The Influence of Functional, Emotional, Symbolic, and Indulgence Attributes on Consumer Brand Perception: A Comparative Study of Zudio and Max

1 Varsha Paramesh*, 2 Neelesh B*, 3 Vairaprasana V*, 4 Saksham Sharma*
1,2,3,4 2nd Year PGDM Student
Department of Management Studies
Xavier Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship, Chennai, India
varshap08che@xime.org, neelesh08che@xime.org, vairaprasana08che@xime.org, saksham08che@xime.org

Abstract

The issue of the impact of sensory branding on consumer behavior has been critical towards brand loyalty and uniqueness in the fast evolving fashion retail industry. To evaluate the influence of utilitarian, emotional, symbolic, and indulgent senses on the brand perceptions of consumers, the study was a comparison of two popular Indian brands of value-fashion Zudio and Max, which provide a standardized self-administered questionnaire through a five-point Likert scale to measure the sensations. The reliability of the constructs was checked with the help of Cronbachs Alpha ($\alpha > 0.7$) and SPSS was applied to perform a multiple regression analysis, independent sample t-test, and descriptive statistics.

The results indicated that there was a great difference between the two brands. Max was much better at emotional and symbolic appeal or expressing lifestyle and self, whereas Zudio was more successful on the practical and indulgence dimensions, emphasizing on cost and value. According to the regression model ($R2 = 0.773$), the most influential perceptions of the overall brand were functional and symbolic attributes. This research study highlights the importance of balanced involvement of emotion and symbolism as well as functional reliability to foster consumer relationship and brand competitiveness in the dynamic value-fashion market in India.

Keywords: Sensory Branding, Consumer Brand Perception, Functional Attributes, Emotional Attributes, Symbolic Attributes, Indulgence.

INTRODUCTION

The global fashion business is one of the most dynamic and least stable fields of contemporary retail due to the developing customer interests as well as the technologies that are being introduced into the world of fashion and marketing creating an ever-evolving consumer experience (Schmitt, 1999). Besides producing high-quality products, the firms are also focusing on establishing a deeper emotional and sensory connection with the customers as the competition increases (Krishna, 2012). Sensory branding has in this respect, taken the form of a crucial strategic instrument in creating all-inclusive brand experiences, which builds brand loyalty and brand identity. To trigger consumer senses, foster brand association, and differentiate objects in crowded markets, it means the intentional utilization of visual, auditory, sensory, and emotional hints (Lindstrom, 2005; Hulten, 2011).

The fashion retail industry of India has changed conspicuously due to the rapid urbanization, increased disposable incomes, and international fashion trends (Kapferer, 2008). Consumers are no longer focusing on price or quality but seeking brands that are associated with their emotions, aspiration in their lifestyles and who they are (Sirgy, 1982). Two of the most recognizable companies in this growing value-fashion market have become Zudio and Max Fashion and are serving the needs of urban and low-end-shoppers. The product focuses on inclusivity, lifestyle appeal and family orient by Max and on young, trendy and affordable as advertised by Zudio (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991). They would be ideal in a comparison study of sensory branding and consumer perception due to the varying brand positioning.

The previous research examined the effect of symbolic, emotional, and functional attributes on customer brand perception (Zeithaml, 1988; Roberts, 2004; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). However, much remains to be known about the role of these multifaceted attributes in their interplay to affect customer brand perceptions in the Indian fast-fashion sector, particularly among companies whose customers are value oriented. Not much can be found out regarding how affordable companies such as Zudio and Max can engage emotional and sensorial engagement with mass consumers due to the fact that the past studies have largely focused on high-end or luxury apparel. Moreover, the dimension of indulgence, that is, self-reward, pleasure, and perceived luxury in inexpensive fashion, has not been researched yet although emotional and symbolic branding have attracted a substantial amount of academic focus.

In addition, the number of comparative studies that compare the Indian fashion business to various strategic philosophies is limited. Max puts more value on symbols of lifestyle and emotional appeal compared to price and functionality on which Zudio performs. Understanding the difference in perceptions of these different approaches by customers in the functional, emotional, symbolic and indulgent dimensions would help in developing successful sensory and emotional branding strategies in value retail.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aims to:

- To examine how consumer brand perception is influenced by functional (utilitarian), emotional, symbolic, and indulgence attributes.
- To compare how consumers perceive Zudio and Max across these four brand dimensions.
- To identify which attribute has the strongest impact on overall brand preference.

SCOPE

The experimental area concentration of this research is restricted to the functional, emotional, symbolic and indulgence features in consumer brand perception and selection in the Indian value-fashion retail segment. The study considers only two prominent brands, namely, Zudio and Max, which have different positioning strategies in one market segment. A structured questionnaire was used to measure data on a five-point Likert scale to collect data on 308 consumers. The research is confined to urban consumers in India, and it is a quantitative descriptive method, which focuses on statistical associations between sensory branding dimensions and brand perception. It also has no extension to other types of retailing, like luxury or high-end fashion and also does not look at the long-term behavioural consequences, such as loyalty or post- purchase satisfaction. Nonetheless, within those boundaries, the study offers some useful information about the functioning of sensory branding strategies within value- based, price-sensitive markets that will allow understanding the perception of the customers of Zudio and Max comparatively.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study has relevance in terms of value both theoretically and practically in improving the knowledge on the effectiveness of sensory branding in the perception and preference of consumer in the value-fashion segment. Theoretically, it builds on the branding research by analyzing the effects of the functional and emotional attributes, the symbolic attribute and indulgence together, which has hardly been studied in affordable fashion. It methodologically puts forward a quantitative analytic framework, which incorporates the sensory attributes, brand perception, and preference, backed by reliability, t-test, and regression analysis. In practice, the results can be used by marketers and brand managers of Zudio and Max to develop practical implications on how they can influence consumer judgments by applying the dimensions of sensory dimensions that have the greatest impact. Indulgence as an aspect of affordable luxury is also highlighted in the study to assist the value-fashion brands in creating aspiration and loyalty. On the whole, it is beneficial to academic literature and managerial practice, as it helps to develop the knowledge about the sensory experience design and the consumer involvement in the fashion market that is developing in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Functional (utilitarian) attributes and brand perception

Functional attributes refer to objective, performance-based aspects of a product or brand: fit, comfort, durability, price/value, and functional design (Zeithaml, 1988). In retail contexts, functional quality forms the baseline for cognitive evaluation; consumers normally evaluate whether the product meets basic requirements before affective and symbolic meanings are processed (Zeithaml, 1988; Liu, Li, & Mizerski, 2012). Studies in the apparel sector indicate that perceived quality and fit have a direct effect on satisfaction and repurchase intent (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). For value brands, functional attributes (especially perceived value for money and comfort) often act as dominant drivers of overall brand perception because they address the primary needs of budget-oriented consumers.

2. Emotional attributes: affective bonds and attachment

The emotional branding strategies are designed to generate feelings, such as pride, joy, belonging, that exceed product characteristics and establish encounter with feelings (Roberts, 2004; Koronaki et al., 2018). Attachment is created by emotion evoking cues (story telling, music, visual identity), which enhances a desire to pay, ceteris paribus (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Within the fashion industry, emotional resonance is commonly put into practice in terms of feelings of confidence, attractiveness, and personal wellbeing in association with wearing a brand (Kim and Sullivan, 2019). Empirical evidence indicates that the relationship between sensory stimuli and the outcome of loyalty is mediated by emotional engagement especially in brands that focus on lifestyle and identity.

3. Symbolic attributes: self-expression and social signaling

According to symbolic consumption theory, a brand can be useful in identity construction and in social signaling (Levy, 1959; Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Symbolic attributes represent how much consumers consume brand products to reflect status, belonging or aspiration identity. Studies in the new markets indicate that symbolic value is one of the primary forces behind brand selection by younger urban populations that use fashion as an indicator of lifestyle and membership to a specific group (Kapferer, 2008;

Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). When working with mid-market brands, symbolic cues can be small (which can include the position of a logo, cut, trendiness) but strong if properly implemented along with the effective use of the experiential marketing.

4. Indulgence attributes: affordable luxury and hedonic reward

The indulgence dimension deals with aspirational or hedonic in the affordable-priced segments - a perception that a product is a small luxury or a pleasurable experience even though it is of low price (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Krishna, 2012). Affordable- indulgence is the concept especially applicable in value-fashion whereby consumers want to have mini-rewards without worrying about the budget limitation. The empirical data indicate that the signs of indulgence (limited editions, high-quality finishes, in-store experiences) can raise perceived value and give rise to impulse buying in the conditions when the functional properties of the product are moderate.

5. Multi-sensory retail environments and brand experience

Multi-sensory branding is very important in store environments. It has been discovered that visual merchandising, touch materials, the scent of a store, lighting and music have a synergistic effect in forming emotion and influencing behaviours of approaching the store (Hulten, 2011; Lindstrom, 2005). Orchestrating a consistent experience of the sensory environment can increase the conversion rates and dwell time in the fast-fashion and low- end segments, where footfall and short decision-making periods are critical. Research has also discovered that sensory congruence (consistency between the sensory messages and brand positioning) enhances actions on perceived authenticity and intention to recommend.

6. Digital sensory cues and omnichannel considerations

The current literature expands sensory branding to online interaction. Sensory experiences in the store can be recreated through visual aesthetics, the sound design (brand jingles), interactive 3D product views, and haptic feedback on the mobile devices and assist in maintaining the emotional involvement (IJTSRD, 2022; Gao and Lan, 2020). In the case of the value-fashion retailer that employs the omnichannel strategy, a balance of sensory feedbacks between the web, app, and instore needs to be harmonized to stabilize brand perception.

7. Comparative studies of value versus premium fashion brands

The difference in literature is the comparative analysis of sensory branding strategies in the different price levels. Although the symbolic and indulgence tactics employed by luxury brands are well established, a number of studies have not been done on how value brands are able to employ symbolic and indulgence cues strategically, without compromising their value proposition. Your work is useful as it compares two value brands (Zudio and Max) with the varying focus on functional and emotional/symbolic approaches to the market - it fills a practical and theoretical gap.

8. Measurement, reliability, and construct issues

The research of the scale development and reliability is the key to a sound research on the sensory-branding (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2019). The concept of functional measures tends to be more valid, as they are objective; the emotional and symbolic scale needs

specific attention to the choice of words, as it is essential to reflect the affective subtleties and identity cues. In indulgence scales, the reliability of the scale tends to be less in value segments since the construct is made up of hedonic and aspirational factors that differ among respondents. The results of your Cronbachs alpha (a = 0.802; a = 0.768; a = 0.684; a = 0.614) fit into the overall results and indicate that it is possible to improve the indulgence and symbolic items.

9. Integrated effects, mediation, and moderation

Emerging studies indicate that sensory attributes can operate both directly on brand perception and indirectly via brand experience or emotional attachment (Krishna, 2012; Hultén, 2011). Demographics (age, income), shopping occasion, and situational cues (sale vs. new collection) often moderate these effects. Future examinations would benefit from testing mediation (brand experience mediates between sensory inputs and CBP) and moderation (e.g., income moderates the effect of indulgence on CBP).

Synthesis and research gap

Synthesis of the literature shows: (1) multi-sensory strategies matter across price tiers, but mechanisms differ; (2) functional and symbolic cues often explain substantial variance in CBP; (3) indulgence is promising but under-operationalized in value contexts; (4) comparative, brand-level empirical work in emerging markets is limited. The study fills important empirical and managerial gaps by quantitatively comparing two big Indian value brands and by estimating the relative predictive power of the four sensory dimensions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The proposed conceptual framework (Figure 1) of the fashion retail area explores the impact of sensory branding dimensions namely, functional, emotional, symbolic and indulgence attributes- control the brand perception and selection of customers. The methodology focuses on the interplay of cognitive, emotional, and symbolic effects on consumer evaluation and consumer buying, as the contribution made to experience marketing (Schmitt, 1999) and sensory branding (Hulten, 2011; Lindstrom, 2005).

The key notion of this framework is called Consumer Brand Perception (CBP) in which consumers combine practical and intangible cues in comprehending and evaluating the overall image of a brand (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1991). The model identifies four key

dimensions of sensory branding that have an integrated effect on this perception: Functional attributes (FA) refer to the performance based and utilitarian attributes of a brand that enhance customer pleasure and trust; and include comfort, design, quality and value of money (Zeithaml, 1988; Liu, Li, and Mizerski, 2012).

Emotional Attributes (EA): Document the emotions experienced by customers when they interact with a brand, including being happy, proud, feeling more confident, and feeling like a part of a community. These affect more emotional feelings and allegiance (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Roberts, 2004; Kim and Sullivan, 2019).

Symbolic attributes (SA): Refers to the degree to which a brand enables customers to utilize their fashion patterns to express their identity, personality, and their social belonging (Levy, 1959; Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Symbolic significance can help brands to evolve self-congruent customer relationships and surpass utility through symbolic connotation.

Indulgence Attributes (IA): Are the aspirational and self-satisfying side of brand experience, in which consumers correlate low cost with a sense of luxury and an emotional fulfillment (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Krishna, 2012; Gao and Lan, 2020).

These four branding sensory qualities combined together influence the perception of the brand by consumers referred to as Brand Preference (BP) or how much consumers like a particular brand compared to the other brands (Keller, 2003; Hulten, 2011). The framework may be of particular interest to value-fashion businesses such as Zudio and Max that target a similar market segment, but employ a different emotional and sensory strategy.

According to the model, the Indian fast-fashion market is saturated with multi-sensory and emotional branding in terms of enhancing brand differentiation, preference, and loyalty by contrasting the effects of these attributes on consumer perception of each brand (Berman, Potgieter, and Tait, 2023; Kim and Sullivan, 2019).

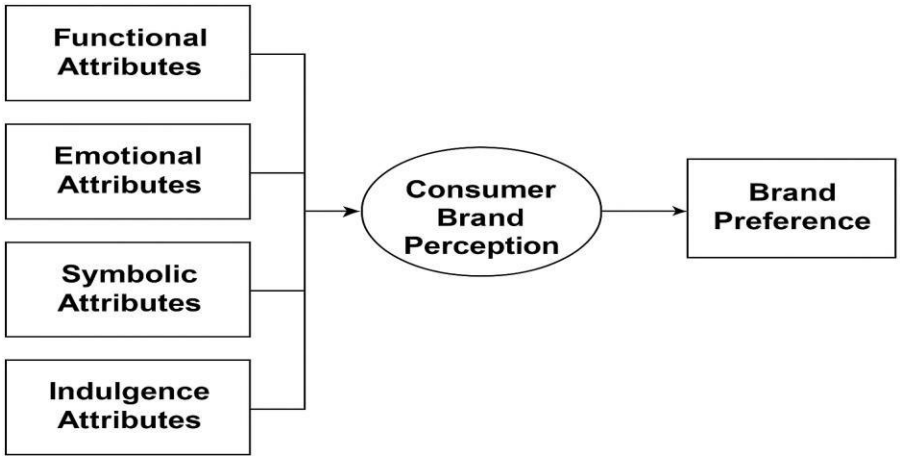

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

HYPOTHESIS

- H1: There is a significant relationship between visual branding cues and brand preference among Gen Z shoppers.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between auditory and tactile branding cues and brand preference among Gen Z shoppers.
- H3: There is a significant difference between Zudio and Max in the effectiveness of visual, auditory, and tactile branding cues in influencing Gen Z shoppers' brand preference.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study is the quantitative, descriptive research design in order to learn the impact of the primary sensory branding variables, namely functional, emotional, symbolic and indulgence attributes on consumer brand perception and preference in the fashion retail market. Two progressive Indian value- fashion brands, including Zudio and Max, are the particular focus of the study, as references to the analysis of the differences in sensorial branding and its impact on consumer ratings.

The respondents were chosen through a self-administered structured questionnaire which was administered both online and on-store on 308 respondents. The non- probability convenience sample was used to select consumers who recently bought or visited Zudio or Max; this was done to be able to use the data in comparative analysis that will be relevant and reliable. The scale was developed based on previous research on sensory branding, brand perception and consumer behavior (Hulten, 2011; Krishna, 2012; Keller, 2003) and pre-tested with regard to clarity and reliability before the full scale administration.

Research Design and Instrument

A structured and self-administered questionnaire was developed and used to collect data using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) in 308 respondents. The four main constructs that were included in the questionnaire were:

- Functional Attributes (5 items)
- Emotional Attributes (3 items)
- Symbolic Attributes (3 items)
- Indulgence Attributes (3 items)

As well, there were items that quantified the overall brand perception and preference. The measurement tool is based on the previous research on sensory branding, brand perception, and consumer behavior (Hulten, 2011; Krishna, 2012; Keller, 2003) and it was pre-tested regarding its clarity and dependability.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The analysis of the data was done with the help of SPSS (Version 26) according to a multi-stage analytical methodology:

a) Reliability Analysis

Cronbach alpha (α) was to be used to evaluate the internal consistency of each construct. An acceptable reliability coefficient of α was 0.7 which is acceptable to social science research (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2019). This made the measurement scales stable and the same between items of each dimension.

b) Descriptive Statistics

The mean, standard deviation, and pattern of responses of each construct was summarized by descriptive analysis. This gave a summary of the perception of Zudio and Max by consumers on the four dimensions of sensory branding (Malhotra et al., 2017).

c) Independent Sample t-Test

A t-test was used in order to establish whether there were significant differences in the ways consumers perceived Zudio and Max on the four dimensions. The test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the two and was used to reflect different brand positioning (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020).

d) Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple linear regression technique was used to determine which attributes of sensory branding have a significant impact on the overall brand perception. The model investigated the predictive role of functional, emotional, symbolic, and indulgence dimensions when it comes to the perception of the consumer brands (Hair et al., 2019; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013).

DATA ANALYSIS:

1. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

To measure the internal consistency of the constructs, Cronbachs Alpha (α), was used as postulated by Nunnally (1978) whereby $\alpha \geq 0.7$ is acceptable as a measure of reliability. The findings as shown in *Table 1* show that, the Functional Attributes ($\alpha = 0.802$) and Emotional Attributes ($\alpha = 0.768$) constructs have a high internal consistency, which is an indication of high reliability to measure the target dimensions. The Alpha value 0.684 was slightly below the optimal mark but quite satisfactory when considering exploratory research but the Indulgence Attributes ($\alpha = 0.614$) exhibited moderate reliabilities.

Overall, the results confirm that the measurement scales employed in this study are statistically reliable and appropriate for subsequent analyses, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, and regression.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Sensory Branding Constructs (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	**No. of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha (α)**	**Reliability Status**
Functional Attributes	5	0.802	Good Reliability
Emotional Attributes	3	0.768	Good Reliability
Symbolic Attributes	3	0.684	Acceptable Reliability
Indulgence Attributes	3	0.614	Moderate Reliability

The reliability analysis confirms that the scale items demonstrate strong internal consistency and are reliable for measuring the sensory branding dimensions. Therefore, all four constructs. Functional, Emotional, Symbolic, and Indulgence Attributes were retained for subsequent statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, t-test, and regression analysis.

2. Descriptive Statistics

The respondents' general opinions of the four main sensory branding dimensions— Functional, Emotional, Symbolic, and Indulgence Attributes—for Zudio and Max were compiled using descriptive statistics. Based on the answers to the questionnaire, the analysis gives a summary of how customers evaluated various features of these brands.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Sensory Branding Constructs

Construct	Mean Range	Standard Deviation Range	Interpretation
Functional Attributes	3.64 – 4.22	0.94 – 1.31	High agreement on quality, style, and comfort
Emotional Attributes	4.10 – 4.23	1.23 – 1.28	Strong emotional connection and confidence
Symbolic Attributes	3.62 – 4.32	0.96 – 1.28	Positive social and identity-related perceptions
Indulgence Attributes	3.60 – 4.21	1.22 – 1.46	Moderate sense of luxury and self-reward

According to the descriptive statistics, respondents have positive opinions about Zudio and Max in relation to each of the four sensory branding dimensions. A generally positive assessment of the brands' emotional appeal, symbolic identity, indulgent experience, and functional quality is indicated by the mean values, which range from
3.6 to 4.3. A consistent pattern of agreement among respondents is suggested by the standard deviation values, which show moderate variation in responses. Overall, the results show that consumers view Zudio and Max as brands in the value-fashion market that are emotionally compelling, value-driven, and aesthetically pleasing.

3. Independent Sample t-Test

To compare consumer opinions Zudio and Max across the four sensory branding dimensions—Functional, Emotional, Symbolic, and Indulgence Attributes—an Independent Sample t-Test was used of. The aim of this analysis was to ascertain whether respondents' ratings of each attribute for the two brands differed significantly.

Table 3: Results of Independent Sample t-Test for Zudio and Max

Construct	Brand with Higher Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Functional Attributes	Zudio	0.000	Significant difference between brands
Emotional Attributes	Max	0.000	Significant difference between brands
Symbolic Attributes	Max	0.001	Significant difference between brands
Indulgence Attributes	Zudio	0.000	Significant difference between brands

The findings of the independent sample t-test indicate that the views of consumers towards Zudio and Max vary considerably in all the four senses of branding. In the findings, Zudio is rated better concerning its purposes and luxurious nature, which is in line with the fact that it is strongly correlated with affordability,

comfort, and value of money. Instead, Max scored higher in emotional and symbolic qualities which show that its customers are more attracted by its social expression, emotional appeal and trust. On the whole, the findings indicate that Max positions itself with the help of emotional appeal and brand recognition, whereas Zudio emphasizes functionality and availability. These are two strategies which are different and yet complementary in the Indian value-fashion market.

4. Regression Analysis

The sensory branding dimensions were determined using a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. Customers' perceptions of Zudio and Max are primarily influenced by their functional, emotional, symbolic, and indulgent attributes. Finding the relative influence of each attribute on consumers' overall brand preference was the aim of this test**.**

Table 4: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Construct / Variable	**Coefficient (β)**	**Sig. (p-value)**	**Interpretation**
Purchasing clothes from this brand provides me value for money	0.072	0.000	Strong positive influence; functional value drives perception
I associate this brand with comfortable clothing that makes me happy	0.037	0.029	Emotional comfort significantly affects perception
I buy from this brand to satisfy my fashion needs	0.048	0.004	Functional satisfaction contributes positively
This brand uses careful craftsmanship and quality materials	0.077	0.000	Perceived quality strongly enhances brand perception
Wearing clothes from this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be	0.057	0.000	Symbolic identification significantly affects perception
This brand offers clothing that feels luxurious or special	0.047	0.002	Indulgence and perceived luxury positively influence perception

Statistic	Value
R-squared	0.773
Adjusted R-squared	0.762
F-statistic	71.35
Sig. (F-statistic)	0.000

The suggested model explains 77.3% of the variance in consumer brand perception (R2 = 0.773), according to regression analysis, which shows it is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The two sensory branding dimensions that have the greatest impact on consumer

perception are functional and symbolic attributes. In particular, it was discovered that self- identity expression, fashion satisfaction, value for money, and fine craftsmanship all had a significant positive influence.

Although they made a positive contribution, the effects of emotional and indulgence traits were less pronounced and not all of them were statistically significant. Overall, the findings imply that consumers' assessments of Zudio and Max are primarily influenced by their symbolic meaning and functional dependability, which are reinforced by their moderately indulgent appeal.

The results confirm that in order to improve their overall brand perception and customer loyalty, value fashion brands should concentrate on striking a balance between quality, comfort, and self-expression.

DISCUSSION

The aim of comparing the two leading value-fashion brands in India based on the comparison of Zudio and Max was to gain insights into how the functional, emotional, symbolic, and indulgence elements of brands affect consumer brand perception and preference. Analysis showed that the functional and symbolic characteristics have the greatest predictors of the overall brand perception as reported by the regression analysis. Consumers related Zudio mainly with comfort, craftsmanship and value money where Max was related to mostly identity expression and emotional attachment. The independent sample t-test also demonstrated that there were significant differences in the perceptions between the two brands: Max was stronger in emotional and symbolic appeal and Zudio in functional and indulgence. In addition, the descriptive statistics indicated that consumers had positive impressions of both the brands since the mean values were above 3.6 in all variables and portrayed positive ratings of design, quality, and emotional involvement. The entire regression model (R 2 = 0.773) satisfied the hypothesis that the four sensory branding dimensions jointly predicted 77.3% of the variability in consumer brand perception indicating that they had a significant combined effect. Combined, these facts imply that Max is successful in using emotive and lifestyle-based branding, and Zudio is successful with its low-cost, functionality, and utility-based three different but equally effective positioning strategies in the Indian value-fashion market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the findings of the study, there are a number of strategic recommendations that have been put forward to maximize the effectiveness of sensory branding of Zudio and Max. Firstly, both brands ought to concentrate on embracing emotional branding as one of the ways of enhancing consumer interaction. By maintaining its already developed symbolic and emotional references through lifestyle-based advertising, telling stories, and community-based marketing, Max can further leverage its good functional placement and position by Zudio to add more emotion and brand attachment efforts. Moreover,

functional reliability should also be a priority, Zudio, specifically, should be able to maintain its reputation of comfort style, affordability, and consistency of craftsmanship so that the quality of its products matched the expectations of the customers.

Moreover, to increase the dimension of indulgence without undermining the aspect of affordability, the two brands may launch a limited-editions collection, offerings or an in- store event of a theme, where the customers feel that they are being exclusive and offer themselves a reward. Last but not the least, better store environment experiences such as visual merchandising, tactile comfort, ambience lighting and background music can add a lot of power to sensory experience and retention. These plans will not only make the shopping experience more satisfying, but also entrench brand differentiation and long-term loyalty of the consumers in the fast-evolving value-fashion market in India.

FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

Despite the fact that this research offers great information on how sensory branding affects the brand perception of consumers in the value-fashion segment, there are opportunities that can be tapped in future studies. In order to increase the generalizability, the research may involve larger number of value and luxury fashion retailers in future. In this study, only two brands were used, namely, Zudio and Max. The inclusion of demographic factors like age, income and gender would also allow a more detailed insight into how the sensory perceptions vary among consumer groups and lifestyle fraternities. Further longitudinal research may also be carried out to determine the impact of sensory branding on brand loyalty and repeat purchase behavior in the long term, to obtain a more dynamic picture of the consumer-brand relationships. Finally, it can be proposed to use qualitative methods, including focus groups or in-depth interviews, which can help provide additional insight into symbolic and emotional sense of fashion brands, which should expand the theoretical perspective on sensory branding and its psychological aspects.

CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, customer brand impression in the fashion retail industry is influenced by the functional, emotional, symbolic, and indulgent aspects of sensory branding. Functional and symbolic characteristics have the biggest impact among them, highlighting the fact that when interacting with fashion businesses, customers prioritize both quality and identity alignment.

Max develops its appeal through emotional connection, lifestyle symbols, and expressive identity, whereas Zudio appeals to consumers by cost, comfort, and usefulness. When combined, they show two aspects of effective sensory branding in the fast-fashion industry in India.

Ultimately, the findings support the idea that, in the current competitive landscape of the retail sector, a perfect balance of pragmatic perfection and emotional narration is necessary in the creation of effective, unique, and iconic fashion brands.

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