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The Modern Indian Middle Class Women: An Analytical Study

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Abstract: Alfred Lord Tennyson has said in his poem "The Passing of Arthur" that old order changeth, yielding place to new , and God fulfills himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
The women of the middle class in India seem to have adopted the words of the great poet in their lives, almost practically. Women who would behave in a particular way for centuries together have reverted to a new style of living.
Women around the globe have more control over their life choices and path than ever before. Women are entering the workforce at lightning speed They have career opportunities and a salary much higher than the women of the previous decades. Now the women have a greater contribution to their family's income than before. Today, it is the woman in a household who makes the decisions in the majority of purchases--not only for her personal purchases but with purchases related to the entire family. This is a great challenge for many companies to understand, because it requires a huge shift in thinking and how business has historically been done. This research is done with the objective to see if the orientation towards of women is the same as a few decades back. For this a few comfort oriented aspects, apparel orientation and recreational aspects are studied. A questionnaire was designed to see the orientation of middle class women . For this data was collected from middle class women who acceding to report by NCAER belong to a family having an annual household income between 3.4 lakhs to 17 lakhs . The questionnaire was filled by women who were then divided into two groups . Group one comprised in the age group 20-140 and group two comprised of women above 40 and then a comparison was made if the orientation between the two groups was same or different. It was done with the intention to see that if differences do exist then if may be of help to marketers to change their products and services accordingly which may in turn b beneficial for the omen consumers and to the marketers as well.
Key Words: Change, Lifestyle and Disposable Income

I. INTRODUCTION

It is important to recognize the importance of women in the market, either in professional roles or in a new emerging roles, where they often serve as the family's communication hub and as the pivot of the household. Women are greatly influenced by other women's opinions throughout the purchasing journey and they look to each other opinion leaders as sources of advice and for real-time reviews of products. As a result of this powerful communication, businesses can quickly decline or improve based on how best they can understand the women orientation. According to a report by the world Bank, globally, women consumers control $20 trillion in consumer spending. They make the final decision for buying 91 percent of home purchases, 65 percent of the new cars, 80 percent of health care choices, and 66 percent of computers. This is just the start of a sweeping change.

This widely accepted model, however, was not enough to explain behavioral intention. Thus, the Fishbein behavioral intention model was modified by Ajzen (1991) and Lee (1990). Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior is an extension of the theory of reasoned behavior made necessary by the original model's limitation in dealing with behaviors over which people have incomplete volitional control. Ajzen (1991) added perceived behavioral control to provide a useful tool to predict a wide range of behaviors. Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, and it is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles. Lee (1990) assumed that Fishbein's behavioral intention model was more appropriate to Western cultures, such as the U.S. and European countries, than to RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of research was to see if the comfort, apparel and recreational factors for the two age groups viz. 21-40 and above 40 are the same or different.

The collection of data was by convenience sampling which is a form of non-probability sampling.

Thus, the population chosen for this study was 250 middle class women

The data collection in this study was done by conducting a survey through a questionnaire.

By combining the theory with the research objectives, altogether questions were formulated. The questions were designed on a 5

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point likert scale. A few questions were related to comfort orientation of women , some on apparel and other on recreational time utilization.

In the beginning of the questionnaire, there were a few general questions age, education, occupation and personal annual income of women.

II. ANALYSIS

Various questions were asked and a comparison was made between the age groups to see if women orientation is same or has changed over the past two decades.

A. Comfort Factor

I can relax as my maid looks after a considerable part of my work. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 70% of the women in the 20-40 age group can relax as their maid looks after a considerable part f their work while 40% of the women above 40 years of age don't depend on their maids. This shows that that whether women in the age group of 20-40 are working or non-working but they all are more dependent on their maids. This shows that there is a greater desire to be in the comfort zone for women in 2040 age group.

B. Comfort Factor

I look out for ease in usage while purchasing any product. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 82% of the women in the 20-40 age group look for ease in usage while purchasing products while just 50% above 40 years look out for such ease.

C. Apparel Factor

Wearing branded outfits gives me the feeling of high status. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 86% of the women in the 20-40 age group get the feeling of high status by wearing branded outfits while just 30% women above 40 years of age get this feeling. Hus we can see that there is a greater scope for branded outfits for the younger generation now.

D. Apparel Factor

I think fashion is for all ages * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 90% of the women in the 20-40 age group feel that fashion is for all ages while just 40 % of the women above 40 years feel that fashion is for all ages. Thus we can see that women in the 20-40 age group have a more open outlook for fashion.

E. Apparel Factor

When I visit the shopping centers I can't resist visiting shops selling apparel even if I have come to shop something else. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 75% of the women in the 20-40 age group can't resist visiting shops selling apparel even of they have come to shop for something else. While just 46% of women above 40 years of age do this. This shows that women in the 20-40 age group have a greater inclination to purchasing apparel.

F. Recreational Factor

My busy schedule hampers my desire to spend quality time with my family on a daily basis. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 70% of the women in the 20-40 age group feel that their busy schedule hampers their desire to spend quality time with their families on a daily basis while just 30% of the women above 40 years feel this way. Since the younger lot of men do not get time to spend with family on daily basis they may opt for going on a tour with family in their vacation to fulfill the desire of spending quality time with family . This may give way to blooming tourism industry

G. Recreational Factor

I log on to face book whenever I get time. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 90% of the women in the 20-40 age group log on to face book whenever they get time

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while 30% of the women above 40 years are also seen logging on to face book whenever they get time. Logging on to face book by majority of the 21-40 age group women helps them to stay connected socially them helping them to know about the recent happenings and the modern world around them. Since this age group is saying more connected it will be more adapted to the recent changes in lifestyle which the above 40 age group will not be.

H. Recreational Factor

I prefer to organize parties at home as compared to restaurants. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 85% of the women in the 20-40 age group do not prefer to organize parties at home while 60% of the women above 40 prefer to organize parties at home. Since the younger lot of women do want to organize parties at home, it may increase the consumption of hotel services of other picnic spots where they may want to organize parties.

I. Recreational Factor

Spending time away from the usual hectic environment gives me the energy for work all the year round. * Age Group

Finding and Interpretation: It is seen that 98% of the women in the 20-40 age group feel that spending time away from the usual hectic environment gives them energy for work all the year round while just 2% of the women above 40 years feel like this. It is so because 90% of the women in the 20-40 age group are working and 81% of them feel that they do not get sufficient time to spend with their families on a daily basis . Because of these reasons they prefer to spend some time away from the usual hectic environment. Thus we can say the younger lot of women may want to go on a tour t relax themselves from their usual hectic routine This may give rise to the tourism services

This aspect is not seen in the women above 40 years of age. It is so because 50% of the women in this age group are not working and those who are working already agree to that fact that they get sufficient time to do all their household chores, thereby indicating they are comfortable with their daily routine and do not specifically need time to spend away from their usual environment.

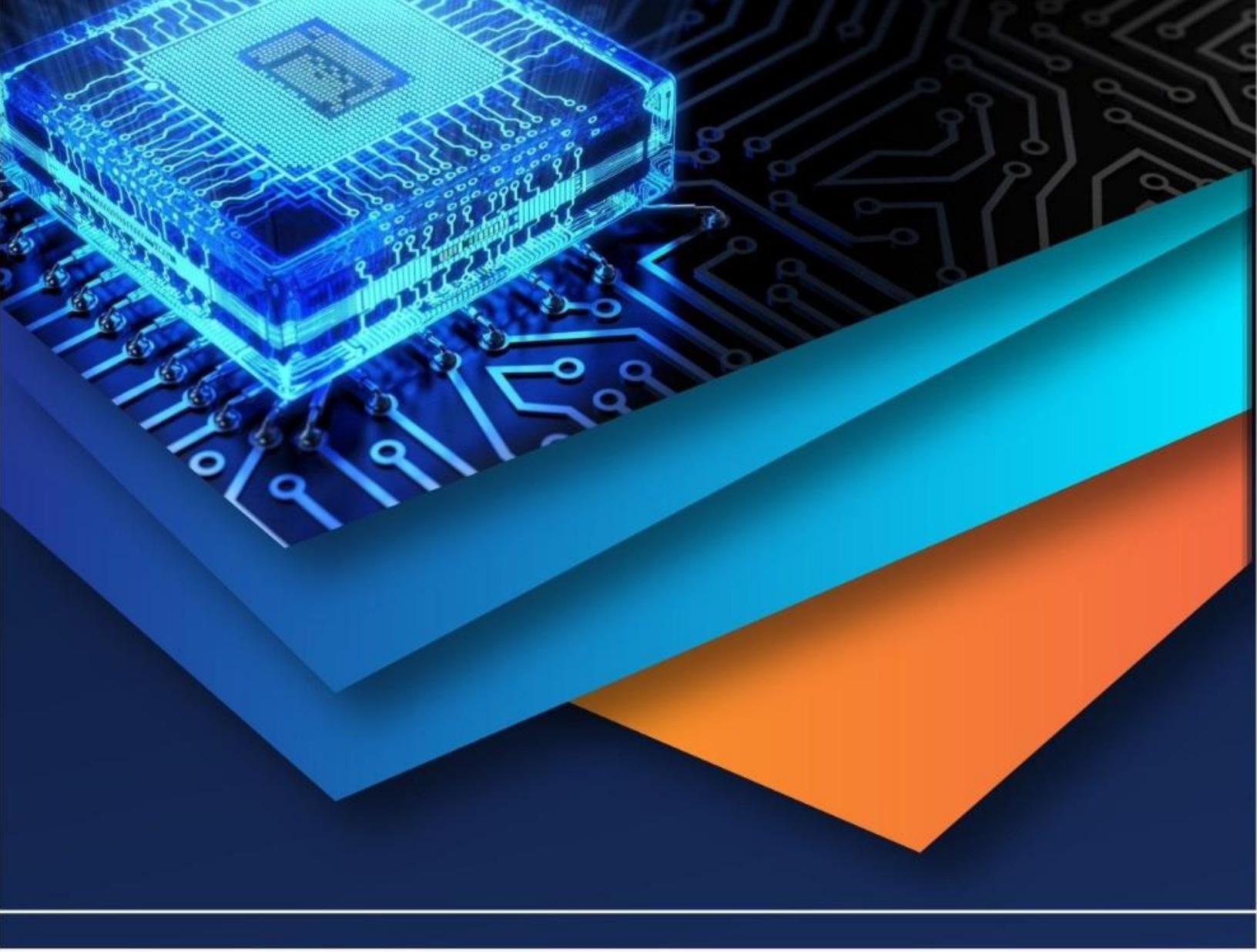
III. CONCLUSION

The research has shown that there is a drastic change the orientation of women in the age group of 20-40 years on one side and above years on the other . Thus we can say that there has been a change in the lifestyle of middle class women. This is because of the greater disposable income of the younger age group. The marketers should know that such changes have taken place so that they may make products and approach women customers according to the changes seen in them. This will help the marketers to earn great profits and also win customers on the same side.

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