
INDIAN PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS BRAND LOYALTY AND KIDS' WEAR SAFETY

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Abstract

Parental care is an essential part of human nature. Parents have the most important role for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their children. Children of all ages are at risk of injury from wearing defective clothing. Product safety refers to the reduction in the probability that use of a product will result in injury, death or negative consequences to the people who are going to use it. Customer satisfaction and brand loyalty is an evolving trend that is considered an essential concern for which the business firms are very sensitive. Study has been conducted to know whether Indian parents will be loyal to the brands who will provide safe garments for the kids. In this study, the data has been collected with the help of structured questionnaire from 1235 parents from Bengaluru, India. The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. This study proved that kids wear safety and customer loyalty have strong effect. Irrespective of gender, education, profession and family income, parents are ready to loyal with the brand which is going to provide safe garments for their kids.

Keywords: Kids Wear, Customer Loyalty, Safe Garments, Brand Loyalty

1. Introduction

Parental care is an essential part of human nature. Parents have the most important role for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their children. Unintentional injuries are the leading threat to the lives and health of children. In India there is common understanding that injuries happens because of fate, chance or bad luck, but this not a fact. Parents must understand that injuries to children are logical, predictable and preventable (Zamani, 2007). Injury prevention is an important part of quality child care and a foremost responsibility of parents. By understanding how injuries happen, planning ahead and taking simple precautions, most injuries can be avoided, particularly the injuries which causes because of unsafe garments.

Children of all ages are at risk of injury from wearing defective clothing. Children need special attention during their activities, and the garments they wear must provide an extremely high level of safety. Drawstrings, cords and hoods have for years been reported to be able to cause serious accidents, and decoration materials, stickers and buttons can become a serious choking hazard when they come loose. Apart from this, general

garment properties such as flammability are important parameters for safe and sophisticated products. The US Consumer Protection Safety Commission (CPSC) received reports of at least 27 deaths of children in connection with drawstrings on children's clothing from 1985 to 2008, as well as 70 non-fatal incidents (<http://www.consumerwatch.com>, 2010).

Though Kidswear regulation are strictly imposed in developed nation but the way Indian kidswear market is growing in future it will be important to look into the safety aspects of the kids wear. At present, no casualty because of apparel is reported in India as compare to USA/UK, probably the main reason is blaming the parents for carelessness in case of any accident. The main purpose of this research is to study the awareness of the Kidswear safety amongst the consumer as well as retailers.

Any kids wear brand have to manage the risk of selling defective garments that may result in injury to kids and can ruin the image of the brand in the market. Kids wear safety can be the foundation of consumer trust so single most important goal of brand must be to make sure that the clothing supplied by them should be safe.

2. Background

India remains one of the most promising markets for apparel due to the ever burgeoning economic activities and ever widening consumer base. The Indian apparel market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9%, from US\$ 41 billion in 2013 to US\$ 102 billion in 2023. In 2013, the kidswear segment, at US\$ 8.3 billion, alone contributed 20% of India's entire apparel market. However, given its higher growth rate, this share is expected to increase to 22% by 2023. (Amit Gugnani, 2015).

Market for kids apparel is the fastest growing industry in India (www.fibre2fashion.com, 2009). Indian market is now moving towards an international look in terms of children's apparel. Children's garments are available in various forms and designs. Manufacturers are coming up with fancy materials targeting kids who are more interested in the upcoming fashion trends.

Branded kids apparel market is in its nascent stage in India with a handful of national and international brands. There is an excellent opportunity for the organized players to lay a strong foundation in this segment. Industry analyst estimate that market size of branded kidswear in India including brands like Ruff Kids, Ruff Baby, Planet Kids, Gini & Jony, Li'l Tomatoes, and Allen Solly Kid is estimated to be around Rs 1,000 crore (www.fibre2fashion.com, 2009). Today Indian Kids wear branded market is growing at 15% per annum. International brands including Barbie, Mothercare, Benetton Kids, Lee Kids, Disney, Tommy Hilfiger, Puma, Reebok, adidas and Levi's Kids have also entered the Indian market.

3. Literature Review

As per David A Aaker, "A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical." (Aaker, 1991)

There are many definitions of brand loyalty are there in use. In general, brand loyalty can be defined as the

strength of preference for a brand compared to other similar available options. This is often measured in terms of repeat purchase behavior or price sensitivity.

As per (Wong Foong Yee, 2008), brand loyalty is a function of both behavior and attitudes of the customer. It is a customer's choice to buy a specific brand for a particular product category. It happens because customers feel that the brand offers the right product features, image, or level of quality at the right price. This perception becomes the base for new buying habits. Initially customers make a trial product of the brand and, when satisfied with the purchase, tend to form habits and continue to purchase the same brand because the product is safe and familiar.

The concept of brand loyalty is very crucial due to its importance in business performance and benefits for an organization. As per one of the McKinsey report, instead of luxury or innovation, safety and trust are now central to brand promises (Dr. Thomas Bauer, 2012). Consumer satisfaction leads to brand loyalty (M. Uthayakumar, 2013).

Customer satisfaction and brand loyalty is an evolving trend that is considered an essential concern for which the business firms are very sensitive.

Product safety refers to the reduction in the probability that use of a product will result in injury, death or negative consequences to the people who are going to use it. Customers have a right to expect that the product they purchase and consume should be safe and of high quality. It is a mistake to think that product safety is only a concern in manufacturing. In fact, advertisers, salespeople, suppliers, manufacturers, and anyone else who occupies a marketing function should make product safety a high priority. Brands can pursue customer satisfaction by creating safe and trustworthy products.

Today, almost all international brands do take care of kids wear safety by following the stringent rules laid down by most of the developed nations. Apart from this, in order to mitigate the kids wear risk, few international brand has set up their own product safety policies and/or procedure that ensure consistently application of physical, chemical product safety and conformity standards.

The Spanish brand 'Zara' by Inditex has developed two in-house product health and safety standards (Clear to

Wear and Safe to Wear) in collaboration with the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) which has been reinforced with third-party analysis and testing. These standards are designed to cover the end-to-end manufacturing process for all garments, footwear and accessories sold by the Group and brand also makes sure that standards are update continually with a view to complying with the world's most up to date and stringent product quality standards. Further the standards are mandatory to all the suppliers attached with the Inditex (Inditex, 2013).

The adidas Group has developed its own "Global Apparel Safety Manual for Children's Clothing" which is a combination of the strictest laws and regulations from major regions such as the EU and the US (Anon., n.d.).

In order to provide clear guidance on proper safety procedures to designer and the testing of products, in 2003, Hanes brands developed Children's wear Product Safety Manual. This 80-page Manual extensively details the Hanes brands policies and procedures related to children's wear product safety. It is based on state and federal laws and customer requirements, as well as experience gained in the many years of manufacturing children's garments. Hanes Brand Inc., uses a two-stage process to insure to meet or exceed all laws and regulations governing kids apparel, both in the United States and around the world

- Design hazard analysis (DHA) – DHA helps to identify potential hazards based on both the products intended and foreseeable use. Every garment Hanes Brand make that is intended for use by a child is examined and assessed for any potential safety hazard.
- Test-to-Failure – Garments identified as having critical parts during the DHA process (e.g. buttons, snaps, zippers, or bows) that may present a safety concern are subjected to test-to-failure analysis. This entails testing sample garments to accurately determine, for example, how much force it will take to tear off a button that could pose a choking hazard. If it does not pass the testing requirements, Hanes Brand will not manufacture it.

4. Research Methodology

A descriptive research methodology was used for this study. The present research aims to study the infinite population of parents in India. Due to time constrain researcher decided to study the representative sample of this population from Bengaluru, Karnataka India.

In this study, 1235 parents were selected through stratified random sampling. To facilitate the study, Bengaluru has been divided into five strata's, i.e. East, West, North, South and Central and from each strata a sample of approx. same number of parents has been selected.

The information was collected from parents through a structured and well-designed questionnaire. Before collecting the responses, parents were explained the voluntary nature of the survey and assured them of the anonymity of their responses. Researcher provided each respondent with a copy of the questionnaire, explained how the questionnaire was to be filled out and collected the completed questionnaires.

The main objective of this study was to find out whether Indian parents are willing to be loyal to the brands, which is ready to provide the safe garments for kids.

5. Result and Discussion

Table 1

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Gender

	Gender	
	Male	Female
No	191 (21.9%)	94 (25.9%)
Yes	681 (78.1%)	269 (74.1%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 2.301$, $df = 1$. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

* $p > .05$

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between gender of Parents and their willingness to be loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids. The results show no statistically significant difference in being loyal between male and

female. Both parents are more likely to become loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids.

Chart 1

Results of Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Gender

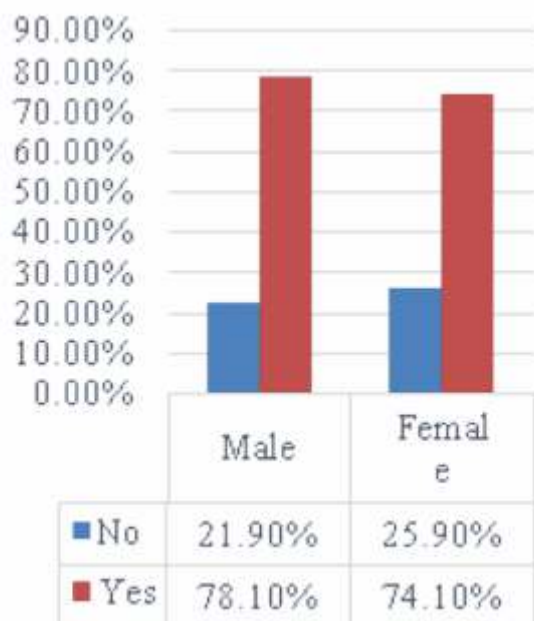


Table 2

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Age

	Education			
	19 – 25 years	26 – 32 years	33 – 39 years	40+ years
No	30 (17.5%)	146 (20.9%)	97 (31.8%)	12 (19.7%)
Yes	141 (82.5%)	552 (79.1%)	208 (68.2%)	49 (80.3%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 18.266$, $df = 3$. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

* $p < .05$

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between age of parents and their willingness to be loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids. The results show statistically significant difference in being loyal between age levels of parents. It is observed that the younger parents and older parents are more likely to become loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids.

Chart 2

Results of Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Age



Table 3

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Education

	Education			
	Under UG	UG	PG	Above PG
No	46 (19.1%)	124 (21.6%)	97 (26.5%)	18 (32.7%)
Yes	195 (80.9%)	449 (78.4%)	269 (73.5%)	37 (67.3%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 8.132$, $df = 3$. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

* $p < .05$

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between education of parents and their willingness to be loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids. The results show statistically significant difference in being loyal between education levels of parents. It is observed that the parents with less education are more likely to become loyal to brand that

will provide safe garments for kids and as education level increases the percentage of loyalty is becoming less.

Chart3

Results of Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Education

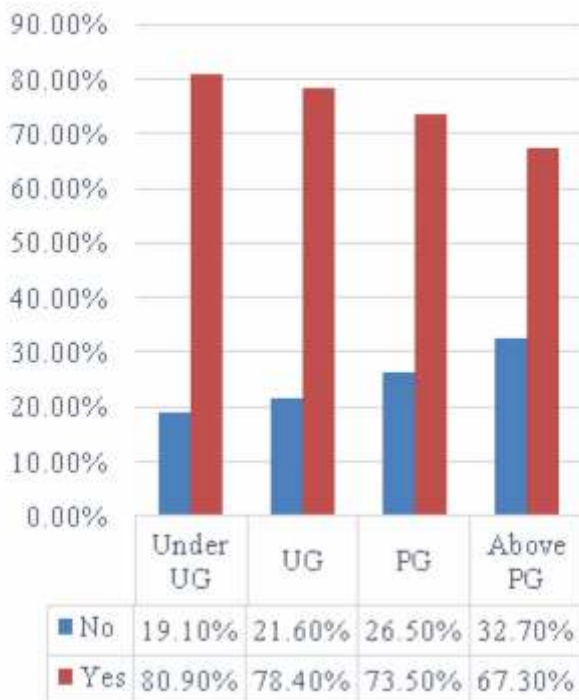


Table 4

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Profession

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between profession of parent and their willingness to be loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids. The results show statistically significant difference in being loyal between professional levels of parents. It is observed that the parents who are in service are more likely to become loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids.

Chart4

Results of Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Profession

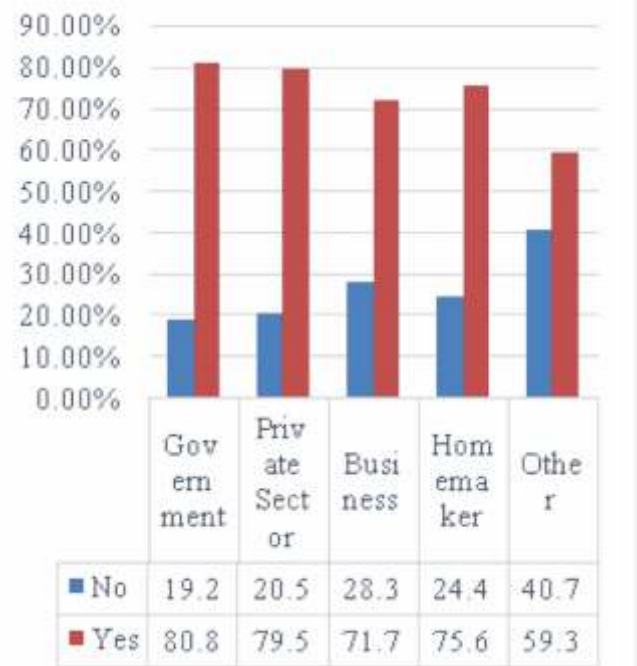


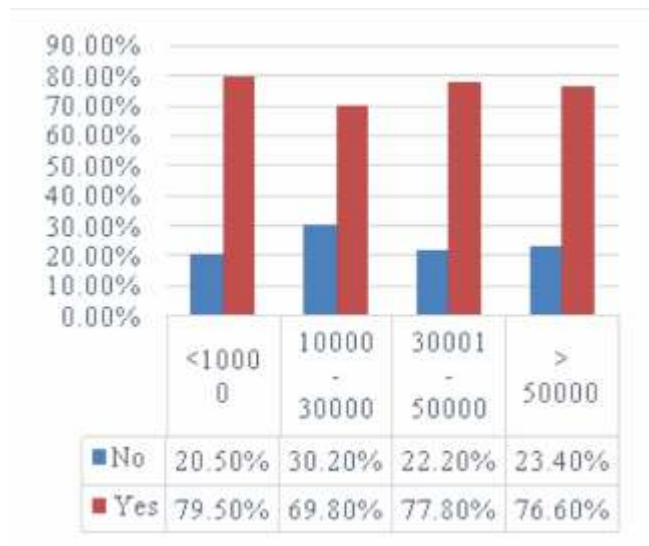
Table 5

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Income

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between Income of parent and their willingness to be loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids. The results show no statistically significant difference in being loyal between all income groups of parents. Parents of all income group are more likely to become loyal to brand that will provide safe garments for kids.

Chart5

Results of Descriptive Statistics for loyalty towards brand that will provide the safe garments for kids by Income



6. Conclusion

Parents, regardless of the level of wealth, always want to give the best to their children. Nowadays customers are getting more equipped with the information, thanks to the exposure because of media, internet and liberalized economy. Because of this customer perception towards kids wear is going to change with more emphasis on safety of their kids. One of way to keep kids safe is to choose safe products for kids. The day when everyone use to purchase the garment for kids simply because of style, color and other design related attribute is going to be history soon. Today Indian parents are getting aware about the important factors like safety and also concern about the same as far as kids wear is concern. This will definitely push kids wear brand in India to provide the safe garments for kids. So here is an excellent opportunity for the kids wear brands in India to capture this new markets of informed parents who are also ready to become loyal for safety of their children. Days are gone when one of the important parameter to assure lasting customer loyalty was an emotional connection of brand with its customers, but today true loyalty exists when customers feel safe with the product provided to them. Indian parents are now ready to become loyal to the brand who are going to provide the safe garments for their kids. The important point is are brands are ready to capture the market or not?

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Table 4.

	Profession				
	Government	Private Sector	Business	Homemaker	Other
No	14 (19.2%)	144 (20.5%)	78 (28.3%)	38 (24.4%)	11 (40.7%)
Yes	59 (80.8%)	559 (79.5%)	198 (71.7%)	118 (75.6%)	16 (59.3%)

Table 4.A Note. $\chi^2 = 12.357$, $df = 4$. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

* $p < .05$

Table 5.

	Income			
	< Rs 10000	Rs 10000 – Rs 30000	Rs 30001 – Rs 50000	> Rs 50000
No	55 (20.5%)	51 (30.2%)	147 (22.2%)	32 (23.4%)
Yes	213 (79.5%)	118 (69.8%)	514 (77.8%)	105 (76.6%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 6.053$, $df = 3$. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

* $p > .05$

