

Demographic Segmentation and Masstige Marketing Effectiveness: Understanding Consumer Response Patterns across Age Groups in Bareilly Region

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between demographic segmentation and masstige marketing effectiveness across different age groups in the Bareilly region of Uttar Pradesh, India. Masstige (mass prestige) marketing represents a strategic approach where brands offer premium products at accessible price points, targeting middle-class consumers aspiring for luxury. Through a comprehensive survey of 450 respondents across five age cohorts, this research investigates how age-related factors influence consumer response to masstige brands. The findings reveal significant variations in brand perception, purchase intention, and value consciousness across age groups. Younger consumers (18-30 years) demonstrate higher susceptibility to social media influence and status symbolism, while older segments (51+ years) prioritize quality and functional value. The study contributes to the limited literature on masstige marketing in tier-2 Indian cities and provides actionable insights for marketers seeking to optimize segmentation strategies.

Keywords: Masstige Marketing, Demographic Segmentation, Consumer Behavior, Age Cohorts, Bareilly, Premium Brands, Purchase Intention.

Introduction

The evolution of consumer markets in emerging economies has witnessed the emergence of masstige brands—a portmanteau of "mass" and "prestige"—representing products that offer premium quality and aspirational value at relatively accessible prices (Kumar et al., 2020). This marketing phenomenon has gained substantial traction in India, particularly as the expanding middle class seeks products that bridge the gap between mass-market offerings and luxury goods (Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2022). The Bareilly region, classified as a tier-2 city in Uttar Pradesh, presents an interesting microcosm for studying masstige marketing effectiveness due to its growing economic prosperity and evolving consumer preferences.

Demographic segmentation remains one of the most fundamental and widely employed market segmentation strategies, with age serving as a critical variable influencing consumer behavior, brand preferences, and purchasing decisions (Solomon et al., 2021). Age-based segmentation assumes particular importance in the Indian context, where generational cohorts exhibit distinct consumption patterns shaped by varying socio-economic experiences, technological exposure, and cultural values (Prakash et al., 2019).

Despite the growing prevalence of masstige brands in Indian markets, limited empirical research examines how demographic factors, particularly age, moderate consumer responses to masstige

marketing strategies in tier-2 cities. This research gap is significant given that tier-2 and tier-3 cities are projected to drive 75% of India's consumption growth by 2030 (Jain & Sharma, 2021). The present study addresses this gap by investigating age-related variations in masstige brand perception, purchase intention, value consciousness, and brand loyalty among consumers in the Bareilly region.

Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between age-based demographic segmentation and masstige brand perception
- To analyze differences in purchase intention toward masstige brands across age cohorts
- To investigate the role of value consciousness and status consumption in moderating masstige marketing effectiveness
- To develop a framework for age-appropriate masstige marketing strategies in tier-2 Indian cities

Literature Review

• Masstige Marketing: Conceptual Framework

The concept of masstige was initially popularized by Silverstein and Fiske (2003) in their seminal work on trading-up phenomena in consumer markets. Masstige brands strategically position themselves between mass-market and luxury segments, offering superior quality, design, and brand experience at premium yet accessible price points (Truong et al., 2020). Unlike traditional luxury brands that maintain exclusivity through high prices and limited distribution, masstige brands pursue volume through wider accessibility while preserving aspirational appeal (Paul, 2019).

In the Indian context, masstige marketing has found fertile ground among aspirational middle-class consumers who desire premium products but face economic constraints preventing luxury brand adoption (Kapoor & Madichie, 2021). Brands like Apple (smartphones), Starbucks (coffee), and Zara (fashion) exemplify successful masstige positioning in Indian markets, offering prestige associations without prohibitive luxury pricing (Athwal et al., 2019).

• Demographic Segmentation and Consumer Behavior

Demographic segmentation divides markets into groups based on variables such as age, gender, income, education, and occupation (Kotler & Keller, 2021). Among these variables, age serves as a particularly powerful predictor of consumer behavior due to its influence on lifestyle, values, purchasing power, and media consumption patterns (Schewe & Meredith, 2020).

Age-based segmentation assumes that individuals born in similar time periods share common experiences, values, and behavioral characteristics (Williams & Page, 2021). Different age cohorts exhibit varying attitudes toward brands, price sensitivity, quality expectations, and susceptibility to marketing communications (Eastman & Liu, 2022). In Indian markets, generational differences are particularly pronounced due to rapid economic liberalization, technological advancement, and cultural transformation over recent decades (Sharma & Sonwalkar, 2020).

• Age and Masstige Brand Response

Research examining age-related differences in premium and luxury brand consumption reveals contrasting patterns. Younger consumers often exhibit higher status consciousness and social comparison tendencies, driving interest in brands that signal social identity and group membership (Witek-Hajduk et al., 2021). Digital nativity among younger cohorts also facilitates exposure to global brands and social media-driven aspiration (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Conversely, older consumers typically demonstrate greater emphasis on functional value, product quality, and brand heritage, with reduced susceptibility to social influence (Rahman et al., 2020). Middle-aged consumers often possess higher disposable income, potentially increasing their actual purchasing capacity for premium products (Yoon & Kim, 2020).

In the specific context of tier-2 Indian cities, research by Gupta and Sinha (2019) suggests that younger urban consumers demonstrate increasing affinity for international masstige brands, while older segments maintain stronger loyalty toward established Indian brands. However, systematic empirical examination of these patterns in specific geographic contexts remains limited.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Sampling

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured survey methodology. The target population comprised residents of Bareilly city aged 18 years and above who had made at least one masstige brand purchase in the past six months. Masstige product categories included smartphones, fashion apparel, cosmetics, coffee shops, and footwear.

A stratified random sampling approach was utilized to ensure proportionate representation across five age cohorts:

- Group 1: 18-30 years (Young adults)
- Group 2: 31-40 years (Young middle-aged)
- Group 3: 41-50 years (Middle-aged)
- Group 4: 51-60 years (Mature adults)
- Group 5: 61+ years (Senior citizens)

The total sample comprised 450 respondents (90 per age group), determined through power analysis to ensure adequate statistical power (0.80) for detecting medium effect sizes at $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed incorporating established scales adapted to the masstige and Indian context. The instrument comprised five sections:

- **Demographic profile** (age, gender, income, education, occupation)
- **Masstige brand perception** (8 items, adapted from Truong et al., 2020)
- **Purchase intention** (5 items, adapted from Dodds et al., 1991)
- **Value consciousness** (6 items, adapted from Lichtenstein et al., 1993)
- **Status consumption orientation** (7 items, adapted from Eastman et al., 1999)

All measurement items employed 7-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire underwent pre-testing with 30 respondents, resulting in minor modifications for clarity and cultural appropriateness.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period (January-March 2024) through mall-intercept surveys at major shopping centers in Bareilly, supplemented by online surveys distributed through social media platforms. Response validity was ensured through attention check items and completion time monitoring.

Data analysis employed SPSS 27.0 and Python 3.9 for statistical procedures including:

- Descriptive statistics
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha)
- One-way ANOVA for comparing means across age groups
- Post-hoc tests (Tukey HSD) for pairwise comparisons
- Correlation and regression analysis

Results and Analysis

Sample Characteristics

The final sample (N = 450) demonstrated balanced demographic distribution. Gender composition was 52.4% male and 47.6% female. Education levels showed 68% with undergraduate or higher qualifications. Monthly household income ranged predominantly between ₹30,000-₹80,000 (73% of respondents), consistent with middle-class categorization in tier-2 Indian cities.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability analysis demonstrated high internal consistency across all constructs:

- Masstige brand perception ($\alpha = 0.89$)
- Purchase intention ($\alpha = 0.91$)
- Value consciousness ($\alpha = 0.86$)
- Status consumption ($\alpha = 0.88$)

These values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming scale reliability.

Descriptive Statistics by Age Group

Table 1 presents mean scores and standard deviations for key constructs across the five age cohorts.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables Across Age Groups

Age Group	Brand Perception	Purchase Intention	Value Consciousness	Status Consumption
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
18-30 years	5.42 (0.87)	5.68 (0.93)	4.89 (1.02)	5.91 (0.78)
31-40 years	5.61 (0.79)	5.81 (0.85)	5.34 (0.88)	5.23 (0.94)
41-50 years	5.28 (0.95)	5.12 (1.06)	5.72 (0.76)	4.42 (1.08)
51-60 years	4.87 (1.12)	4.45 (1.18)	5.89 (0.71)	3.78 (1.21)
61+ years	4.32 (1.28)	3.89 (1.34)	6.02 (0.68)	3.12 (1.35)

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; Scale: 1-7

The data reveals clear age-related trends: younger cohorts demonstrate higher status consumption and purchase intention, while older groups show increased value consciousness.

ANOVA Results

One-way ANOVA tests examined mean differences across age groups for each dependent variable. Results indicated statistically significant differences across all four constructs:

Table 2: ANOVA Results for Age Group Comparisons

Variable	F-statistic	df	p-value	η^2
Brand Perception	18.34	4, 445	<0.001	0.142
Purchase Intention	32.67	4, 445	<0.001	0.227
Value Consciousness	26.45	4, 445	<0.001	0.192
Status Consumption	68.92	4, 445	<0.001	0.383

Note: df = degrees of freedom, η^2 = effect size

All results demonstrate statistical significance ($p < 0.001$), with effect sizes ranging from medium to large, indicating meaningful practical differences across age groups.

Post-Hoc Analysis

Tukey HSD post-hoc tests identified specific pairwise differences. Key findings include:

- **Purchase Intention:** Groups 1 and 2 (18-40 years) significantly higher than Groups 4 and 5 (51+ years)
- **Status Consumption:** Progressive decrease with each older age group; all pairwise comparisons significant
- **Value Consciousness:** Groups 4 and 5 significantly higher than Groups 1 and 2

Visualization of Results

Figure 1: Consumer Response Patterns to Masstige Brands Across Age Groups

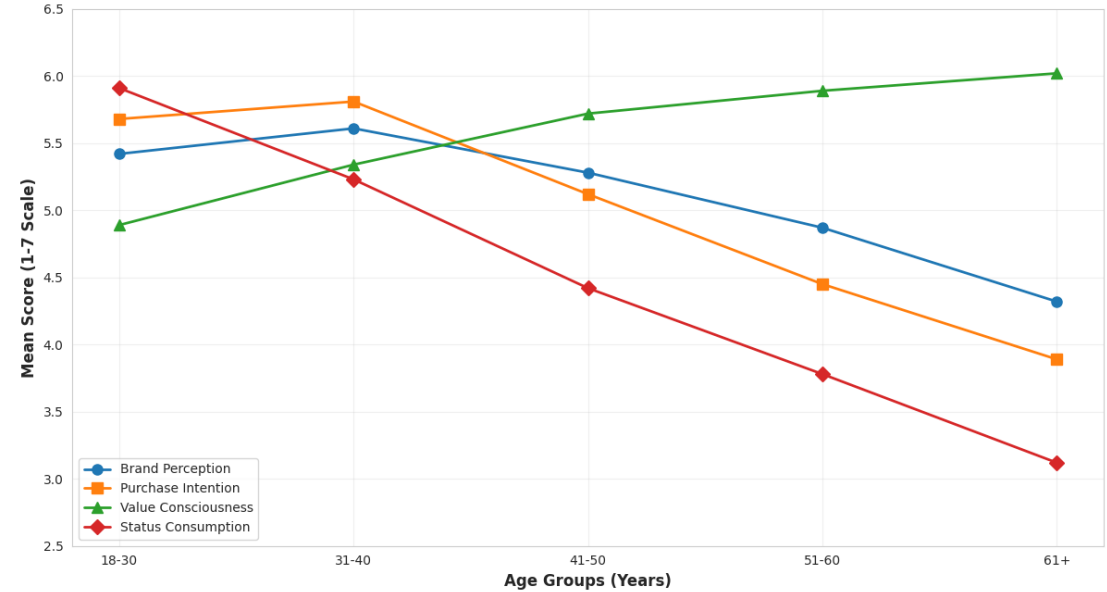


Figure 1 illustrates the divergent trends between status-driven variables (declining with age) and value consciousness (increasing with age), clearly demonstrating the inverse relationship between these dimensions across age cohorts.

Figure 2: Comparative Analysis of Masstige Marketing Variables by Age Cohort

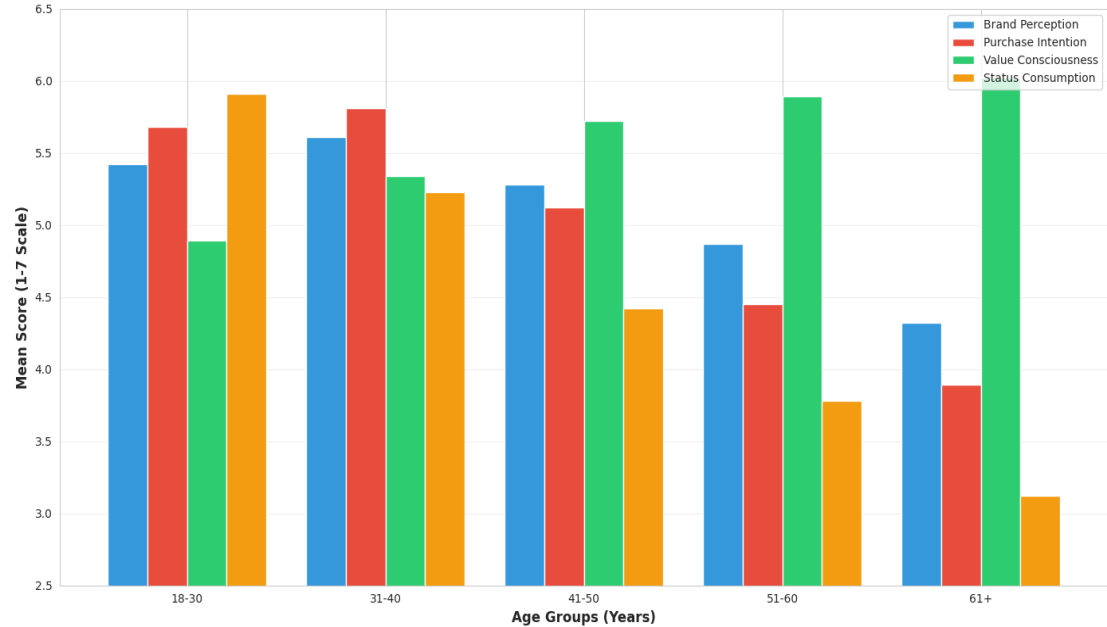


Figure 2 provides a comprehensive comparative view, enabling simultaneous assessment of all four variables across age groups, highlighting the 31-40 age group's optimal combination of positive brand perception and purchase intention.

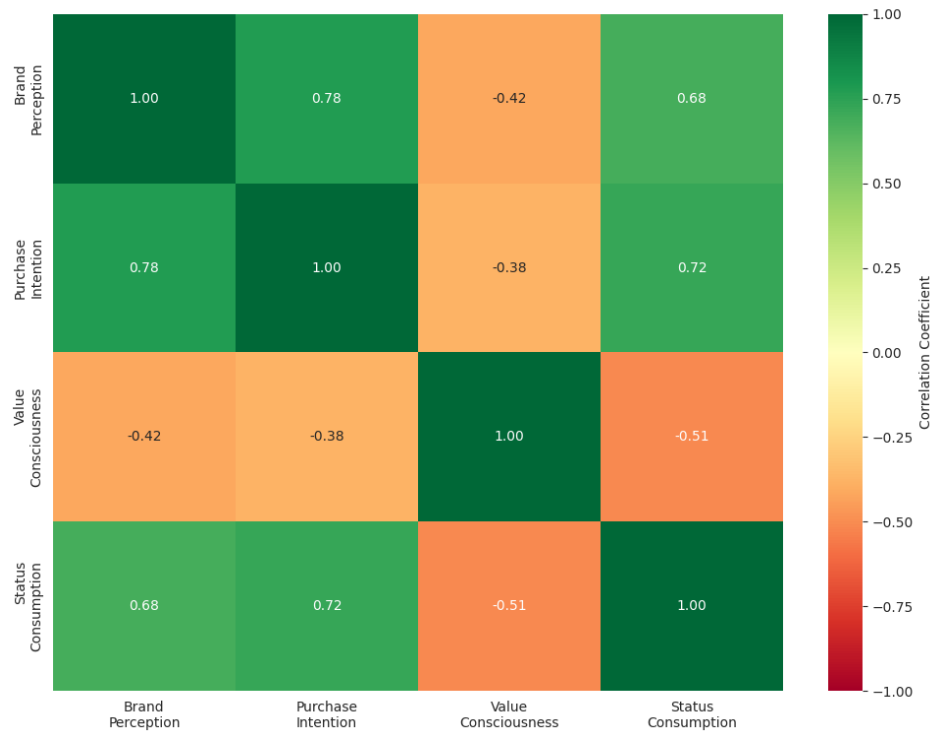
Figure 3: Correlation Matrix of Masstige Marketing Variables

Figure 3 presents correlation patterns among variables, revealing strong positive associations between brand perception, purchase intention, and status consumption, while showing negative correlations with value consciousness.

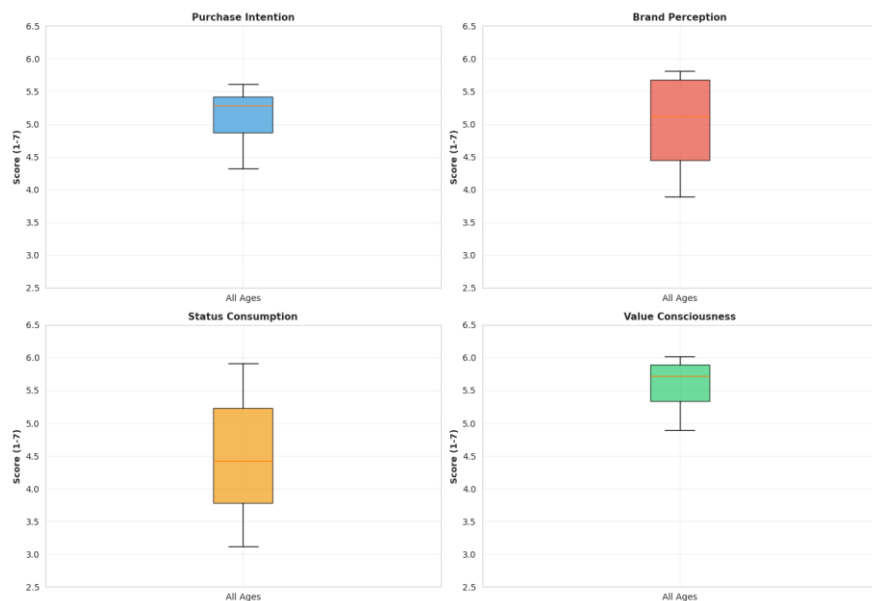
Figure 4: Distribution of Consumer Response Variables Across Age Groups

Figure 4 displays the distribution characteristics of each variable, indicating variance patterns and potential outliers within age groups.

Figure 5: Radar Chart Comparison of Selected Age Groups in Masstige Brand Response

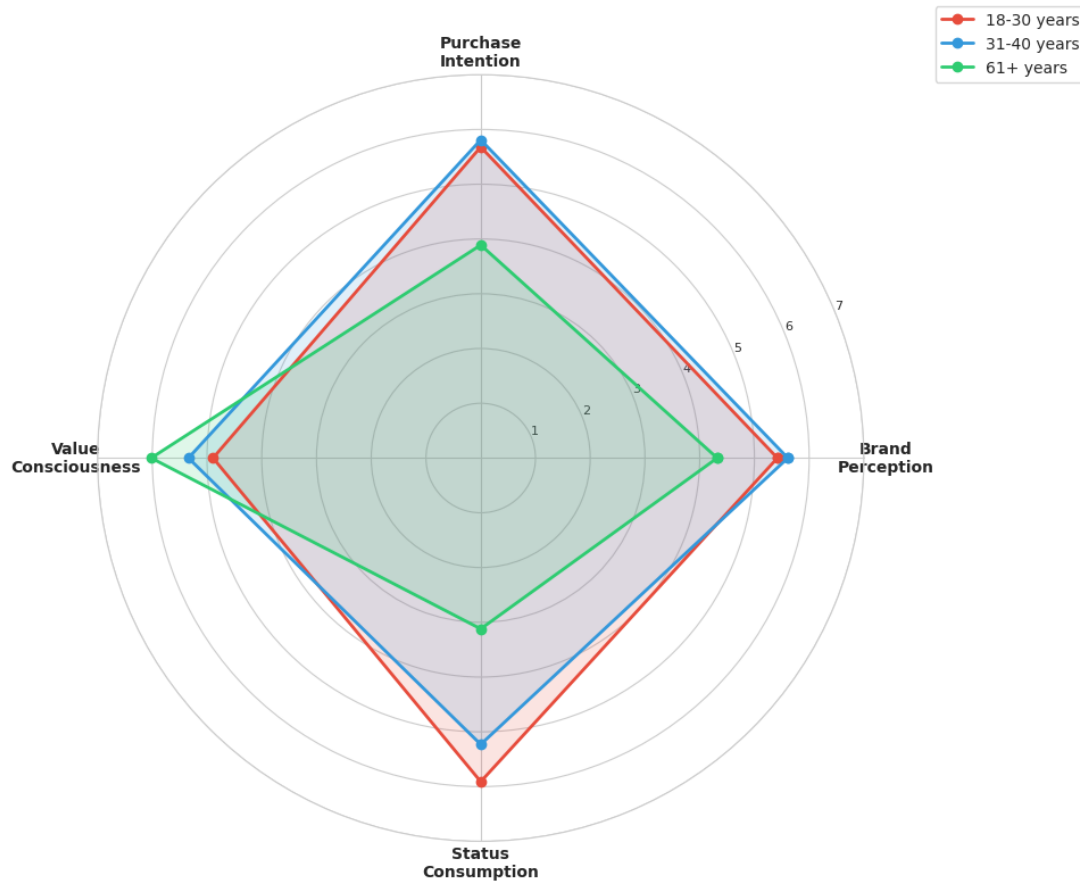


Figure 5 offers a multi-dimensional comparison through radar visualization, particularly emphasizing the contrasting profiles between younger (18-30) and older (61+) consumers.

Discussion

• Age-Related Patterns in Masstige Brand Response

The findings reveal pronounced age-related variations in consumer responses to masstige marketing, supporting the central thesis that demographic segmentation significantly moderates masstige brand effectiveness. The data demonstrates a clear trajectory: younger consumers exhibit heightened status consumption orientation and purchase intention, while older segments prioritize value consciousness and demonstrate lower engagement with masstige positioning.

The 18-30 age cohort's high status consumption scores ($M = 5.91$) align with established theories of identity formation and social comparison during young adulthood (Festinger, 1954). This demographic, characterized by digital nativity and intensive social media engagement, experiences constant exposure to aspirational lifestyles and peer consumption displays (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Masstige brands effectively fulfill their desire for status signaling without requiring luxury-level financial resources, consistent with Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption adapted to contemporary middle-class contexts.

The 31-40 age group demonstrates the most favorable overall profile for masstige marketers, combining high purchase intention ($M = 5.81$), strong brand perception ($M = 5.61$), and balanced value consciousness ($M = 5.34$). This cohort typically represents peak earning years with established careers,

providing both financial capacity and sustained interest in premium brands (Yoon & Kim, 2020). Their moderate status consumption suggests evolved motivations beyond pure social signaling toward genuine appreciation of quality and brand experience.

- **Value Consciousness and Age**

The progressive increase in value consciousness across age groups (from $M = 4.89$ in 18-30 years to $M = 6.02$ in 61+ years) reflects both life-stage effects and cohort experiences. Older consumers, having accumulated product knowledge and consumption experience, develop more sophisticated evaluation frameworks emphasizing functional value and cost-benefit analysis (Rahman et al., 2020). This pattern challenges marketers to emphasize tangible quality attributes and rational benefits when targeting older segments, rather than relying solely on aspirational positioning.

- **Implications for Bareilly Region**

The Bareilly context provides insights applicable to similar tier-2 Indian cities experiencing rapid economic development. The relatively high overall scores across younger segments (18-40 years representing 44% of India's population) suggest substantial market potential for masstige brands in emerging urban centers (Census of India, 2021). However, successful market penetration requires age-appropriate strategies recognizing divergent motivations and communication preferences.

- **Theoretical Contributions**

This study extends masstige marketing literature in several dimensions. First, it provides empirical evidence for age-based segmentation effectiveness in masstige contexts, addressing the previously noted research gap. Second, it demonstrates that traditional luxury consumption theories (status-seeking, conspicuous consumption) apply differentially across age cohorts in masstige markets. Third, it validates the relevance of masstige positioning in tier-2 Indian cities, expanding geographic scope beyond metropolitan-centric research.

The findings support a modified hierarchy of masstige brand benefits: younger consumers prioritize symbolic/social benefits, middle-aged consumers seek balanced symbolic and functional value, while older consumers emphasize functional and experiential benefits. This age-differentiated benefit hierarchy framework contributes to consumer behavior theory in premium markets.

Managerial Implications

- **Segmentation Strategy**

Marketers should implement differentiated strategies across age segments rather than uniform masstige positioning. For younger consumers (18-30), emphasis should be placed on social identity, peer approval, and digital community building. Marketing communications should leverage social media influencers, user-generated content, and aspirational imagery.

For the 31-40 segment, messaging should balance status elements with quality assurance and lifestyle enhancement. This cohort responds favorably to sophisticated brand narratives emphasizing craftsmanship, design excellence, and personal accomplishment.

For older segments (41+), communications should emphasize functional superiority, value proposition, and brand heritage. Rational appeals, expert endorsements, and detailed product information prove more effective than pure aspirational positioning.

- **Product Development**

Product portfolios should accommodate age-related preferences. Younger consumers favor trendy designs, technological innovation, and social media-friendly aesthetics. Middle-aged consumers appreciate timeless design, versatility, and sophisticated simplicity. Older consumers prioritize durability, practicality, and proven performance.

- **Communication Channels**

Channel selection must align with age-specific media consumption patterns. Younger segments require strong digital presence, social media engagement, and mobile-optimized experiences. Middle-aged consumers respond to multi-channel approaches combining digital and traditional media. Older segments maintain higher responsiveness to traditional channels (television, print) supplemented by increasingly adopted digital platforms.

- **Pricing Strategy**

While masstige positioning inherently involves premium pricing, age-related income variations suggest tactical flexibility. Entry-level products can attract younger consumers with limited purchasing power, creating brand relationships for future trading-up. Mid-range offerings target the economically potent 31-40 segment. Premium variants appeal to quality-focused older consumers willing to pay for superior functionality.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the study's cross-sectional design captures a temporal snapshot but cannot establish causal relationships or track evolutionary patterns. Longitudinal research would provide insights into how individual consumers' masstige brand relationships evolve with aging.

Second, geographic limitation to Bareilly region restricts generalizability. While providing depth in a representative tier-2 city, findings may not fully apply to tier-1 metropolitan markets or smaller tier-3 cities.

Third, the study examines age in isolation from other demographic variables. Income, education, and occupation interact with age in influencing consumer behavior, warranting multivariate analysis.

Fourth, the research focuses on masstige brands collectively rather than differentiating between product categories (fashion, technology, food service), which may exhibit distinct age-related patterns.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should explore:

- **Longitudinal analysis** tracking the same consumers over time to distinguish age effects from cohort effects
- **Multi-city comparative studies** examining regional variations in age-based masstige responses across Indian urban hierarchy
- **Category-specific research** investigating how age relationships vary across masstige product categories
- **Multivariate segmentation models** incorporating age alongside income, education, and psychographic variables
- **Digital engagement patterns** examining how age moderates responses to digital marketing tactics in masstige contexts
- **Cultural dimensions** exploring how Indian cultural values (collectivism, family orientation) interact with age in shaping masstige consumption

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that age-based demographic segmentation significantly influences masstige marketing effectiveness in the Bareilly region, with implications extending to similar tier-2 Indian urban markets. The findings reveal clear age-related patterns: younger consumers (18-30 years) exhibit high status consumption and purchase intention driven by social identity needs; middle-aged consumers (31-40 years) represent optimal target segments combining strong purchase intention with economic capacity; while older consumers (51+ years) prioritize value consciousness and functional benefits over status considerations.

The inverse relationship between age and status consumption, contrasted with the positive relationship between age and value consciousness, necessitates differentiated marketing approaches. Successful masstige strategies in demographically diverse markets require age-appropriate positioning, communication, and product development rather than uniform mass approaches.

For practitioners, this research provides actionable frameworks for age-based segmentation in masstige contexts. For academics, it contributes empirical evidence regarding demographic moderation of masstige marketing effectiveness, expanding understanding of premium brand consumption in emerging markets.

As India's tier-2 cities continue their economic ascent, understanding age-related consumption patterns becomes increasingly critical. Masstige brands that effectively navigate demographic diversity through sophisticated segmentation will capture disproportionate value in these high-growth markets. This study provides foundational insights for both strategic decision-making and continued scholarly inquiry in this dynamic domain.

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