

# Finding Congruence Between Sensation Seeking, Brand Personality and Purchase Intention: An Empirical Study

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## ABSTRACT

*Human needs give way to the engagement of consumers in different activities which provide avenues for self-expression or to experience the anticipated emotional benefits that differentiate them from others. One such category of consumers is termed as Sensation Seekers. This research study explores the phenomenon of congruence and examines the correlation between sensation, brand personality and purchase intention. The key focus of the study is the brand personality of the automobile brands in India and with the use of multistage methodology, the purchase intentions of sensation seeking is being explored. Data was analyzed statistically and the study concludes that there is no marked difference in the purchase intentions of High and Low Sensation Seeking.*

*Keywords: Brand Personality, Congruency, Human Needs, Purchase Intention, Sensation Seeking*

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## INTRODUCTION

Experience in consumption is the buzzword for the marketers for quite long time now. Marketers are talking about creating experiences for customers through their interaction at every contact point. Every individual is different in terms of his/her preferences and tastes. These

preferences are results of many factors like background, upbringing, values, attitudes, culture, etc. depending upon these factors individuals indulge in various diverse set of activities. Moving to a step further in this direction is the concept of Sensation Seeking.

People engage in certain behavior with the purpose of increasing their level of sensory stimulation. This need for sensory arousal, called Sensation Seeking, varies across individuals,

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with some people having a generally higher preferred stimulation level than others (Raju, 1980; Zuckerman, 1994). Also the sensation seeker is seen as a person who needs varied, novel and complex sensations and experiences to maintain an optimal level of arousal. It is a personality trait believed to have a biological basis that expresses as a need for physiological arousal, novel experience, and a willingness to take social, physical and financial risks to obtain such arousal (Bardo et al., 1996; Zuckerman, 1979, 1994). Part of appeal of extreme experiences is that people feel that experience differentiates them.

Marketers of today try to incorporate emotional values in their brands to differentiate their brands, portraying this through the metaphor of brand personality. Brand personality is the concept of "set of human personality characteristics associated with the brand" (Aaker, 1996). There is a logical appeal to the idea that consumers prefer brands that are similar to how they see themselves or how they would like to see themselves. The consumer's and brand's personality should be similar in order to persuade the consumer to prefer the brands to others (Rajgopal, 2005).

This study intends to provide insights and highlight some marketing implications regarding this relatively unexplored stream. There is dearth of literature combining the concepts of brand personality and purchase intentions with that of sensation seeking. In this study an attempt has been made to explore the congruence between the sensation-seeking individuals and the personality of the cars they intend to purchase. The concept of sensation seeking has been explored with reference of Optimum Stimulation Level. In doing so, the dimensions of sensation seeking and its relevance with a broader marketing concept are highlighted. Subsequently, a model is constructed which is empirically analysed by applying the concept of brand personality and relating the concepts in order to analyse the level of congruency.

The research objectives are (i) to analyze the effect of brand personality on purchase intention of sensation seekers; (ii) whether

being sensation seeking has effect on purchase intention; & (iii) whether sensation seeking has congruence with the brand personalities of the Car.

A model is developed to include these ideas. In developing the model, the researcher reviewed the relevant literature related to sensation seeking and brand personality. The study conceptualized that product type (i.e., cars) will moderate the relationship between sensation seeking and brand personality and intention to buy.

Indeed, it is assumed that this relationship is stronger for certain products than for others.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Past researches have thrown light on various aspects of sensation-seeking and brand personality but till date no research has been undertaken for finding the congruence between the two concepts. The relation between the two can be of immense importance to the marketers and can uncover many new unexplored arenas. This study is designed to fill this research gap and to contribute to the growing literature on relationship marketing.

### Sensation Seeking

Sensation seeking theory is based on the varying levels of need for thrills, adventures, and novelty. Such needs can be satisfied by risky activities and experiences (Zuckerman, 1979, 1983a, 1983b, 1984; Zuckerman, Kolin, Price, & Zoob 1964). Zuckerman defined the Sensation Seeking (SS) personality trait as "...the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experience" (1979, p. 10). Zuckerman (1990) suggested that sensation seeking is a trait that has evolved as a function of its adaptive value for survival and reproductive fitness. Novel stimuli may elicit either approach or avoidance reactions depending on species, level of maturation, and individual differences within species.

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