

Impact of popular song lyrics on brand choices among youth of age 20 to 25

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ABSTRACT

Music is the representation of its heritage and culture. Punjabi music industry is rapidly expanding since last two decades. The use of the articles of daily use is the part of lyrics which is visible in the old songs as well. The modern Punjabi songs also use the names of the brands of the articles with the videos promoting luxurious lifestyles and big brands. This trend in lyrics is visible in all the top singers of the Punjabi music industry like Arjan Dhillon, Shubh, Prem Dhillon and others. Major listeners of these singers are youngsters. The purpose of this study is to find the impact of such songs on the listeners in terms of brand influence. To accomplish the goal, analyses of the lyrics and the relation of lifestyle and song choices of the participants on 20-25 years of age is studied through survey questionnaire. The songs are selected on the basis of high YouTube views. This research will us help to understand the depth of the impact of music. The results of the study of correlation of music lyrics with purchasing choices of the youth will help both musicians and the brand owners of brands in deciding the use of songs for the marketing of their products.

Keywords: Punjabi, brand influence, hit song science, lyrics, music

Introduction:

Music is an integral part of a culture and society. Punjab, whose religious scriptures are also written in Ragas, have music embedded in the life of people. Punjabi music has been around 85 years (Schreffler, 2012) and currently Punjabi is spoken by 122 million people (Singh, 2018). Starting from the bottom, now Punjabi music is known in the world and the Punjabi songs have been in billboards.

Various scholars attribute the gain of popularity of Punjabi music industry to the diaspora, the migration to the UK, Canada, USA etc. According to census in 2016, Punjabi was 4th most spoken language in Canada (Sandher, 2019). Migration led to the adaption to the music of various communities with our folk styles which resulted in something that was not limited to only Punjab's audience- it was known as Bhangra. Bhangra is a harvest dance and the same name was used for the style of songs that emerged in diaspora countries which as a fusion of both Punjab's folk lyrics and instruments with a western touch (Roy, 2010). Bhangra was also said to be as "good time party music" ((Diethrich 1999). In 1950s Bollywood also started using Bhangra and Punjabi songs and due to Bollywood's large fan base, it represented Punjab's national and cultural identity (Leante, 2004).

Code mixing is another visible impact on Punjabi music. Since the globalisation, the

effect of other languages, majorly English can also be seen in various songs. This phenomenon is called code mixing. Muysken (2000) states that code-mixing refers to “all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence”. Likhithphongsathorn and Sappapan (2013) observed that a large number of songs contain at least one English word. In research conducted by Raja and Sadia (2019), it was found that people like code mixing in a song and thing they are lyrically stronger.

The impact of other genres is also visible in Punjabi music. Hip-Hop and RAP is included in the songs and is being loved by the Punjab’s audience and its influence can be seen in the songs of popular contemporary singers like Wazir Patar, Bohemia, Karan Aujla. Both Bohemia and Honey Singh have the same genre of singing- the RAP music. RAP music is known for story telling practices of the black communities about the hardships faced by them but later it became global (Pervez, 2022). Globalization makes it easy for a culture to adapt and modify other cultures according to their convenience (Aftab, 2019). Rap music started as a verbal competition and nonsensical bagging between males (Blair, 2014). Campbell noted the representation of the serious sexual content and violent messages are found in rap music and these may affect the listener and their ideologies (2016).

Studies also found the problem of identity crises as the effect of globalisation. Singh (2021) mentions that the folklore of Punjab is familiar with the stories of love, sacrifice, war, social values etc. Earlier, the youth was impressed by the stories of Jeona Maurh, Dulla Bhatti, etc. but now, the industry has portrayed quite a different image of a hero. The youth is going through identity crisis as they see their favourite artists promoting a very different image of an ideal man. (Buckingham, 2007)

The image of the hero in the song is becoming the representative and ideal of the Punjabi youth as per consumerism. “Consumerism attributes the meaning to the identity of the person which is determined by the product he consumes. It is these meanings that are used to attribute meaning to what we consume, and the meaning consumed becomes part of our self-identities. In both views identity becomes an open-ended, fluid entity that is more or less continuously re-fashioned.” (Lodziak: 24).

The portrayal of violence and masculinity is largely visible in Punjabi music. The Punjabi music industry is portraying an image of an ideal man as someone who has guns, cars, drinks alcohol, has opium, and is very rich who only wears luxurious brands (Singh, 2021). Often the heroes in Punjabi cinemas belong to the Jatt caste (gill, 2012) as they are in songs as well. Around 2000s bohemia gained large fan following among youth of Punjab followed by Honey Singh their songs glorified Jatt caste, brands, violence, guns etc. which led to the image of Jatt being someone who drinks premium alcohol, has guns, is rich and drives expensive cars (Guram, 2020).

Jasvirpal Singh, Owner of Punjabi music production company ‘Jass Records’, experienced that Punjabi audience prefers violent songs that present high end guns or songs that make a listener feel superior to other people. The reason behind this, according to him, is because Punjab has been a war zone for long and its in their blood to feel that anger and rage (Personal Communication, 12-10-2024). He continued by saying that women are also objectified and men always feel the need to protect them this can be seen in the songs since the beginning of this industry. This directly leads to the presence of masculinity seen in the pop music from which the women are largely absent (Bal, 2020). This nature of masculinity is termed “Toxic masculinity” and defined as “the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence” (Kupers, 2005).

Research conducted among adolescents by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in 2009 that finds that a female is more likely to relate emotionally with music and lyrics whereas males use music as the source of positive self-portrayal (Fuld et.al, 2009).

Not only rap music, other forms have also been hit in Punjabi music between songs most of the hit songs seem to have brand names or luxuries in their lyrics. The protagonist of Punjabi songs, brag about their lifestyle. The significant number of views on the songs, having these characteristics, suggests the manipulation of aspirations of a life that a common man would want to live. It is also about the fact that singers themselves or the protagonists of their songs try to portray them as coming from a very poor family and now living a luxurious life. This makes their song a hit and consumed more by the audience.

For a song to be a hit, researchers have said that most of the hit lyrics are lengthier (Singhi and Brown, 2014). Interiano et.al. (2018) observed that popular songs now-a-days have lyrics that focus on self, include fewer words describing companionship and more hate words. Punjabi music industry has explored the areas of lyrics being violent but brands have never been an area of discussion among the same.

The intersection of music and brand choices has been a topic of interest in the fields of marketing, music business management, and consumer behaviour. Music plays a significant role in shaping brand identity, influencing consumer perceptions, and creating emotional connections with brands.

Music is generally a genre of art that have a lot of characteristics and multipurpose effects on its listeners (Ali et.al., 2019). Numerous studies have highlighted the strategic use of music in branding. Music is considered a powerful tool for enhancing brand recall, creating brand personality, and establishing brand differentiation. North et al. (1999) demonstrated that congruence between music and brand image positively influences consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

Music has a powerful influence on individuals' emotions, attitudes, and behaviours. When consumers listen to music with specific lyrics, it can evoke certain emotions and associations that are then linked to brands. North et al. (2004) found that background music with positive lyrics led to increased sales in a retail environment. This suggests that the lyrical content of music can impact consumer behaviour and brand choices.

The relationship between music and consumer behaviour has been extensively studied. Music has been found to influence consumers' emotions, cognition, and behaviour towards brands. Vida et al. (2007) conducted a study showing that background music in retail environments can affect consumers' perception of waiting time and overall shopping experience.

Cross-cultural studies have examined how music preferences vary across different cultures and its implications for branding strategies. Kim et al. (2018) investigated cultural differences in musical preferences and their influence on brand perceptions, emphasizing the need for global brands to adapt their music strategies to local preferences.

The digital revolution has transformed the way brands leverage music in their marketing efforts. With the rise of streaming platforms and social media, brands have new opportunities to engage consumers through music-driven campaigns. Smith et al. (2012) discussed the impact of digitalization on music-driven branding strategies, emphasizing the need for brands to stay relevant in an increasingly connected world.

Research has also explored the association between different musical genres and brand preferences. Berger and Schwartz (2011) found that individuals who preferred hip-hop music were more likely to choose brands associated with status and luxury. This indicates that musical genres can serve as cues for consumers when making brand choices.

Another aspect of the relationship between musical lyrics and brand choices is brand placement in music. Brands often collaborate with musicians to feature their products or services in song lyrics or music videos. This form of product placement can influence consumers' perceptions of the brand and their likelihood of choosing it. Nelson (2002) demonstrated that brand placements in music videos can lead to increased brand recall and

recognition among viewers.

Cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping the relationship between musical lyrics and brand choices. Different cultures may interpret music and its lyrical content differently, leading to varying effects on consumer behaviour. Lee et al. (2015) examined how cultural values influenced the impact of music on consumers' brand choices in different countries.

Objective

This study aims to find the impact of top Punjabi songs that mention different brands in their lyrics on the people between ages 20-25. Brands can be of different categories – fashion, alcohol, guns etc. that may influence the young people to buy the same whether it's in their budget or not. The brands may not be directly names in the songs such as – in the song named “still rollin” by Shubh – “mere dub 32 bore thalle kali car hai” but in the line “32 bore” is the .32 calibre gun and “kali car” refers to as black car this shows that the man in the song has a rich status.

Research Methodology

In this research, the data sample has been taken from the top 9 songs of 9X Tashan, a Punjabi music channel. The data is collected from 10 weeks i.e. from 16 July, 2023 to 20 October, 2023 and the lyrical analysis of the same have been done. Along with this, a focus group was conducted and interviews with various artists and the content manager of 9X Tashan was conducted to understand if the artists prefer making songs that have brands in it. A poll of 200 people was also conducted to deeply understand the impact of songs that promote brands and if people like listening to those songs more than the ones that do not promote brands.

Results and Discussion

Data of top 9 songs from 9X Tashan, a Punjabi music channel has been taken from 16 July, 2023 to 20 October, 2023. A total of 90 songs were found out of which total of 39 songs were shortlisted by taking out all the repeated songs. The shortlisted songs were then analysed lyrically one by one to understand and divide the songs that have brands in them with the ones that do not.

In an interview with the content manager of 9X Tashan, he stated that they select their songs based on their censor board approval along with the social media hype and the audience's poll and research they conduct themselves.

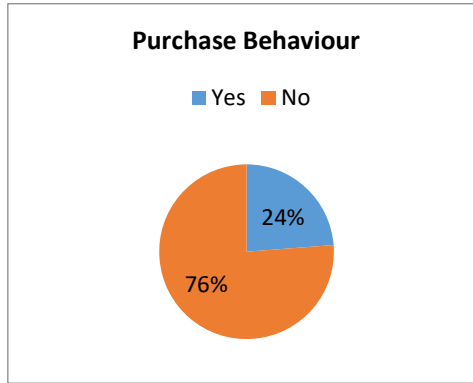
Brands in the Punjabi songs are not calculated by the exact name but the mere mention of it. For example- “mere dub 32 bore” this implies he has a gun of 32 calibre and “gaddi neevi jhi krake 22 inch de pava ke tyre ghumde tere shehr ghumde” in this too it implies that the car has 22 inch tyres.

On this basis - Out of those 39 songs it was found that

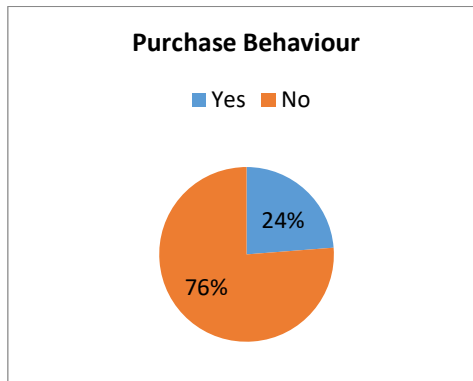
- 39 % of the songs have mentions of brands in them
- Out of those, 83 % of the songs have more than 15 million views whereas only 36 % of songs that do not have brand mentioned in it, have more than 15 million views.
- Romantic or Sad songs do not mention brands in it.

Apart from this an online poll of 265 people was conducted between the ages 20-25. It was found that:-

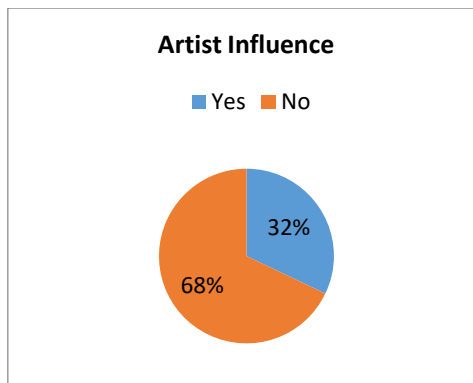
- **Purchase Behaviour Influence:** A majority (202 respondents) indicated that they have *not* purchased brands—whether real or fake—due to song influence, while 63 acknowledged being influenced in this way.



- **Preference for Songs with Brand Mentions:** There is a notable interest in songs that mention brands; 141 respondents prefer listening to such songs, whereas 124 do not, showing a slight lean toward brand-oriented lyrics.

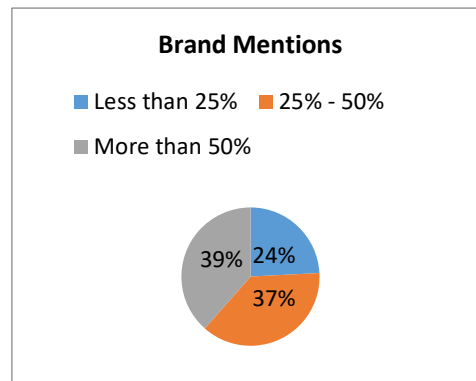


- **Artist Influence on Personal Style:** Most respondents (180) reported that they do *not* try to emulate artists who wear popular brands, though 85 do find inspiration in these artists' brand choices.



- **Brand Mentions in Playlist Songs:**
 - 102 respondents stated that *more than 50%* of their playlist contains songs mentioning brands.
 - 99 respondents reported *25%-50%* of such songs in their playlist.

- 64 respondents mentioned that *less than 25%* of their playlist includes songs with brand mentions.



A focus group containing 10 participants was also conducted in which it was found that-

- 8 out of 10 participants like the songs that mention brands more than the songs that don't.
- 6 out of 10 people use the brands that their favourite/ hit songs have mentioned in them
- It was also found that boys prefer the songs that talk about the guns or cars more than fashion brands whereas girls prefer songs that have fashion brands in them.

In an interview with content manager of OTT platform 'Chaupal' and Television channel 'Balle Balle' (G. Singh, personal communication, October 16, 2023), Gagandeep Singh mentioned that while playing the songs, when brands contact them for advertisement, they play similar songs to make a bigger impact on the audience. He continued by giving the example- if a brand like Nissan contacts them, they play the songs that mention cars in them and in between those songs, they play that respective ad.

In conversation with Punjabi singer, Rajvir Jawanda (R. Jawanda, personal communication, October 11, 2023), he mentions that he prefers promoting the brands when they contact them. But if one wants to target those brands, one has to sing about them to attract the target audience.

Jasvirpal Singh who is a producer and owner of a Punjabi music production company- 'Jass Records', said that he does not select a song based on the amount of brand names it has but he doesn't deny to those songs either if they sound good. He feels that now an artist is not limited to only singing he has a social media image to maintain. With the mentions of brands in songs and the artist himself using those brands creates an image and the target audience follows them with which a brand is most likely to contact him. Bigger the brand, more become the value of an artist. (J. Singh, personal communication, October 7, 2023)

CONCLUSION

Punjabi music industry is not limited to Punjab it has made its way through billboards. Punjabi artists are now being shown in times square. Despite the language barriers the Punjabi music has made its way through it all. With this comes a major responsibility of taking care of the sentiments and mentality of the audience and somehow guide them about the rights and wrongs. The data from the survey suggests that while brand mentions in Punjabi songs resonate with many young listeners, prompting some level of preference, this does not strongly translate to brand-influenced purchasing or emulating artist style. There's a distinct awareness and enjoyment of brand mentions in music, yet with relatively low follow-through in personal

brand choices. These lyrics do motivate the youth to work harder to afford these brands but when it comes to the brands of weapons, misuse is also possible. Whereas being an artist and using fashion brands can help them grow bigger and the chances of their song being selected for Television promotion is also higher. More research in this field can be done by taking a bigger sample and analysing the lyrics by dividing the type of brands those songs are talking about. This will give a deeper understanding of the influences and choices of youth.

Future Implications

The research can have future implications in the fields of Sociology, Psychology, Behavioural Psychology, Consumer Psychology, Management, Marketing, Branding and Music. This can become a base for the future research and strategic planning of the Brands.

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