Original Researcher Article

A Study of Subliminal Cues and Their Influence on Purchase Decisions of Young Consumers in Urban Retail Markets

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of subliminal phenomena on offline consumer buying behaviour among young consumers aged 18 to 30 years in Pune, India. Subliminal messaging, which operates below the level of conscious awareness, has attracted growing attention in marketing and consumer psychology due to its potential to subtly shape perceptions, attitudes, and purchase-related decisions. While international research has explored the effectiveness of subliminal techniques, empirical evidence within the context of Indian offline retail environments remains limited, creating a clear need for context-specific investigation. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach to develop a comprehensive understanding of how subliminal stimuli function within physical retail settings. Quantitative data are collected through structured questionnaires administered to a representative sample of young consumers, capturing their exposure to subliminal cues, brand awareness, emotional responses, and offline purchasing behaviour. Qualitative insights are obtained through in-depth interviews with marketing professionals and advertising practitioners to explore their understanding, application, and perceived effectiveness of subliminal techniques in offline marketing strategies. The findings of the study are expected to reveal meaningful associations between subliminal messaging and consumer perceptions of brands, as well as its influence on purchase intentions and actual buying behaviour in offline markets. By integrating consumer experiences with professional perspectives, the research aims to advance theoretical understanding of subconscious influences in consumer decision-making and contribute practical insights for marketers and brand strategists. Ultimately, the study seeks to enhance knowledge of how subliminal techniques shape brand identity and purchasing behaviour among young urban consumers in India, while also informing responsible and evidence-based marketing practices.**.**

Keywords: Subliminal phenomena, consumer behaviour, offline purchasing, brand identity, young consumers

1. INTRODUCTION:

Consumers frequently make decisions based on unconscious influences that they may not be aware of. The term "subliminal messaging" describes marketing stimuli that are quietly influencing preferences, brand associations, and purchasing behaviour by being conveyed below the level of conscious perception. Visual, auditory, and sensory subliminal cues have all been incorporated into marketing methods over time in an effort to increase brand recognition and encourage impulsive purchases. Every day, without consciously considering them or using critical thinking to arrive at a decision, we act, produce, and exchange beliefs and ideas. We frequently act in this way without understanding the origin of the belief or desire for the specific brand or product. In other words, we salivate as the pellets emerge from the bar when we press it, and the store rings the bells. (Lakhani, 2008). Subliminal messages may play a significant part in the world of brands in attracting customers, capturing their attention, and making an influence on them subconsciously. Secondly, it could strengthen his commitment to the company and its goods. (Atrees, 2015). One of the most fundamental factors in

predicting consumer behaviour is knowing a consumer's purpose to choose a brand of product or service from all those provided at a specific time and in a particular sector of the market (Maalik et al., 2020). Customer experience is a significant subject in the process of creating a brand and advertising it. To attract customers, marketing firms and advertising professionals are constantly looking for fresh methods and smart strategies. Consumers engage with brands everywhere and all the time. They always surrounded by Brands Design (Brands Name, logo, Shape, Colours, Slogans, Tag line), advertisements, and products in different manners. The idea of brand personality provides a significant strategic benefit. It contributes to creating relationships between brands and consumers. (Karam et al., 2017). Brand identity is the character and image that a company projects to its consumers. Many mediums which include logos, packaging, advertisements and product design may be used to express this identity. These brand identification components can include subliminal signals that alter how consumers see the company. In the world of brand identity, subliminal phenomenon is extremely important for grabbing the consumer's attention. Visual subliminal signals are intended to be imperceptible to conscious

perception so that they can communicate with the subconscious mind without being noticed by human thought. (Damaskinidis & Kostopoulou, 2021)

Subliminal Messaging in Offline Shopping Environment:

In actual retail/shopping settings, subliminal cues can appear in a number of ways, such as, Visual Stimuli, to influence perceptions of quality and reliability, brands use subtle colour associations, hidden symbols, and logo alterations (Moore, 1982). Auditory Subliminal Cues, background music affects mood, buying habits, and the speed at which purchases are made. It also frequently promotes extended in-store interaction (Sánchez Contreras, 2024). Olfactory Triggers, in order to evoke strong feelings and boost the possibility of a purchase, retailers purposefully distribute pleasant scents (Karremans et al., 2006). Product placement and store layout, by strategically placing things that customers are likely to buy next to checkout counters, retailers can take advantage of their subconscious decision-making (Karaduman, 2024). Knowing how subliminal messaging influences purchase behaviour in offline retail environments is essential, especially among young customers who are increasingly influenced by experiential shopping trends and brand loyalty development. Because they are more exposed to branding, have stronger preferences for integrated shopping experiences, and are more sensitive to subtle marketing cues, the youth demographic (ages 18 to 30) is an excellent study group (Hassan et al., 2015).

The primary goal of this subject is to better understand the connection between subliminal brand identity phenomena and offline consumer purchasing behaviour. Pune, a large metropolis, has a vibrant retail scene with a mixture of innovative and traditional shopping experiences. Young consumers between the ages of 18 and 30 make up a sizable portion of the Indian retail sector and are regular users of offline retail spaces such as malls, supermarkets, and freestanding brand stores. This study is especially important because there is a lack of research on the effects of subliminal stimuli in offline retail settings in India. Subliminal Phenomenon may be a strong instrument for affecting the perception and actions of consumers. And also study on Traditional Illustration Technology changes take place into Digital Illustration Technology nowadays and impact on Artist life.

1.1 Research Objectives:

This study aims to:

Investigate how subliminal messaging influences brand perceptions among young consumers.

Identify the key psychological and environmental factors that drive offline purchase decisions.

1.2 Research Questions:

The study is structured around the following research questions:

How does subliminal messaging influence brand perception among young consumers?

What are the key characteristics that influence offline buying behaviour?

What is the relationship between subliminal phenomena and purchasing decisions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 The Concept of Subliminal Messaging:

Subliminal is a combination of two words made from the Latin words sub and limen. Limin signifies threshold, whereas Sub denotes below. The meaning of subliminal is when stimuli that are presented below the threshold or limen of awareness subliminal perception happens when ideas, emotions, behaviour, or actions are affected (Sandoval et al., 2018). In other terms, consumers process these cues subconsciously rather than consciously. In easy language, Words or pictures that are conveyed to us subconsciously are known as subliminal messages (Kumar, 2020). James Vicary introduced the idea of a subliminal message, advertising in 1957. According to James Vicary Experiment, in which Coca-Cola and popcorn advertising were continuously presented to cinemas in 1/3000-second increments dramatically enhanced product sales. (Increased, 57.5% sale in popcorn and 18.1% sale in Coca-Cola) (Crandall, 2006).

According to the findings of several psychologists, the subconscious mind is quite potent and keeps such signals. It is still uncertain and unclear, though, if potential buyers genuinely respond to such subliminal messages. (Singh & Nayyar, 2017). There are major types of Subliminal Message- Audio-visual Subliminal Message, Hidden Visual Subliminal Message, and Sound Subliminal Message.

Audio-visual Subliminal Message- A typical advertisement has roughly 25PPS. One method is to add the subliminal phenomenon to the picture that comes after the conventional twenty-four, on the twenty-fifth image. The picture cannot be consciously recognized since it is released for too little time, yet it is nonetheless subconsciously remembered by the spectator.

Hidden Visual Subliminal Message- If a picture is recognizable to the person or elicits an emotional reaction; visual subliminal messaging will have a greater impact on that person. In order to evoke emotion in the customer and forcefully but completely unknowingly influence his choice, the advertiser uses this approach to subtly and harmlessly alter his vision. They have a favourable impact on a person's ideas and subsequent conduct through influencing the subconscious mind.

Sound Subliminal Message- In order to entice listeners to purchase a beverage or utilize a certain product, for instance, hidden audio messages use fusing natural sounds with audio. This method of persuasion involves sending messages at extremely low sound levels. (Maalik et al., 2020)

There are five different ways to incorporate language into music. Placed below the hearing threshold, the target words or messages are covered up by the music. Over the perceptual threshold, it is able to utilize words with a reversed time structure (backward masked messaging). Subliminal usage of backward-masked communications is

also possible. It is possible to employ written messages with high pass filters (including frequencies over 15 kHz). Music can include time shrunk subliminal messages, which are recorded messages that are played again twice as quickly. (Atrees, 2015)

2.2 Empirical Studies of Subliminal Advertising:

Since James Vicary's famous study on hidden messages in movies (1957), which demonstrated that it increased sales, subliminal advertising has been the focus of academic research. More recent empirical research has confirmed that subliminal cues can affect customer behaviour, particularly in offline retail contexts, despite critiques and allegations of methodological problems (Moore, 1982). (Karaduman, 2024). According to a study by Hassan, Niazi, and Riaz (2015), subliminal cues including background music, logos, and brand colour greatly increase consumer trust and brand memory. In the same way, Sánchez Contreras (2024) investigated the effects of subliminal messaging in quick fashion and discovered that, over time, subtle branding techniques enhanced brand associations and promoted impulsive purchases.

2.3 Subliminal Messaging and Consumer Decision-Making:

Customers are influenced by subliminal cues at several points during the decision-making process:

Attention and Awareness: Research shows that product placements, ambient music, and store design can subconsciously attract customers' attention without their knowledge (Sánchez Contreras, 2024).

Emotional Connection: Subtle visual elements in ads and emotional branding may trigger emotional associations in the subconscious, increasing loyalty to a brand (Karremans et al., 2006).

Impulse Buying Tendency: Research indicates that product placements close to checkout areas and subliminally displayed discount messaging enhance the number of impulsive purchases (Hassan et al., 2015).

Long -Term Brand Perception: Karaduman (2024) highlighted that recurrent exposure to subliminal branding strategies might increase brand loyalty, especially among younger consumers who are more sensitive to experiential and visual branding.

2.4 Factor that Affecting Consumer Buying Behaviour-

Shopping choices and preferences are influenced by a number of significant factors that impact consumer or buyer behaviour. Social, cultural, psychological, economic, and personal aspects are some of the main categories into which these influences can be divided. Aspects like motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes are examples of internal and psychological characteristics that are important in determining how consumers understand and react to marketing stimuli. Conversely, social influences include peer groups, family, friends, and social standing, all of which have an impact on a person's purchasing decisions. By affecting preferences and decision-making processes, cultural elements such as traditions, values, rituals, and societal norms can have a big influence on consumer behaviour.

The affordability and viability of making purchases are also influenced by economic factors, including market trends, income level, purchasing power, and economic conditions. Finally, individual variances in purchasing behaviour are further influenced by personal factors such as age, gender, occupation, lifestyle, and personality. Businesses and marketers must comprehend these elements in order to create strategies that effectively meet the demands and preferences of their target audience (Ramya et al., 2016; Qazzafi, 2020).
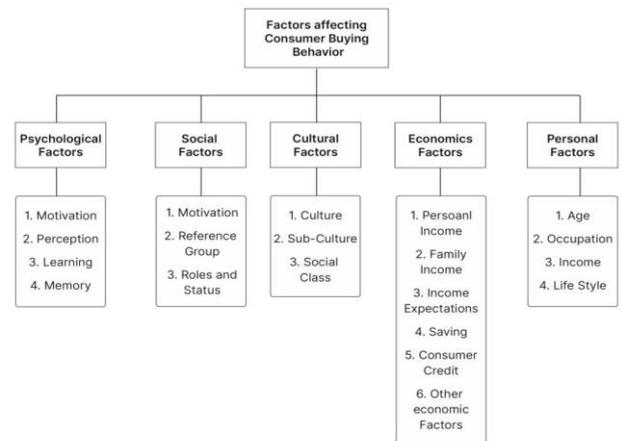
2.5 The role of Subliminal Message in Offline Purchasing:

Subliminal marketing works particularly well in shopping malls. Offline environments immerse customers in sensory experiences, in contrast to digital advertising where they can ignore or skip commercials (Moore, 1982). The following are important variables affecting subconscious consumer involvement in offline contexts:

Ambient Music & Soundscapes: Research shows that background music influences how long people spend shopping and how much money they spend; slower music makes people spend more time in stores (Sánchez Contreras, 2024).

Olfactory Triggers: It has been discovered that pleasant fragrances promote relaxation in customers, which increases the possibility that they would make a purchase (Hassan et al., 2015).

Lighting and Colour Psychology: According to Karaduman (2024), store lighting and colour schemes affect how customers feel and perceive products, which in turn affects their decision to buy.

Product Placement Strategies: According to Karremans et al. (2006), strategically placing items that customers are likely to buy next to checkout counters encourages them to make impulsive purchases.

2.6 Ethical consideration and Consumer Awareness:

Subliminal marketing presents ethical questions disregarding its efficacy. According to some academics, subliminal advertising might go against ethical standards because it manipulates people without their knowledge or agreement (Moore, 1982). Others, however, argue that subliminal techniques can improve customer experiences without lying when used ethically (Sánchez Contreras,

2024). As the understanding of consumers has increased, subliminal advertising has come under increased scrutiny, prompting firms to figure out a balance between transparency and subtle persuasion (Karaduman, 2024).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The two major theoretical concepts on which this study is based are the use of priming Theory and Consumer Decision-Making Model. The theories provide a beginning point in understanding the influence of subliminal cues on customer behaviour particularly in brick and mortar retailing. The priming theory explains the impact of exposure to a stimulus on the subsequent thoughts or behaviors of a person without the subject being aware of it (Bargh, 2006). Subliminal messages are priming stimuli, which is engineered by initiating the connection networks within the brain to influence the consumer preferences and behaviours albeit indirectly (Karremans, Stroebe, and Claus, 2006). Expostured people tend to remember pertinent thoughts and respond well to situations triggered by specific words, pictures, or sounds, as per psychology studies. Since subliminal priming has the potential to enhance brand memory and buying behavior, the concept is common in advertising and marketing (Moore, 1982). An example: (Even though consumers are not always conscious of the exposure), the visual representation of a brand logo in advertisements can affect their brand choice (Sanchez Contreras, 2024). Music in a store has the ability to captivate the auditory priming of the customers that can influence their buying behavior and their expenditure pattern (Hassan, Niazi, and Raza, 2015). It is possible that customers are more likely to buy the product when they have been primed to feel good because of the presence of such nice scents (Karaduman, 2024).

3.1.2 Consumer Decision –Making Model:

According to Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell's (1968) Consumer Decision-Making Model, there are five essential steps in the buying process:

Problem Recognition: Customers are able to identify a need or want for a product.

Information Search: They look for information on the possibilities that are available.

Evaluation of Alternatives: Customers analyse products and brands.

Purchase Decision: They make their final decision on how they feel.

After-Purchase Behaviour: The buyer considers their choice, which influences subsequent purchases.

Subliminal messaging will subtly guide the customer to a specific brand or a product thus it is primarily what determines the evaluation and the decision making stages (Moore, 1982). Subliminal messages influence impulse buying preference as opposed to direct advertising where a buyer purchases the product without considering it (Karremans et al., 2006). This paper examines the influence of subliminal messages in all stages of consumer decision making, particularly in the offline retail store where the consumer is bombarded with numerous inspirations in the environment all at the same time. The research strategy employed in this study is of mixed-methods whereby qualitative and quantitative research methods are integrated. This approach gives an in-depth analysis of the influence of subliminal marketing on offline customer behaviour. The study includes:

Qualitative aspect: Interviewing expert in retail strategy, design, and marketing to understand how subliminal stimuli are inculcated into off-line marketing.

Quantitative aspect: It involves conducting a structured survey among 40 youthful Pune consumers to find out their awareness, perceptions, and purchasing behaviour that are affected by stimuli at the subliminal level.

3.1.3 Qualitative Component:

The qualitative part of this research entailed semi-structured interviews with 12 professionals in the industry as per their fields of expertise namely branding, consumer behavior, and marketing design. The respondents were divided into six professional designers and six professors who had to give their opinions on what effect subliminal messaging had in offline retailing. The 6 professional designers which comprised of industry directors and brands specialists were experienced in in-store design, product packaging, and brand development. They gave insights on the use of subliminal stimuli like store ambience, placement of goods and visual branding to persuade consumer behavior. The six academicians, who specialize in psychology, consumer behavior, and branding, provided an academic viewpoint on how the subconscious stimuli influence the decision of purchase and brand loyalty. The interviews were aimed at three areas. Questionnaire Development involved the proper formulation of the survey questions in line with consumer behavioral patterns with regard to subliminal messages. Perceived Effectiveness of Subliminal Marketing investigated the views of experts on whether using symbols, background music, color psychology and visual branding have any effect on consumer choice on a subliminal level. Finally, Ethical Considerations evaluated the conformity of the subliminal marketing methods to ethical advertising procedures to guarantee the clear and responsible consumer relations. These interviews were invaluable and aided in the narrowing down of the survey questionnaire and the validity of the study process of understanding subliminal influences in the offline retail environment.

3.1.4 Quantitative Component:

The quantitative aspects of this study were aimed at determining the perception and reaction of the consumer towards subliminal messaging in the offline retailing scenarios. The number of consumers who took part in the survey was 44, which was representative enough to guarantee that the number of young shoppers in Pune, India is well-represented. It targeted a sample population that consists of people aged 18-30, a group that is highly brand conscious, appreciates an experience-oriented shopping and is highly sensitive to minor marketing indications. In order to come up with reliable and

representative information, all the 44 survey responses were gathered in a real-life retail environment, such as malls, shopping centers, and retail establishments, offline. These were the places chosen with a good choice to observe consumer habits in various off-line settings, including the high-end retail outlets to fast fashion stores and department stores. The survey questionnaire was carefully constructed in such a way that it addressed various aspects of consumer behavior, with preference given to subliminal factors in off-line retailing set-ups. Knowledge of consumer demographics was a critical point of this research. They were grouped in terms of age, sex, education, occupation, family life cycle, monthly family income and shopping frequency in order to determine the trends in consumer behavior in terms of subliminal messaging. Gender has been well balanced in order to have a good diversity in consideration of subliminal influence in retail marketing. The shopping behaviors, the number of times they shop in the malls, and the preferences were also gathered in the course of the study and they assisted in determining the correlation between consumer profiles and reaction to the subliminal cues. All the questions were designed as Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree) to allow obtaining quantifiable customer reactions. There were five areas covered by the questionnaire. The Mall Shopping Behavior was the first dimension, which investigated the frequency of visits, spending patterns, and the main reasons why consumers prefer malls to other shopping channels. This assisted in evaluating whether habitual shopping behavior and expenditure habits are indirectly influenced by in-store subliminal influences. Store Environment Influence was the second category, and it compared the effects of retail layout, lighting, background music, and sensory factors on consumer engagement. Given that store ambiance is a more important component of subliminal marketing, this section was to establish the extent to which the environmental design would influence consumer decision-making on a subtle level. Another fundamental area was Cultural and Emotional Effects where the influence of colors, symbols with cultural difference, and emotional attachment in branding was analysed. The intensity of cultural congruence tends to increase the level of consumer trust, and brand favoritism, it is critical to evaluate the extent of subliminal response entrenchment in influencing consumer perception on a subliminal level. The fourth category was Brand Identity and Awareness which examined the role of subliminal messages in brand recognition and long-term loyalty. This involved determining whether the consumers can recall brand logos, colors, and hidden visuals even without recalling them consciously. In order to measure the consumer awareness on subliminal messages, the respondents were presented with the logos of the well-known brands, i.e. Amazon, Baskin Robbins and LG, including hidden subliminal messages. The participants were requested to name any hidden messages, symbols or visual tricks in these logos. The experiment was to determine whether branding techniques were registered at the subconscious level by the consumer without any conscious awareness of them. The outcome gave an idea on how brand familiarity and subconscious exposure affect consumer recognition and preference in the process

of determining the degree of general awareness about such forms of advertising. Post-Visit Perception was assessed in order to determine the long-term effect of subliminal marketing on consumer memory. This part was about the effectiveness of customers in recalling subliminal elements of branding once they are out of the store and this helps to assess whether the subliminal marketing tactics can impact the capacity of the customers to recollect the brand and the intention to purchase the brand in the long run. Finally, the participants were requested to choose the four most influential factors that impact consumer behavior out of a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the most influential and 4 the least influential. These were the four factors: Use of Emotional Cues (Emotional Connection)/ Repeated Subtle Messages to Brand Recognition (Familiarity)/Strategic Use of Symbols (Symbolism)/Alignment with Culture and Tradition (Cultural Association). This ranking system, through consumer response analysis, served to find out which subliminal strategy has the greatest effect on offline retailing. The findings were useful to marketers to tune the branding strategies that would have the largest appeal to customers. In a move to make the questionnaires valid and reliable, the survey questions were vetted and perfected by marketing experts before questionnaire was given out. Their knowledge was used to maximize clarity of question so that the survey could best portray the real life consumer experiences in subliminal marketing.

3.2 Data Analysis:

In the analysis of the data we performed multiple linear regression analysis. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR)- This is a statistical modeling methodology that is applied to describe the relationship between a single dependent variable (outcome variable) and two or more independent variables (predictor variables). It assists to determine the major factors of influence that impact an outcome, quantify the strength and the importance of relationships among the variables, and to make predictions using the available observed data. The overall model of the MLR is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon$$

where:

Y = Dependent variable (outcome we want to predict or explain)

$X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_n$ = Independent variables (factors influencing Y)

β_0 = Intercept (constant term)

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots, \beta_n$ = Regression coefficients (measure the impact of each independent variable)

ϵ = Error term (accounts for variability not explained by the model)

To determine the changing behavior of the consumer under the influence of the environment factors and subliminal messages, a Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) model was developed, where the change in Brand Preference was the dependent variable. The model also contained six independent predictors each of which has a very large influence on customer decision processes in

real world retail settings. The first predictor, Influence of Store Ambiance, examined the effects of such factors as store design, background music, and overall ambiance on customer interaction and purchasing behavior. Brand emotional attachment was a measure of the extent to which some of the customers formed unconscious attachment to the brand which influenced their tendency to purchase the brand again. The third predictor was Cultural Aspects of Advertising which examined the effect of using culturally familiar symbols, colours and emotions on consumer trust and buying behaviour. Purchases Remarkability, which is another significant element, assessed the presence of high recollections of in-store marketing among customers which would increase the post-visit influence and the recall of the brand. Moreover, the contribution of the subconscious influence by such minor aspects of stores as light, music, and smell was also evaluated. The model also considered subliminal communication by analyzing implicit messages and unspoken brand clues that influence the perception of consumers. Lastly, Brand Loyalty Incentives examined how tactics of in-store interaction and small rewards affected brand preference and retention through the long-term. The MLR model provided a framework of data-driven measures of the relationship between ambient influences, subliminal cues and variations in brand choices in offline retail settings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study presents valuable information that indicates the variables that in fact determine shifts in brand preferences of customers in the offline shopping setting.
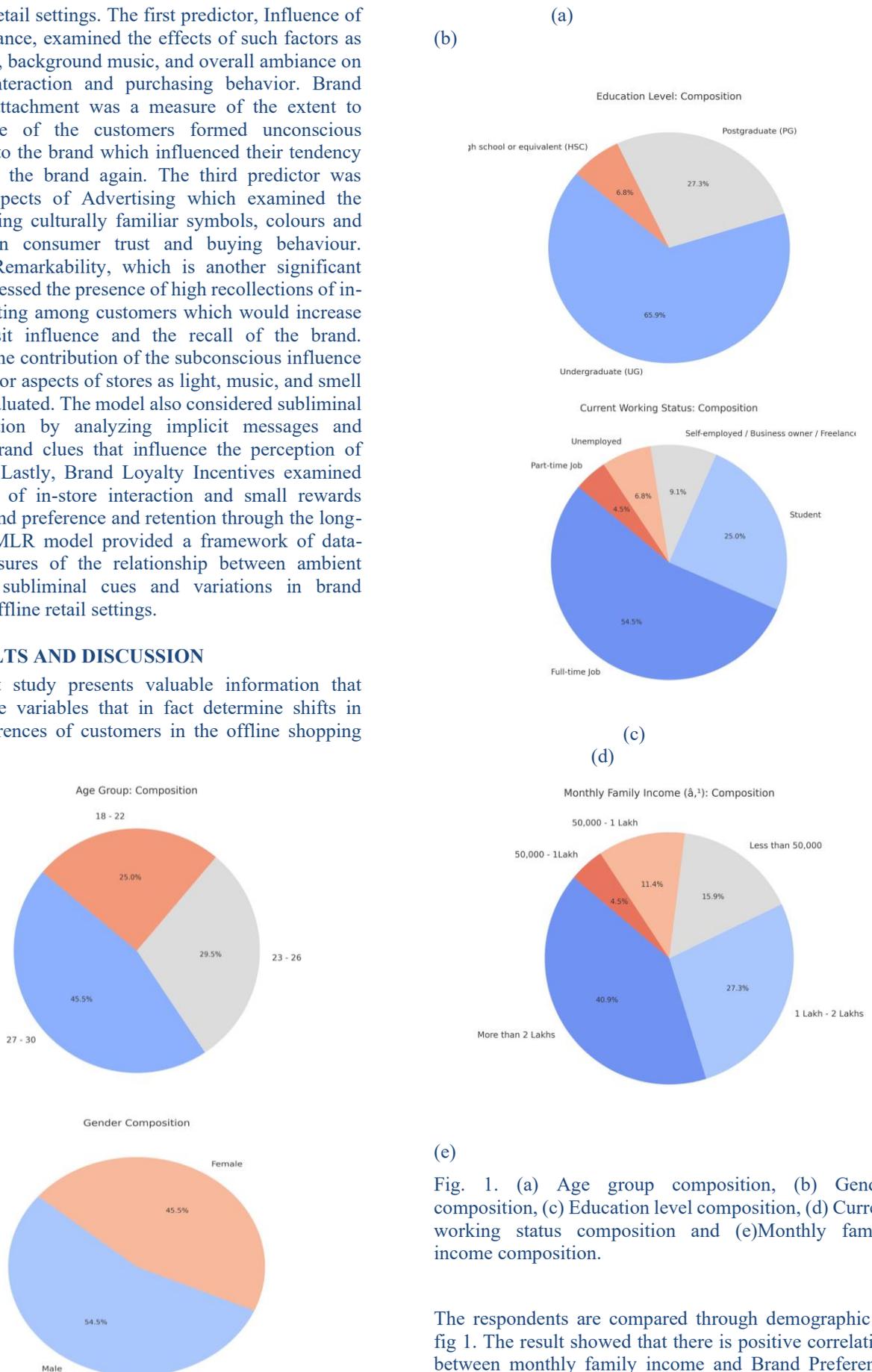

(a)
(b)

(c)
(d)

(e)

Fig. 1. (a) Age group composition, (b) Gender composition, (c) Education level composition, (d) Current working status composition and (e)Monthly family income composition.

The respondents are compared through demographic in fig 1. The result showed that there is positive correlation between monthly family income and Brand Preference Change and Brand Loyalty Incentives whereby, the high-income category respondents tend to change the brand preference and respond to the loyalty programs. Loyalty

incentives are especially good with consumers who have more financial flexibility and who are more responsive to discounts, rewards, and exclusive offers. There was a weak association between the level of education and Purchases Remarkability with educational level indicating that the more educated individuals have a memorable in-store experience. Nevertheless, education did not have a significant effect on brand preference changes, which implies that brand recall can be affected, but the changes in loyalty are less of a dependence on education. The relationship between gender and purchasing behavior was a low correlation, and this implied that consumers did not buy products significantly due to their gender. There might be minor trends, but they were not significant to make any concrete conclusions. In the same fashion, the age group and working status were not significantly correlated with the change of preference to the brand and purchase behaviour, meaning that they do not directly determine the shopping behavior, but could be combined with other factors to give a significant effect. This research indicates that the marketing creative must concentrate on a blend of psychological, behavioral and demographic aspects as opposed to basing entirely on the conventional segmentation standards. Brand Preference Change is the dependent variable of this analysis and the dataset will consist of a total of 44 observations. The R-squared in the model is 0.277, which means that 27.7 percent of the change in preference of the brand is attributed to the predictors used. Upon correction of number of predictors, however, the value of Adjusted R-squared is reduced to 0.136, indicating only 13.6 percent of the variation is effectively explained in view of the complexity of the model. The F-statistic of the model is 1.968, which determines the overall significance of the regression. The Prob (F-statistic) is 0.0871 that is a little above the 0.05 ability of statistical significance.

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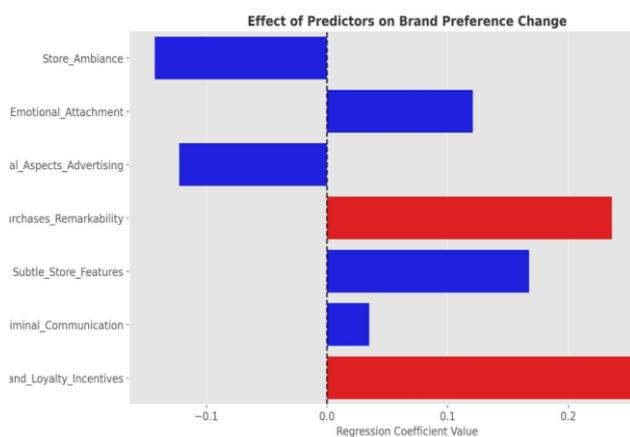

Fig. 2. Representing effect of predictors on brand preference change with key factors in y-axis and regression coefficient value in x-axis.

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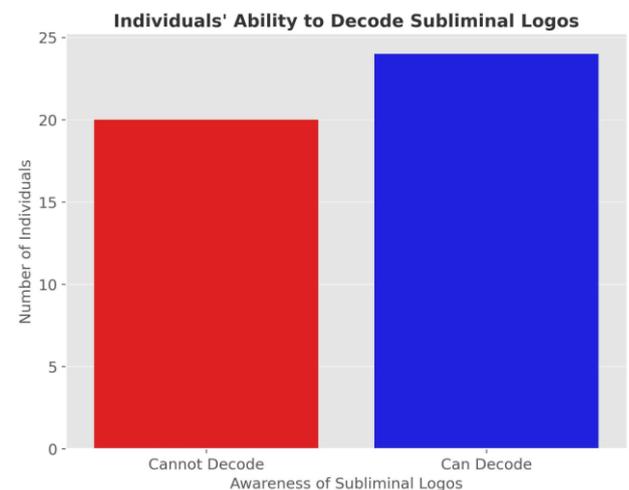

Fig. 3. Representing individual ability to decode subliminal message with number of individuals in y-axis and awareness of subliminal logos in x-axis.

There were 44 respondents that attended the survey. Of these 24 people (54.55%), could decode subliminal logos; that is, they could read the concealed symbols, shapes or messages in the given logos as illustrated in fig 3. This indicates that over fifty percent of the respondents are more aware of the practice of subliminal branding.

Conversely, 20 people (45.45) were unable to decode subliminal logos, which shows that a considerable number of consumers might not be aware of hidden brand messages consciously. This brings out the power of subtle branding, where a large portion of the consumer base can be persuaded unconsciously without even actively observing the integrated images. In general, it can be concluded that consumer knowledge about subliminal messages is rather neutral, with slightly more representation (54.55) having the knowledge about hidden brand components. This might have an implication on marketing strategies since brands that use subliminal messages still might have different effects on the conscious and unconscious consumer. The results of awareness questions analysis indicate that 61.36% of all people strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to appreciate the fact that they could discern subliminal symbols, shapes, and messages in logos which means that there is a high degree of awareness regarding the existence of hidden elements of brand. Also 25 percent of the respondents were neutral which indicates that a good percentage of the people may be consciously aware of these messages but not sure of their capacity to decode them. Conversely, 13.64 percent of the interviewees disagreed or strongly disagreed and said they do not believe that companies employ subliminal messaging and they cannot be influenced by it. Nevertheless, in spite of this, in the test conducted, only 54.55% of the participants could decode the hidden messages contained in the logos reflected in the survey. This can be seen as creating a gap between the assumption that many consumers might think they are able to identify subliminal branding and their actual capacity to decode the message is much less. This implies that a significant number of consumers including those who feel they are not susceptible to subliminal marketing strategies can be manipulated through subliminal marketing strategies.
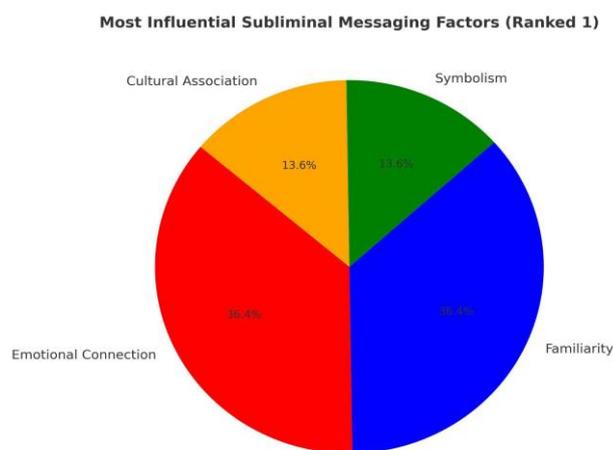

Fig. 4. Representing most influential subliminal messaging factors that were ranked 1

The most important factor seems to be the most rank according to the Emotional Connection. The familiarity (Repeated messages to join brand recognition) comes next meaning that the brand exposure and repetition is important. The influence of symbolism (Strategic use of symbols) and Cultural Association is considered to be lower than that of emotional and familiar cues. The current survey has only 44 participants, a rather small sample that cannot be assumed to make powerful statistical conclusions. An increased sample (300 and above participants) would enhance the accuracy of the model, minimize variability, and increase the accuracy of the insights. The survey should be extended to various groups of people, locations, or sectors to make the results more universal. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) assumes numerous independent predictors, however, in behavioral studies, latent constructs (e.g. brand attachment, awareness and purchasing behavior) tend to have a correlation. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) would enable the research to identify indirect relationships, i.e. how the store ambiance influences emotional attachment, which further leads to the change of brand preference. More profound cognitive effects, including how the frequent exposure to the subliminal branding affects the long-term buying pattern or the emotional reactions to the subliminal marketing (positive or negative view) can be evaluated using awareness questions. The eye-tracking, biometric response testing, or implicit association tests (IATs) might help come up with more evidence on the effect of subliminal branding on decision-making. The research fails to reflect the long-term effect of subliminal messaging on the repeat buying. According to the ranking system of the Emotional Connection/ Familiarity/ Symbolism/ Cultural Association, the importance of each factor is equal, and the participants are not required to attach much importance to one of the factors based on which the detailed perspective can be examined.

5. CONCLUSION

The survey analysis findings bring forth some important discoveries in terms of consumer awareness, subliminal responses, and market dynamics. Only a notable 61.36% of people said that they could see the subliminal messages, but on examining the respondents, only 54.55% proved to be able to decode the hidden messages in brand logos. Such discrepancy between perceived and actual awareness implies that the subliminal branding is a powerful resource in influencing consumer tastes without them being aware of it. According to the Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) model, the greatest impact on the change in Brand Preference was found to be Purchases Remarkability (p = 0.073) and Brand Loyalty Incentives (p = 0.115) which implies that memorable in-store experiences and promotional incentives are significant factors that influence the change in Brand Preference. Nevertheless, store atmosphere, cultural elements of advertising, and subliminal indicators of messages were not found with significant statistical significance and suggest that exogenous variables, behavioral tendencies, and the effect of digital influence can play a more important role in changing brand preferences. The fact that the mall settings do not directly influence the customer preferences directly does not mean that marketers should focus more on the store layout as opposed to emotional branding and advertising. Advertising is the strongest force that affects customer behaviour. The reminder of brand advertisements will raise the chances of the consumers altering their decisions. The paper also supports the fact that subliminal messaging

is a powerful, but not well-acknowledged factor in consumer behavior. Most of the respondents feel that they are resistant to such schemes, but the fact that they are not able to read subliminal messages means that they are affected by these. The repetitive exposure of brand elements, emotional stimulations as well as visual designing tricks are at the subconscious level and influence consumer choices in the long run. This is especially applicable during the fast shifting Industry 4.0 era where technological-driven branding, artificial intelligence, and algorithm-directed interaction with consumers are reconstructing historical approaches to marketing. With the growth of globalization and online trading, brands are exploiting neuromarketing, sensory branding, and AI-driven personalized advertising to produce associations that create subliminal associations that lead to long-term brand commitment. Although this was found, much more studies are needed before the full operation of subliminal messaging in the new-age digital economy can be understood. The current research is mainly concentrated on the environment of offline retail experience although with the current prevalence of e-commerce, digital branding, and AI recommendations that interfere with the established purchasing patterns, future research will have an opportunity to examine how digital environments (social media, streaming advertisement, AI suggestions) can be used to support the subliminal influence. As demographics, which are influenced by supply-side disruption by startups and world markets, change, the traditional offline purchase is now becoming a hybrid omnichannel experience, with digital, social, and immersive branding experiences becoming the key drivers of brand recall and conversion rates. Subliminal influence in this case has been a distinguishing factor among the brands that seek consumer attention in a market that is becoming saturated. Customers might think they cannot be subliminated but the statistics shows the opposite. With the ever-increasing pace of the Industry 4.0 revolution, it is brands that know how to apply the science of subconscious persuasion that will have a competitive advantage in convincing people to make purchasing choices. More complex models can be studied in the future, and behavioral tracking can be combined with the analysis of the digital ecosystem to give a more perfect picture of the influence of the subliminal message on the consumer mind in the new era..

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