

An artifact on materialism in India

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: Indian culture has been influenced by materialistic way of life from developed economies, which are on mass consumption stage. It is surviving through materialism without any judgment for right and wrong.

Methods/Statistical analysis: It is a qualitative study stimulated through the exploration on materialism and its impact; it traces on Indian culture.

Findings: Literature has suggested that materialism is not a new concept and is as old as Indian culture. Modern materialism is a new field of study, which needs to be explored.

Improvements/Applications: The recent trends in market suggest that study of materialism in context of marketing is need of an hour and essentially to be premeditated in Indian context.

Keywords: Materialism; India; Artifact

1. Introduction

With the globalization, developing economies like India are facing increasing materialism [1]. The Indian culture has been influenced by materialistic way of life [2-5] through western countries but at the same time the rudiments of Indian culture has been saved and is not much affected unconstructively [6-8]. The existence of multiplicity of ethnicity in Indian culture could not avoid the effect of consumerism and the Western way of life has found place in the country. But at one fell swoop, the kinds of materialistic tendencies that have shadowed Indian culture are more self-governing and self-contemplating. Indian culture is surviving through materialism without any judgment for right and wrong [9].

For the emerging economies like India, the current research, which involves the understanding of important concepts like materialism in context of India, makes vital sense.

2. Materialism in India

Materialism has been a major concern and an important subject of study in India and abroad. Materialism has been defined as one's devotion to material needs and desires which diverges from spiritual premise (The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1995) but opposite to this description of materialism, in Indian thought, materialism has been explained as consistent with spiritualism and is considered as a balancing factor [10].

Thirteen factors have been identified [4, 10] that emphasized the changing relationship between Indian society and consumption culture in the country [11-14] the affiliation between the two gets underlined in the study that includes changes in consumption patterns of middleclass, shift from joint to nuclear families, changing role of women in society, changing appeal of consumer goods sector etc. as ingredients of new culture of India [15]. There are certain other features that set the Indian consumer apart from the rest [16]. Those are cultural factors and social factors such as Indian traditions and family values and bonding. Increasing consumerism in India has changed the shopping style and purchase decision criterions of consumers.

There is considerable transformation in age structure of Indian population, which is the reason that India is heading towards consumerism at fast pace. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and this progress of economy has led to increase in willingness to spend on material goods.

3. Materialism in Indian history

In a country like India, the prevalence of materialism gets authenticated through literature from times of yore and research on materialism by some modern researchers [17-19]. The incidence of different nomenclatures of materialism in ancient Indian scriptures is the evidence of different perception about the term materialism and its

evolution over the time. Brhaspati is considered as initiator of ancient school of materialism ([19-21] with inscription of materialism in BrhaspatiSūtra.

In Indian literature, new materialism has been denoted by terms 'Lokayata' and 'Carvaka'. The term Lokayata signifies the idea of worldliness or materialism and the term Carvaka has been related to consumption [19, 20]. The people in the country, who were predominantly religious and believe in philosophical idealism to fight against materialism and called materialistic people as Nastik, have started following philosophical materialism to express worldview and progress [19, 21]. There is a swing that has happened, in values and ideals of Indian culture after globalization [22].

New culture that exists is both modernization and westernization. The gap has been felt due to exodus movement of Indian culture from traditional one to the contemporary one [23]. The shift is also bridged by the dynamism of Indian culture itself [8, 16]. Deviations from traditional culture towards modern ethos makes materialistic and consumer society a conflicting one and people might attempt arbitration for such pressures [22]. Materialism has great bearing in changing life style of people in India.

4. Outcome

The topic is worthy of entrenched study and development of a tool to gauge such an influential aspect of human behavior. It has also been recently established that media has significant and influential effect on consumer behavior and this effect differs across different cultures. The influence of media is also a contribution of western individualistic culture [24]. Materialism is an embryonic attribute of Indian consumers and emerging aspect of Indian culture [25]. In spite of conventional advocacy in Indian culture [5], such effect has also found to be significant determinant of Indian consumers [26].

5. Conclusion

Materialism in India, like in any other socio-economic setting, has been seen as reflecting one's darker side of one's behavior. Indian culture has strong roots in history of materialism surviving with less positive and more negative interpretations. This study fills the gap that was left unattended and overlooked by existing limited studies carried out in this context in India.

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