) degrees of freedom at 0.05 significance level in case of 2 sub-samples * Signifies that the value of chow test statistic was greater than critical value of F with 2k and (n – 3k) degrees of freedom at 0.05 significance level in case of 3 sub-samples			

**Table 3. 60: Description of different dresses**

Dress 1	Indian Modest
Dress 2	Indian Revealing
Dress 3	Western Modest
Dress 4	Western Revealing
Dress 5	Indo-western Modest
Dress 6	Indo-western Revealing

### 3.5 Conclusion

With what formed the core part of this chapter – a complex factorial design with repeated measures (with-in subjects design) and its data analysis, the study reached at a number of main and interaction effects of the four independent variables, confirming a larger part of what was predicted on the basis of the literature review and qualitative study.

The study illustrates that the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress positively impacts its perceived social value for a particular social occasion, validating the proposition of literature review that in collectivist societies, the luxury consumption is other-directed and consumers desire social approval. As portrayed in the literature review, the study also highlights that the key theme in Indian fashions remains ‘Indianness’ – Indian dresses have shown higher perceived social fit than the Western and Indo-western ones. Literature has shown that fusion of Western and Indian elements, leading to hybridity in Indian fashion, has been the norm in the clothing choices by young Indian females. This is reflected in the higher perceived social fit enjoyed by Indo-western luxury dresses in comparison to Western luxury dresses.

The analysis has also shown that the Indian dress has a higher perceived social fit for a traditional social occasion. Contrary to what is expected from the literature, the study has not shown a higher perceived social fit of a Western luxury dress (than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses) for a modern social occasion. This perhaps could be analyzed with the understanding that the respondents’ differentiation of events for context-congruent behavior is more than just a dichotomous division into traditional and modern. The hypothesis test results also reflect that the social imperatives of the occasion are a product of interaction between the

type of event and the characteristic of people present at the occasion (peers /elders). Indo-western luxury dresses are found to score better for modern social occasions, in general, perhaps, for the reason that these dresses get accepted by elders for their Indian product-attributes, and at the same time, the Western product-attributes serve the social imperatives pertaining to the peers, who are more acculturated with the Western culture. This result, indirectly also points out that the concerns relating the modesty as a dress-attribute, are culture-specific.

As envisaged in the Conceptual Diagram, ‘modesty’ as a dress-attribute, is found to be interacting with the type of event and the characteristic of the company, in influencing the perceived social fit of a luxury dress. This manifests in the testing of predicted interactions shown in the conceptual diagram (e.g., for a traditional social occasion, a modest dress has a higher perceived social fit than a revealing dress). In the study, the consumption-choices of young Indian females are found to be influenced by the characteristic (peers or elders) of the company/people present at the occasion and this is reflected in what is revealed through the confirmed hypotheses (e.g., “for an Indian female at an event with elders, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses”). However, the hypothesis that for an event with peer group, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress, was not supported. This establishes the dress-attribute, ‘modesty’ as a key defining element in social-appropriateness of a luxury dress and more importantly suggests that modest clothing is perhaps emerging as a fashion product in contradiction to what has been conventionally perceived, that it is a product of religious sanctions only.

These above-mentioned main and interaction effects form the basis of the contributions, that this research makes. Besides, the contributions and broad outlines of this research, the next chapter (chapter 4), also presents the research learning in terms of managerial implications, for both Western luxury brands and Indian fashion designers for their market success. Before



moving to the concluding section that highlights future research avenues, chapter 4 lists the limitations of the present research.

**Table 3. 61: Results of Hypotheses-Testing**

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Result</b>
H1: For an Indian female, the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury dress will positively impact its perceived social value for a particular social occasion.	Supported
H2a: The traditional or modern characteristics of a social occasion result in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female.	Supported
H2b: The characteristic of the company/people present at the occasion (peer group or elders) results in different perceived social fit of a luxury dress for an Indian female.	Supported
H3a: For an Indian female, Indian luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Indo-western and Western luxury dresses.	Supported
H3b: For an Indian female, Indo-western luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than Western luxury dresses.	Supported
H4: For an Indian female, modest luxury dresses will have higher perceived social fit than revealing luxury dresses.	Supported
H5a: For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.	<b>Not Supported</b>
H5b: For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.	Supported
H6a: For an Indian female at a modern social occasion, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.	Supported
H6b: For an Indian female at a traditional social occasion, a modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.	Supported
H7a: For an Indian female at an event with elders, an Indian luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Western and Indo-western luxury dresses.	Supported
H7b: For an Indian female at an event with peer group, a Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western luxury dresses.	Supported
H8a: For an Indian female at an event with elders, modest luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a revealing luxury dress.	Supported
H8b: For an Indian female at an event with peer group, a revealing luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest luxury dress.	<b>Not Supported</b>

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Outline

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## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter weaves the entire research together by summing up what has been done, the learnings and contributions, the managerial implications and the limitations. It also lists the avenues for future research.

First, I discuss the gap this research attempts to address (section 4.2) and then submit the contributions it makes to two important domains – value perception of luxury apparel and decision-making process among young Indian females concerning luxury dresses (section 4.3). Thereafter, I discuss the main and interaction effects of the independent variables. The practical essence of the research has been presented comprehensively as managerial implications for Western luxury houses and Indian fashion designers, separately. There is a critical evaluation, in brief, of attempts of “indianizing” luxury products by a few Western brands, like Hermes, Ermenegildo Zegna, Etro, etc. (section 4.4). The chapter also lists the limitations of my first attempt at a major research (section 4.5). The chapter ends with section (Section 4.6) on future research avenues for further improvements in relation to the present research design, and the opportunities, the social and physical diversity of India offers to widen the research horizons.

## **4.2 Discussion**

The present research aimed to explore and analyze the decision-making process for luxury consumption of apparel, specifically dresses, among young Indian females. Following the pragmatic approach, I employed exploratory sequential mixed method, comprising an exploratory qualitative study (semi-structured interviews) and a quantitative study (using experimental design) (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 27).

The study attempted to address the conspicuous gap in research related to identity-based consumption by focusing on a dominant culture from an emerging economy (in the large body of literature on ethnic identity-based consumption, the focus has predominantly been on minority sub-cultures based in Western countries) and also to bring in the focus on consumption-context and product-attributes in social value perception of luxury consumption.

The highly recognized importance of cultural elements in value perception of luxury and the potential that the Indian luxury market holds make such studies imperative.

The literature has demonstrated the dominance of other-directed symbolism for luxury consumption choice in India, illustrating the vertical collectivism/hierarchical set-up of society. This suggests that an Indian's decision making related to luxury consumption is affected significantly by others' views and as a result he/she chooses to consume for societal acceptance (Paurav Shukla, 2011; Paurav Shukla et al., 2015).

The study manifests the co-existence of tradition and modernity, as modern elements of Westernization have integrated into the traditional framework of Indian society. The study makes it explicit that the young Indian females continually negotiate the tightrope between these two aspects via the axis of decision-making as contextual-fit: In this study the match between the consumption-choice (dress-attributes) and social imperatives of the occasion in terms of the type of event (modern or traditional) and the characteristic of people present (peers or elders) is called Contextual-Fit. The study echoes, what is stated by Arti Sandhu (2015) in her research on Indian Fashion – “No matter how much Western dress may appear to displace traditional dress styles, clothes still need to be worn in a specific “fashion” in order to function within certain localized constructs for their meanings to be transmitted convincingly. In India, this relates as much to the past as it does to the present-day pressures of modernity, and takes into consideration the evolving sense of national identity” (Sandhu, 2015, p. 16).

The present study illustrates that young Indian females, with status-based luxury consumption, attempt to show social-conformity by choosing context-congruent luxury dress. This mirrors what is reflected in the research by S. Woodward (2007, p. 141), when she comments: “Dressing involves situating the self in a social context, and so the clothing codes of social occasions allow the enactment of particular identities” (S. Woodward, 2007, p. 141). In this reference, she quotes Kaiser (2003, p. 186) for defining identity as the “organised set of

characteristics an individual perceives as representing or defining the self in a given social situation” (quoted in S. Woodward, 2007, p. 141).

The study identifies and establishes, both qualitatively and empirically, the type of event (traditional or modern) and characteristic of company (peers or elders), as the defining elements of consumption-context. The broad directions revealed in the study synchronize well with what is available in the literature, the traditional tenets of hierarchy and patriarchy are still prevalent and strongly anchored in Indian society (Lahiri-Roy, 2016; Uberoi, 2004). The young females in their choices of clothes tend to exhibit their individuality but at the same time desire to fit in a given social-context. The study supports S. Woodward's (2007) assertion that the individual and social are not necessarily in contradiction: “conforming to social expectations can allow women to expand upon themselves (S. Woodward, 2007, p. 150). It is understood from their choices of consumption that even though to fit in they need to become like others, it makes them feel like “themselves” (Yodanis, 2018, pp. 65–66).

The study establishes through the test of various hypotheses that the attributes of dress interact with the type of event in the decision-making for the appropriate luxury dress-choice. In both, traditional and modern setting, the young Indian females show tendency for achieving higher degree of social value in luxury consumption by attempting what has been referred to in this study as contextual-fit. Our study has shown the tendencies among young Indian females for context-congruence in luxury dress consumption-choices with preferences for Indian aesthetics reflected for traditional occasions and Western aesthetics for modern/non-traditional ones. From the most traditional setting (a traditional event with the presence of elders) to the most modern one (a modern event with peers), a given particular dress can achieve very different perceived social value. Expectedly, the Indian modest dress will perform the best in a traditional context with the presence of elders, and the worst in a modern context with the presence of peers only. But unexpectedly, the Indo-western dress (both modest and revealing) perform better than the Western (both modest and revealing) in a modern context with the

presence of elders. Indo-western aesthetics are perceived to fit in both traditional and modern occasions, especially when elders are also present at the occasion. The study has shown that Indo-western dresses (both modest and revealing) were perceived to have higher social values, both at a Reception (a modern event with the presence of elders) and Engagement (a traditional event with the presence of elders). The study indeed validates the significance of social value perception when it comes to luxury consumption in India, similar to the findings of Hennigs et al., (2012), Shukla, (2011), Shukla, Singh, & Banerjee (2015).

Overall, the results of the experiment lead to the following inferences –

**a. The Indian modest dress** is preferred the most, for a traditional social occasion with the presence of elders (Engagement). The same dress is also preferred for traditional social occasion, without elders (House-warming). The probable reason being that in India, traditionally, House-warming ceremony is a religious ceremony with sacred rituals, performed by a priest for facilitating the flow of positive energy into the new house. Pravina Shukla (2016), in her study finds that women in India do wear modern Western clothes but on occasions that involve religious rituals, they stick to traditional clothes (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 416). The Indian modest dress also ranks high on preference for modern social occasion with elders (Reception). The two factors which justify this finding are, first, although Reception is a modern event, it ranks lower on modernity (in comparison to Bachelorette Party) and second, the presence of elders at the event. There is a clear ‘no’ by respondents for this dress in the case of a Bachelorette Party (a modern event with peers). A Western dress is preferred for such a modern event that is attended only by peers.

**b. The Indian revealing dress** isn’t preferred for the Bachelorette Party either, due to the above-stated reason that the dress is not congruent for the Western/modern social occasion. The dress is most preferred for the modern occasion with elders (Reception). This could be attributed to the fact that modern occasions provide a little more liberty to Indian women in relation to ‘modesty’ as a dress attribute; and Reception is not ranked very high on

modernity. The dress is not preferred for the traditional social occasion without elders – House-warming, as its ‘revealing’ attribute does not fit with the religious nature of the occasion and is expected to go against the desired norm of social conformity.

- c. The **Western modest dress** is preferred only for the Bachelorette Party and not for any other social occasion chosen for the experiment. This seems to imply that the independent variable, type of event, is the primary factor in the consumption-choice of luxury dress. For the other modern event, i.e. Reception, the dress not being preferred, is perhaps an indication that consumption-choice process for an Indian female is not simply dichotomous, in terms of modern or traditional, rather it is more along a continuum with extremes as modern and traditional. Moreover, Reception, though classified as a modern event, was rated much less modern than a Bachelorette Party and perhaps therefore, the dress is believed to be less congruent for the situation.
- d. The **Western revealing dress** is found to be preferred only for Bachelorette Party. The dress, as expected from our qualitative study and literature review on product-attribute of ‘modesty’ and Indian society, is not preferred for traditional social occasions and/or in the presence of elders, because of its deep plunging neckline and exposure of shoulders and chest (Sandhu, 2015, p. 64; Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 331).
- e. The **Indo-western modest dress**, due to its congruence with the occasion, is most preferred for Reception (modern event with elders). However, it is not chosen for Bachelorette Party, as the occasion is more Western in comparison to Reception and product congruence/fit is not good enough for the selection. The dress is also chosen for Engagement (traditional occasion with presence of elders).
- f. The **Indo-western revealing dress** is also the most preferred for Reception due to the greater congruence/fit of product attributes with the type of event. In addition, it is also chosen for Bachelorette Party, though the preference is not noteworthy.

The above-stated findings (summarized in Table 4.1) reveal interesting aspects about consumption choices of luxury dresses. The Indo-western dresses are preferred for Reception (modern event with elders). Both the Western dresses (modest and revealing), are not preferred for traditional events, with or without elders, because of their lack of congruence/fit with the type of event. However, it is interesting to note that the Western dresses are also not chosen for Reception (modern event), suggesting perhaps, that the respondents' differentiation of events is more nuanced rather than just a dichotomous division into traditional and modern. The Indian modest dress is preferred for traditional event (with presence of elders) for its congruence/fit and this is the only dress, out of six types, chosen for House-warming, pointing to the norm that for religious occasions, one avoids 'Western' and 'revealing' dresses so as to achieve social-conformity. The lack of preference for Indian dresses, both modest and revealing, for Bachelorette Party, and the selection of only Western dresses (both modest and revealing), strongly establish the key relevance of the independent variable – type of event.

**Table 4. 1: Dress preference by young Indian women** (Circled results were unexpected)

Perceived Design Origin		Social Occasion			
		Bachelorette Party (Modern, With Peers)	Reception (Modern, With Elders)	House Warming (Traditional, With Peers)	Engagement (Traditional, With Elders)
Indian	Modest	---	+++	+++	+++
	Revealing	--	++	--	+
Western	Modest	+	--	--	---
	Revealing	+++	--	---	---
Indo-western	Modest	-	++	-	+
	Revealing	+	++	--	+
+++ Occasion for which the dress is most preferred ++ Preferred + Slight preference			--- Occasion for which the dress is least preferred -- Non-preference - Slight non-preference		

For a modern event attended by peers, the best scoring dress in perceived social fit are in the following order (descending): Western revealing, followed by Western modest and then comes Indo western revealing.



For modern event attended by elders, the order (descending) is different: Indian modest dress achieved the highest perceived social fit, followed by Indian revealing dress. Indo-western dress and Indo-western revealing dress both achieved the third highest value of perceived social fit.

For a traditional event attended by peers, only Indian modest dress was preferred and achieved the highest perceived social fit.

For a traditional event attended by elders, Indian modest dress achieved the highest perceived social fit, followed by Indian revealing dress, Indo-western modest dress and Indo-western revealing dress.

Expectedly, in general, the perceived social fit of a luxury dress, is found to vary with its perceived contextual fit, in terms of its attributes (perceived design origin) and modesty with the social imperatives of the context, in terms of the type of event and the characteristic of the company/people present (peers/elders).

Each dress achieves a very different perceived social fit depending on the context.

Two responses are not on expected lines. First, Western (modest) dress registering non-preference for Reception (modern event with elders), perhaps because of the fact that reception was rated much less modern in comparison to bachelorette party as well as due to the presence of elders. Second, only slight preference for Indo-western (revealing) dress for Bachelorette Party (modern event with peers), perhaps because respondents were looking for a dress with more Western attributes for this highly modern event without social constraints related to elders' presence.

### **4.3 Contributions**

The present research makes contributions to two important domains – value perception of luxury apparel, and decision-making process among young Indian females concerning luxury dresses. The study has, both qualitatively and empirically, validated the dominance of social value perception in luxury consumption in the pre-dominantly collectivist set-up of the Indian

society. It has also established the critical influence that the consumption-context holds in the consumption-choice of a luxury dress by a young Indian female.

The present study adds on to the corpus of luxury value perception by demonstrating empirically through a robust experimental design, the positive correlation between the contextual-fit and social value perception. These two parameters, contextual-fit and social value perception, are merged in the final analysis and the resultant parameter is referred to as **perceived social fit**. Based on literature review and my study, I define **Perceived Social Fit** as the measure of one's perceived social appreciation/acceptance by referent group in accordance with the degree of social conformity in one's behavior (in terms of the fit between attributes of dress chosen for a social occasion and the social imperatives of the occasion).

The contribution is to be seen in the background that though the corpus of knowledge about value perception in luxury consumption is well developed, the literature does not take into account the impact of consumption-context and product-attributes on cultural relevance of luxury goods, as well as the impact of cultural relevance on the social value dimension. The contribution is also important as there is established realization of the importance of cross-cultural studies in value perception of luxury consumption. In particular, the present study helps in understanding luxury consumption process in the emerging luxury market of India.

The study has shown that young Indian females are inclined towards status-based luxury consumption, and consumption-context is a critical determinant in luxury-consumption choice. The study has highlighted **the type of event (modern/traditional) and the characteristic of the company/people present at the event (peers/elders)** as the two important defining elements of consumption-context. The study has also established that the **luxury dress-attributes - perceived design origin (Indian/Western/Indo-western) and modesty (modest or revealing)** - have significant interactions with **type of event and the characteristic of people present**. The present study illustrates that contextual-fit [i.e. the match between the consumption-choice (dress-attributes) and social imperatives of the occasion in terms of the

type of event (modern or traditional) and the characteristic of people present (peers or elders)] is the axis in decision-making process, regarding the choice of a luxury dress for a social occasion. This exhibits young Indian females' adherence to social conformity.

The theoretical support for the above-mentioned inferences is found in identity based consumption; value perception models of luxury consumption; contextual framework regarding the role of a dress; and the literature about the salient characteristics of Indian society.

#### **4.4 Managerial implications from our results**

The study has provided a number of significant main and interaction effects of the four variables, namely, type of event (traditional/modern), characteristic of the company/people present at the social occasion (peers/elders), perceived design origin (Indian/Western/Indo-western), and modesty (modest/revealing).

A). **Firstly**, the study empirically establishes that the perceived contextual-fit of a luxury-dress positively impacts its perceived social value for a particular social occasion. The independent variables, type of event and characteristic of the company, show significant main effects. The study, therefore, validates the importance of social value perception, establishes the critical role of social context in luxury consumption behavior, and highlights the importance of the two components of the social context - the type of event (traditional/modern) and the characteristic of the people who are present at the occasion (peer group/elders).

Therefore, marketers can gain from knowledge about the Indian consumer's shifting consumption preferences based on the consumption-context. Indian women wish to consume luxury products in line with the identities they wish to express at different social occasions. The analysis in the present study about how young Indian women perceive the social value of clothes in various contexts is an explicit illustration of context-related social identity. The type of social event (traditional or modern) and the characteristic of the people present at the event (peer group/elders) influence the consumption-choice of luxury dresses. The learnings suggest that luxury brand marketers stand to benefit by customizing their strategies vis-à-vis the

attributes of various important social occasions – especially for the female luxury dresses. The luxury companies need to gather information pertaining to social diversity of important occasions and process it, to integrate variety in their product-line and position their products to provide a consumption experience that is in line with social conformity norms in the Indian society. This can enable the luxury companies to deliver the appropriate products at the most appropriate times of the year, as there are particular special occasions when Indians tend to spend luxury, especially during the wedding season or important festivals like Diwali.

The study clearly confirms the dominance of other-directed luxury consumption behaviour. This suggests to the marketers to especially focus on a luxury product being a symbol for status and social conformity behavior in their luxury product development and promotion processes. This guides the marketers towards innovatively adding those elements in their products which help boost social status. The social value perception elements should be exploited well in positioning and advertising strategies for effective communication to target the potential luxury consumers. Promotional strategies amplifying social and symbolic attributes can certainly benefit the marketers more in the collectivist set-up of Indian society. “Motivational values relating to prestige-seeking behavior play a pivotal role in developing effective positioning and communication strategies of luxury brands. Solid integration of values into brand positioning and/or promotional messages would be fundamental in order to resonate with global consumers. Thus, marketers are recommended to deliver the creative concept to portray brands as a means to affiliate with affluent lifestyles for collectivistic consumers” (Lee et al., 2018, p. 119).

B). **Secondly**, the study finds that the variable **perceived design origin** (Indian/Western/Indo-western) has a significant main effect (the dresses with Indian and Indo-western designs have a higher perceived social fit than dresses with Western design). The study also finds significant interaction between the variable **perceived design origin** and the variable **type of event** (the Indian dresses have the highest perceived social fit during traditional events;

Indo-western dresses have the highest perceived social fit for the modern events and Western dresses, the second highest). I had hypothesized that for a modern event, Western luxury dress will have a higher perceived social fit than Indian and Indo-western dresses. However, data does not support this. The variable **perceived design origin** has significant interaction with the variable **characteristic of the company/people present at the occasion** (the Western luxury dresses have higher perceived social fit during an event with peer group than other dresses, and Indian luxury dresses have higher perceived social fit during an event with elders).

In this regard, marketers stand to gain through the knowledge about the variation in consumption behavior along the continuum between the extremes of individualism and other-directed behavior. In the presence of elders at the occasion, the study shows more inhibitions in choosing a dress, whereas in the presence of peer group, the consumption behavior seems to be directed more by individualistic tendencies. Marketers can commercially benefit by providing a larger variety of consumption-choices to fit in different social contexts in which Indian consumers are placed. Moreover, the understanding about the co-existence of tradition and modernity in India should direct brands to focus and create more fusion of Western and Indian/traditional elements in dresses. The desired basket of dresses to be marketed in India should be a judicious mix of three broad variants – Indian, Indo-western and Western. The need for the primacy of fusion also gets supported by historical accounts, as Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun (2018), following Arti Sandhu (2015), note in their book, *Fashion History - A Global View*, that with the arrival of the British, there was an acceleration in the change of fashion but it was marked with the focus on the fusion of local and global. They conclude – “the tension between adopting modern Western styles of dress and retaining Indian garments for the sake of identity resulted in hybridity, a process that is still affecting fashion in India today” (Welters & Lillethun, 2018, p. 143). In general, following Brenninkmeyer (1973), they also opine that consumers are at ease in adopting fashions that have more affinity to what they already have rather than experimenting with an entirely innovative style – people opt for gradational

variations rather than sharp ones (Brenninkmeyer, 1973; Welters & Lillethun, 2018, p. 38). The present research and success stories like Motahajiba chains, famous for vogue Islamic fashion and high-quality design of textiles in Egypt, suggest new directions for luxury marketing research for production and advertising to project Fusion Fashion for carving out market shares in social set-ups with collectivist orientations and consumption aligned with consumers' faith but still desiring latest in fashion. Larger the number of studies about different permutations and combinations of desirable mix of fashion, faith, and practicality in clothes, more the ease in acceptance of luxury dresses in various Eastern cultures (Abaza, 2013, p. 79).

C). **Thirdly**, the study finds that the variable **dress-attribute – modesty** has a significant main effect (modest dresses have higher perceived social fit than revealing dresses). In addition to the main effect, the variables **type of event** and **modesty** have significant interaction (during a modern social occasion, a revealing dress has a higher perceived social fit than a modest dress; during a traditional event, a modest dress has a higher perceived social fit than a revealing dress); as well as the interaction between variables – **characteristic of the company/people present** and **modesty** - is significant (for an event with elders, a modest luxury dress has a higher perceived social fit than a revealing dress; I had hypothesized that for an event with the peer group, a revealing dress will have a higher perceived social fit than a modest dress. However, this is not supported by the data; and even for an event with peer group, a modest dress has a higher perceived social fit than a revealing dress).

In a nutshell, the study establishes clearly that 'modesty' as a dress attribute is significant for an Indian female to select an 'appropriate' dress for a particular social occasion. This becomes an important element in the designing of luxury dresses for the Indian market.

The norms concerning modesty as a dress-attribute are a matter of social convention and permissibility. For a living culture, the two essential pre-requisites are – continuity and change. On the one hand, culture keeps us bound with our heritage, and on the other, helps us keep up with the contemporary times. The role of our costumes is similar as they, too, are a

reflection of culture (Biswas, 2017, p. 4). There is a large young female population in India that is ready to adopt luxury fashion with a touch of social conformity. The Western luxury brands need to look at the emerging market with cultural relativistic approach and adapt fast to its social norms of appropriateness of fashion garments. Our study in India points out and supports what Shelina Janmohamed (a specialist in Muslim market and vice-president of the advertising agency Ogilvy Noor and a blogger) opines, that though norms concerning modesty vary, some common elements of appropriateness of fashion garments remain as “longer clothes, looser clothes with long sleeves, worn with or without the veil” (O’Brian, 2016). In general, the youth in India aspires to be fashionable but tends to be constrained by the contours of religious beliefs and feels either proud or obliged to carry forward the cultural and political traditions. Hoggard (2013), a consumer journalist, adds that the Western mainstream media perceives modest/ethnic clothing as a ‘uniform’ to adhere to religious norms and not as a fashion product. This is so despite the fact that those who wear these modest/ethnic clothes constitute a definite consumer group and this group needs/deserves to be spoken about (Hoggard, 2013, p. 179). So there lies a learning for the Western luxury houses to adapt, because in India, there is a predominance of a young population with rising incomes and aspirations. To tap the huge potential in the emerging market, the challenge for the Western luxury brands lies in the infusion of elements of modesty as a dress-attribute in the matrix of Western cuts, styles and brand value of luxury fashion garments; and having products’ launch at the most appropriate times of the year; and culturally correct and effective communication in advertisements.

As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, there have been some appreciable attempts of “indianizing” luxury products by a few Western brands. This certainly helps in providing a connect with Indian culture and a foothold in Indian luxury market, but the challenge lies in transforming such marketing strategies into commercially profitable success stories. The launch of limited edition of Indian saris by Hermes (Sethi, 2011) in Mumbai as a tribute to Indian culture and elegance was well applauded by many luxury market players and

market reviewers, but the idea did not translate into market success. The reasons perhaps being, the high price (Rs 4 – 10 lakh), the lack of variety, and the market for adorned saris and bridal wear being held almost completely by Indian fashion designers (Kazmin, 2011; Sethi, 2011).

**Table 4. 2: Examples of mixed fashion**

Saree Gown by Gaurav Gupta	Summer Ramadan Collection 2014 from DKNY.
	
Source: <a href="https://www.perniaspopupshop.com/gaurav-gupta-white-embroidered-draped-saree-gown-gagu012016.html">https://www.perniaspopupshop.com/gaurav-gupta-white-embroidered-draped-saree-gown-gagu012016.html</a>	Source: <a href="https://madame.lefigaro.fr/style/la-mode-et-le-monde-musulman-un-marche-de-484-milliards-en-2019-110116-111672#diaporama-932357_13">https://madame.lefigaro.fr/style/la-mode-et-le-monde-musulman-un-marche-de-484-milliards-en-2019-110116-111672#diaporama-932357_13</a>

At the same time, however, Dhillon (2011) reports that Canali, the Italian men’s fashion brand, has produced a customized product for Indian market with great success – a jacket based on “bandhgala” – India’s equivalent of the tuxedo. She adds that customized products gain larger acceptance as Indians cherish a long-established norm of handmade and handcrafted goods (Dhillon, 2011). Other brands, like Ermenegildo Zegna and Italy’s Etro have also seen similar success in jackets inspired by Indian traditions. Neelesh Hundekari, a luxury expert with AT Kearney, a consultancy, comments that traditional Indian women’s garments too can gain similar success and adds that “Many of the brands think that India is a market that will evolve to Western norms but it will not – it will evolve in its own way” (quoted in Kazmin, 2011).



The present thesis clearly points out that “indianizing” their luxury products (apparels) is an important pre-requisite for luxury fashion houses to exploit the true potential of the luxury market in India. It is apparent from both qualitative and quantitative studies that despite globalization, Indian society is evolving with its own peculiar co-existence and amalgamation of modernity and traditions. Therefore, the winning formula for Western brands seems to be a judicious fusion of brand value and ‘Indianness’ of luxury product/dress.

#### **4.4.1 The thesis provides a few important directions for Western luxury houses -**

a. They should innovate by infusing Western elements in Indian dresses with a focus to enhance their social value perception. Infusion of Western elements should be in social conformity and to set the consumer apart in conspicuous consumption.

b. They should introduce Western dresses with modifications to suit the norms of modesty and other product-attributes, like colors, as per the Indian society. For Indian females, modesty as a dress-attribute pertains to what body part/s it reveals and to the specifics of Indian culture. The particular elements of their concern relate to *decency* – conformity to social norms of morality, *conservatism* – reflection of traditional elements of Indian culture, *exposure* – of body parts like cleavage, belly button, thighs, etc., and *vulnerability* in terms of public gaze.

c. They should introduce latest Western dresses for young women, especially for modern social occasions, where only the peer group is present, for ex., a cocktail party.

d. They should produce a few variants in each category of apparel, keeping the type of social occasion and age category of consumers in mind. This would help bring potential consumers other than youngsters in their fold. The degree of infusion of Western elements can be as per the age-group – youngsters or elders.

e. They should develop luxury dresses with a clearly visible value (for money) as qualitative study shows that even in luxury consumption, Indian consumers look for value for money.

It is very apparent from the literature sources (Jay, 2015; Kuldova, 2016) that Indian luxury fashion designers have held supremacy in traditional luxury attire market for important traditional occasions like a wedding. Qualitative study also reflects the confidence young Indian females hold in Indian fashion designers' work for what is traditional. Moreover, the Indian designers provide products at lower prices in comparison to Western brands. Kuldova (2016) emphasizes the same – "Indianness is the buzzword of contemporary fashion design. These days, all Indian designers know if they do not attempt to capture the essence of being Indian in one way or another in their designs they are likely to be out of business" (Kuldova, 2016, p. 12). Kuldova (2016) mentions that William Mazzarella (2003) has highlighted the prerequisite of incorporating Indianness in Indian advertising and marketing industries.

#### **4.4.2 The thesis provides the following recommendations to Indian designers –**

- a. They should hold on to and strengthen their forte – traditional craftsmanship and dress-materials,
- b. They should keep innovating for young consumers through a fusion of Western elements and the mosaic of colors, patterns and fabrics provided by the Indian heritage, and
- c. They should exploit their knowledge of Indian traditional moorings and roots to ensure a commercial edge over their Western competitors.

In the mature luxury markets of the West, patterns of consumption have been clearly delineated and understood for product development and promotional strategies, but in the emerging markets of the East, India and China, many attributes of luxury consumption still remain latent. The present study is an effort to manifest some important attributes of luxury-dress consumption in India. In the emerging economy of India, with a growing middle class and increasing disposable income, to encash the luxury consumption potential, the study provides insights for marketers to have commercial advantages. As noted in the first chapter, although India is an emerging market for luxury consumption, the number and scope of studies

so far remain much less than desired in relation to the importance and complexities of the luxury market in India.

#### **4.5 Limitations**

Every research, it is said, has limitations and as a result, its applicability gets restricted. Limitations, if recognized and worked upon, provide opportunities for future research. In this section, I list the limitations of my research.

1. The present study is specific to India. It focuses on the importance of consumption-context in the decision-making process for choosing a luxury-dress for a social occasion by young Indian females. In many other Eastern cultures, too, because of their collectivist orientations, the consumption-context may play important role in consumption-choices of luxury dresses, but the specific defining elements of consumption-context may differ from one society to another.
2. In the present study, a large proportion of the respondents were students, and as a result, the external validity of the conclusions might have been compromised. For the present study, it was presumed that these students were potential consumers of luxury in near future, as they were from economically well-off families, and with high qualifications and aspirations for high end jobs.
3. For both, qualitative exploratory study (using semi-structured interviews) and quantitative study (using experimental design), the samples were chosen through a mix of convenience sampling types. Being non-probability sampling methods, there may be questions regarding the samples' representativeness of the desired target population and hence, limitation in terms of general applicability for luxury consumers in India.
4. The respondents were not provided with any particular definition of 'luxury dress'. The individual differences in the conception of luxury dress will tend to reduce the applicability of the conclusions.

5. In the present study, the consumption behavior is explored and analyzed for a particular product category and consumption situation – choosing a dress for a private social occasion only. The other luxury product categories, like jewelry and accessories as well as incorporation of official occasions in the study, could make this research, much more widened and useful.

6. The present study focuses primarily on social value perception of luxury consumption among Indians, and some studies have indicated the importance of individual value perception, too, among Indians. In the literature, in reference to dress practices among women, the concept of ‘comfort’ involves many strands. Comfort is experienced in terms of the physical fit, the clothing fitting into the social context, and the individual, being the real self. In the present study, I chose to focus only on the dominant strand i.e., the social value perception.

7. In this research, we used a within-subjects design (i.e. repeated measures design). In this type of design, all the subjects/participants take part in all the conditions of the independent variable/s. The other design type is between-subjects design, in which different participants take part in different conditions of the independent variable/s. The major advantage of with-in subjects design lies in its greater sensitivity. This is so because this design results in the reduction of the experimental error. The added advantage of the method is that the design requires lesser number of participants as compared to between-subjects design (Abdi et al., 2009, p. 336,337). The repeated-measures/with-in subjects designs have higher power, as the standard deviation of difference scores is generally very low and that generates a large effect size and that enhances the power of the study. The main disadvantage associated with the with-in subjects design is about the research participants getting matured or improved, therefore, there is a possibility of alternative explanations for the scores obtained under different conditions of the independent variable/s. This does generate difficulties but there are problems with the between-subjects design too, as in that the subjects being compared are tested under different conditions (Aron, Aron, & Coups, 2007, p. 263).

To keep the research within limited, easily manageable contours, the focus was on some specific parameters of the Indian society. India being a large-sized, geographically and socially diverse society, and human behavior being multi-faceted, it is possible that our conceptual model may be moderated by demographic characteristics like religious affiliations of consumers; elements of regional diversity; and incorporation of new parameters/approaches etc. Therefore, to take care of the limitations mentioned above and to widen the horizons of research, in the next section (section 4.6), I discuss the future research avenues pertaining to the study.

#### **4.6 Future Research**

In the concluding section, I first discuss the possible future research for improvements in relation to the research design employed in the present research, and thereafter, I discuss the potential research avenues in Indian society for its inherent physical and social diversity and with the inclusion of new parameters/approaches in the present research.

*Firstly*, in reference to the research design used in the present research, following are some suggestions to bring about improvements in future research of a similar kind:

- i. Since in my case the sampling may be biased, future research can employ more representative techniques of sampling to aim for more rigorous conclusions.
- ii. More diverse samples will certainly provide better conclusions. For future studies, it is recommended that one can opt for a purposive sample, i.e., choosing subjects who are involved in luxury consumption and/or are well-informed about luxury brands. A purposive sample is motivated for luxury experience, as subjects form the sub-set of the target population.
- iii. With particular bench marks fixed for luxury dress, say in terms of price, conclusions can be improved further. For example, bridal lehengas and Western luxury dresses in India, by famous designers, generally start somewhere between INR 1.5 to 2 lac (approximately 1800 to 2500 euros). With the incorporation of notions about minimum luxury dress' price range,

the selection of the sample for target population as well as the conclusions about decision making process for luxury dress choices, could be improved further.

- iv. For my research experiment, I used dress-stimuli and vignettes for social occasions and the manipulations they offered were very helpful. However, to get a more realistic picture, in future research one can use the real luxury dresses and seek real social occasions to record the participants' behaviors about their choices.
- v. In future research, one interesting approach could be to include the observations by others present at the occasion about the choices and conduct a comparative analysis of these observations with those of the consumers' own perceptions about others' observations.
- vi. One problem with the repeated measures design is relating to carryover effect. "The fact that human beings have good memories probably compromises most repeated-measures designs using human participants to some extent. Similarly, some research paradigms involve tasks that are complex or time consuming, and even if it is theoretically feasible to repeat the task under a variety of conditions, there may be serious practical barriers to obtaining multiple observations from each subject" (Murphy, Myers, & Wolach, 2014, p. 145). To avoid the disadvantages inherent in within-subjects experimental design, one can carry out a similar study employing a between-subjects design, in which different participants take part in different conditions of the independent variable/s. For a similar research as the present one, a between-subjects factorial design can be employed, if there is not much of a problem in getting a larger number of participants, and their individual differences do not form a concern.

**Secondly**, to widen the scope of present research and the related field, I suggest the following for future studies –

- a) The study, in general, indicates the importance of social-context in consumption decision making, especially for collectivist social set-ups (found typically correlated with Eastern cultures). Analyzing modest dress norms among orthodox Jewish and Muslim women,

Tarlo (2013), comments: “Key areas of difference between orthodox Jewish and covered Muslim women’s dress practices revolve around the questions of how, when and in what contexts parts of the body should be covered.” She notes that most Muslims cover their entire body except the hands and face in public spaces where males, other than the family members are present, and the orthodox Jewish women cover their hair and wear clothes which cover the knees, elbows and collar bone. As a religious commitment, orthodox Jewish women cover their heads only after their marriage whereas Muslims who opt for the same prescribe the practice for girls who have grown to sexual maturity. She further adds that veils to conceal the face are popular in countries like Saudi Arabia and Yemen and comparatively unusual in countries like Britain and the United States, where Muslims are in minority (Tarlo, 2013, p. 75). The defining elements of consumption-context may differ from one setting to another. This implies opportunity for similar studies in cultures where relevant others are very important for luxury consumption-choice. The future studies can explore the importance of consumption-context in luxury consumption decision-making for diverse cultural settings in Asian markets and the Western world with comparative analyses.

- b) The present study focuses primarily on the social value perception of luxury consumption among Indians, but some studies have indicated the importance of individual value perception too among Indians. For ex., Eng & Bogaert, (2010) have discovered a variety of interaction effects between collectivist and individualist orientations. They have proposed that Indian consumers opt for symbolic consumption for the projection of their social status and demonstration of wealth, but at the same time, luxury consumption aims self-indulgence too (Lee et al., 2018). Future studies can also include individual value perception of luxury consumption and that will provide more comprehensive understanding of Indian consumption behavior for luxury experience.
- c) In the present study, the consumption behavior is explored and analyzed for a particular product category and consumption situation – choosing a luxury dress for a social occasion

(some private occasions only). The research can be widened with more such studies involving other luxury products like jewelry, accessories etc. and more regionally rooted consumption situations. One can also widen the scope in future by including official/business situations and the other characteristics of people present/company at the event, for example, their economic strata and values, etc. As per Pravina Shukla (2016, pp. 383, 384), human beings are always found to be acting with freedom and constraints. She posits: “the challenge in body art, as in other creative acts, is to achieve a balance between the aesthetic and the practical, the personal and the social, fashion and tradition”. She further observes that the Indian woman projects herself through various means, like jewelry, clothing, and their variety of attributes (color, texture, and patterns) within the general restraints of family, caste, religion, and region she belongs to as well as her taste. Economic status imparts conspicuous limits, and she has to operate within the social constraints relating to gender, age, caste and religion, though sometimes with minor subversion. This clearly indicates that the field has a large number of opportunities for studies to incorporate variables like region, religion, etc., and other luxury product lines like jewelry, etc., as mentioned above.

- d) Through interview-interactions, weather also emerges as one determinant in decision-making about dress-sensibilities. In a country like India, that has great variety in weather conditions in the vast and diverse landscape, it would be interesting to see its impact on fashion choices of consumers. India has tropical monsoon type climate and has three main seasons: Winter (December to March); Summer (April to May); and Monsoon (South-West Monsoon - June to September; and North-East Monsoon – October to November). December and January are the coldest months with average temperatures around 10-15 degrees centigrade in the North-West and 20-25 degrees centigrade towards South-East. During summer, April/May is the hottest month with temperatures averaging 35 to 45 degrees centigrade in northern India (Mathew, 2018, p. 395). Traditional and modern



events, as discussed in the present research are in general spread over the entire year, with higher frequency of weddings and related events in designated auspicious period. Both the spatial and temporal variations in weather-conditions make changes in required fabrics, choices of colors, and styles of luxury dresses imperative.

- e) The present study did not focus on the regional variations of the events/social occasions chosen for studying consumption behavior. This restricts its applicability, and in future research, present findings can be enriched by incorporating regional elements of diverse Indian society. Sandhu (2015) in her research of Indian Fashion confirms the presence of variations in consumption and adoption of global styles between metro centres (e.g., Mumbai) and smaller cities/towns (e.g., Lucknow). She also highlights that regional differentiation in fashion also occurs because of variations in regional tastes and preferences; textile crafts and cultural elements. She cites an example – “it is not uncommon to hear about the blingy flashiness of North India, compared to the cool, casual yet more fashion-forward cosmopolitan of Mumbai, and the chic understated sophistication of the East” (Sandhu, 2015, p. 17).
- f) Since human behavior is multi-faceted, it is possible that our conceptual model may be moderated by demographic characteristics for example, religious affiliations of the consumers. In this context, Pravina Shukla's (2016) observation is very relevant: “the religious importance of seeing and adornment, and the importance of adornment as a marker of identity in a society divided by religious persuasion, caste, and social class – these reasons make India a powerful site for ethnographic investigation of body art. Another reason is found in the richness of opportunities for personal expression. Most items of adornment are still handmade” (Pravina Shukla, 2016, p. 5). By incorporating socio-demographic parameters like religion etc., deeper insights can be gained, as for ex., religious values affect the norms about, say modesty as a dress-attribute. Some religious groups believe that moral norms of the society can be preserved through the behavior of

women, including their dress. Some religions hold the belief that sexuality, if not controlled and harnessed, can be dangerous for the society (Fernea & Fernea, 1995). Such beliefs become the foundation for religious prescriptions regarding modest and appropriate dressing for women in the society (Miller-Spillman & Reilly, 2019, p. 192). Biswas (2017) adds: “the moral connection is a matter of association of ideas and social conventions” (Biswas, 2017, p. 124).

- g) One important research focus concerning this thesis, that has emerged in recent times and needs to be studied in different societies, is about the necessity of analyzing the *modest dressers* as a definite consumer group in fashion clothing in different cultures. Mainstream media’s wrong perception of modest dress as mere religious prescription rather than being a possible practice in fashion has turned the modest dressers to fashion blogs and YouTube (Hoggard, 2013, p. 179). Geczy (2013, p. 194), too, in his book *Fashion and Orientalism* mentions about the increasing interest among Muslim women in *modest fashion*. He further mentions that modest fashion practices are getting popular even among the Jewish and the Mormon, for whom clothing is primary to their faith. Geczy (2013) adds: “More noticeably than ever it is not only a religious attribute but also inhabits the different category of comprising its own specialized fashion system” (Geczy, 2013, p. 194). In a similar reference, Sarah Ansari (<https://www.artizara.com/pages/about-us-artizara>), one of the founders of the American company, comments: “We wanted to reach out not just to Muslims but women of all faiths who have an interest in modest dress and style. We wanted to go out there and say Islam is beautiful, and dressing modestly is cool” (quoted in Tarlo, 2014, p. 220). Entwistle (2015), too, points out that recently there has been a proliferation of academic interest in studies of fashion based on faith and it counters the conventionally held simplistic two-fold division, ‘modern’ and traditional’ dress practices. We are also confronted presently with the fact that although young women in major religions have

grown up in the era of consumerism, they still opt for modest dresses, and this may or may not be related to religious practices (Entwistle, 2015, preface, pp. 17–20).

- h) The sample for the present study primarily comprised young female consumers. With more diversity in sample in terms of age, the study can be enriched further. For example, by incorporating older age groups, conclusions can be easily broadened for larger Indian population and some interesting insights might get discovered through comparative analyses. “Individuals in the same generation or age group share a common habitus and culture. In other words, each generation is considered to be embedded with specific social and historical events that evoke the differences in values, attitudes, and lifestyles (Rogler, 2002)” (Jiang & Shan, 2018, p. 461).
- i) With ever increasing emphasis, especially after liberalization of the Indian economy, on body art/fine grooming among males for amplifying their confidence and the new adage being “Cosmetics make the man” (Palackal, 2011, p. 156), similar studies to analyze social value perception of luxury consumption and the importance of consumption-context among males can further broaden the contours of consumption related studies. Studies among males can focus on a range of luxury products, like dresses, accessories such as shoes, watches, etc.
- j) Taking clues from my own research and from Banerjee & Miller's (2018) suggestions, I understand that studies about consumption-choices need to go deeper to seek answers to questions regarding the reasons behind a particular decision-making process. Thus, quoting Banerjee & Miller (2018) from their discourse on the traditional Indian dress, *The Sari*, “A study of clothing should not be ‘cold’; it has to be involved in the tactile, sensual, emotional, intimate world of feelings. The task of an anthropological account is firstly to convey these feelings empathetically: that is, to try to experience the sari from the point of view of the various women who wear them. But while empathy is the starting point, it should not be the ending point of anthropological enquiry. Its necessary corollary is to ask the analytical

questions: why should these particular people be experiencing the world in the way they do? Why does ambiguity or a particular distinction in texture seem to matter for this population but demonstrably not for other societies? Why are feelings about formality or about beauty taking this form at this moment and not previously?” (M. Banerjee & Miller, 2018, p. 253). This suggests the scope for sensory and emotional analysis of clothing among Indian consumers especially with a focus to understand their subjective facts and perceptions.

- k) There is a strongly emerging need in India for temporal analysis of consumption-choices about what to wear because of recent resurgence of Hindutva, the right wing political ideology. Studies about consumption-choices in clothes can help appreciate the undercurrents of social change in India. Kuldova (2016) in her book, *Luxury Indian Fashion*, observes that: “Hindutva, the ideology that insists on the dominance of a Hindu way of life, has often been invoked by my business interlocutors, designers as much as by India’s philanthropists.” She mentions Sabyasachi, one of the leading fashion designers in India, focusing on the need to stop copying the West and being Indian, and his claim that dressing ‘Indian’ induces confidence among people and helps them succeed. This, he believes, is what his clothes seek to provide. She adds that the key theme of current fashion in India is Indianness (Kuldova, 2016, pp. 12, 104–105).
- l) There has been a debate and concern about the sari’s future as a dress for modern India. This has been often a point of discussions, especially in reference to young females in urban areas who look for functional aspects of clothing and prefer wearing saris only for certain traditional social occasions (M. Banerjee & Miller, 2018, pp. 249–252; Sandhu, 2015, p. 162). There is a need and scope for such investigations and find some definite trends.
- m) Another interesting and important area of research relating to consumption decision making process among females in India is about the ways, fashion gets influenced in India by films, television, print media (fashion magazines). These sources provide easy access to global

and local trends of fashion and reinforce the traditional elements and also help generate waves of emerging global elements. They suggest a mosaic of fashion choices for consumers to choose from. Referring to such influences, Sandhu (2015) comments: “Together these mediums not only impact the sartorial choices of individual fashion systems, but also give shape to Indian fashion and its aesthetics as a whole” (Sandhu, 2015, pp. 17–18). This connection has been noticed in other research work on Indian fashion, too (M. Banerjee & Miller, 2018, pp. 219–228), but there remains scope for more in-depth and contemporary focus in future studies.

- n) Consumption-context studies pertaining to food, another basic need in India and other collectivist societies can help understand their cultures. Social restrictions on food were always significant in India but recently with the strengthening of right wing ideology, this has emerged as an important area for new research. Writing on ‘taste’ in reference to fashion, food and art, Vercelloni (2017) quotes Gronow (1997, p. 91): “Taste always refers to the preferences and the choices of an individual and is totally private by its very nature. Everyone is supposed to choose what feels good. At the same time, the ideal of good is meant to be beyond the individual, and to be socially binding. It offers a universal standard, potentially applicable to all members of a society. It is an ideal which everyone is supposed to follow. Furthermore, it is a standard which is socially communicable even though it can never be conceptually determined” (Vercelloni, 2017, p. 132).

I conclude my thesis by quoting what Sandhu (2015) opines in her research on Indian fashion - that the requisite of negotiating “the specificity of Indian tastes, climate, traditions, levels of modesty, morality and comfort and other cultural factors” makes the infusion of India’s traditional elements into Western fashion canvas an imperative (Sandhu, 2015, p. 19).

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