

Effect of Religious Icons on Consumer Behaviour

A Thesis submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY (CLINICAL)

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has investigated the role of symbolic cues similar to religious symbols on consumer behaviour. However, interaction between product involvement, valence of religious icons and message congruence has received little attention. To address these gaps, this study investigates the influence of product involvement and the congruence between religious icons and product information on consumers based on symbolic interactionism and congruity theory. Valence of religious icon showed statistically significant differences between high involvement and low involvement products (Experiment-I). Experiment-II and III attempted to test if valence of religious icons interacts with valence of brand information. The results(experiment-II) showed that subjects who were exposed to the congruent condition had an increase in their purchase intention and perceived value. In contrast (experiment-III) results showed that subjects who were exposed to the incongruent condition had an increase in their purchase intention and perceived value. Overall, this study helps to explain the dynamics through which religious images affect consumer behaviour and provides insight into marketers wishing to design culture-oriented advertisements. Future research can look into the impact of different cultural contexts, variations in religiosity.

Keywords: religious icons, product involvement, congruence, purchase intention, perceived value

CERTIFICATE

This is certify that the thesis entitled “Effect of religious Icons on Consumer Behaviour” being submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, submitted in the Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala is a bonafide work carried out under the supervision of Dr.Ipshita Chowdhury, Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and that no part of this project has been submitted for the award of any other degree.



(Bhawna Sharma)

This is to certify that the above statement made by the student concerned is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.



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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled, “Effect of religious Icons on Consumer Behaviour” in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, submitted in the Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala, is an authentic record of my own work carried out under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Ipshita Chowdhury, Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and refers to other researcher's work which are duly listed in the reference section.

The matter embodied in this thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

Date: May, 2025

Place: Patiala



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This is to certify that the above declaration made by the student concerned is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.



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Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1 Religious Icon / Symbols

Religion is an integral part of any culture, and it influences daily lives and values of its citizen (Pe 2018). Religious icons have played a crucial role in India by serving as tools for political legitimization, social cohesion, and cultural identity (Veluthat, K. 1993). In the world of advertising, symbols work as shortcuts for meaning. A religious icon, for instance, can instantly make people think of purity, trust, or even religious approval. This emotional connection can influence whether someone feels good about a brand or product. Hence religious icons can have a deep effect on how individuals see products and influence their purchasing decisions. In advertisement, symbolic advertising entails a great deal of meaning and value. For example, a religious symbol can immediately bring to mind the notion of purity, trust, or even religious endorsement. That connection, in turn, could determine whether a person finds a brand or product favorable and agreeable, which is good for business. Thus religion can be very important when it comes to people's perception of products and purchasing behavior. These symbols and icons have great power in shaping consumer behavior as to what they affect purchase decisions. Herzfeld (1990). This process demonstrates why icons have the greatest power to shape consumer behavior, because they bound the person on a spiritual level through consumption, and reinforce the discourse that brand name goods are sacred (O'Guinn, T. C., & Belk, R. W. ,1989).

1.2 Involvement in product

Product involvement is the level of personal significance and relevance a consumer assigns to a specific product or product category (Chen & Chou, 2009). It has a central function in determining consumer behavior by influencing the level of cognitive effort, emotional commitment, and information processing consumers put in the decision-making process. High-involvement products involve more information search and reflective judgment, while low-involvement products usually encourage quick and habitual responses (Petrović & Kovačević, 1996).

Product involvement is normally divided into two forms: enduring involvement and situational involvement. Enduring involvement represents a continuous, long-term interest in a product category and is usually connected with personal values or lifestyle. Situational involvement, by contrast, is short-lived and is activated due to a given need or shopping situation and fades once the need is met (Richins & Bloch, 1986). It is important to understand this difference so that marketers and researchers look to predict what consumers will do in various settings.

More recent methodological advancements have included the use of fuzzy logic models and longitudinal approaches to better capture the nuanced and sometimes fluctuating nature of involvement (Chen & Chou, 2009; Richins & Bloch, 1986).

The applicability of product involvement increases the theoretical importance; it carries practical significance to fields like new product development, advertising performance, and consumer segmentation (Lesschaeve & Bruwer, 2010). Consumers of high involvement will be more prone to examine product information, appraise symbolic clues (e.g., religious symbols), and react differently to promotion messages than those of low involvement.

1.3 Congruence

Congruence, in organizational and marketing research, is a measure of similarity or consistency among various variables, cues, or configurations. It is a relationally similar and not necessarily literal sameness, and is defined as a less strict version of equivalence than are traditional similarity measures (Bezes, 2010). In organizational theory, congruence is the basis for model building, expressing the agreement between factors like strategy, structure, and processes (Fry & Smith, 1987; Hatton & Raymond, 1994).

In consumer and marketing psychology, congruence has come to mean the match between sensory, symbolic, and semantic cues that are present in products, brands, ads, or settings. Semantic congruence, the match between a product or brand message and related symbols or cultural aspects, may shape a variety of consumer responses such as perceived value, trust, emotional reaction, and intention to buy (Eklund & Helmeffalk, 2021). When these factors are viewed as congruent or consistent, customers are likely to experience positive affect and cognitive ease and hence give more positive evaluations. On the other hand, incongruence may

create confusion, perceived risk, or psychological discomfort, though in some cases, it can also create curiosity or greater attention.

1.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is one of the most important constructs in consumer behavior studies, which is a consumer's deliberate plan or intention to purchase a product or service in the future (Morwitz, 2014). It is an important predictor for predicting future purchasing behavior, consumer choice, and future sales performance. Although purchase intention may not always straight away turn into actual purchase behavior, it is generally viewed as one of the most valid predictors of consumer behavior in marketing practice and research.

There are many factors of purchase intention, involving social, emotional, psychological, economic, moral, and logical aspects. The facets indicate the dynamics of consumer decision-making, where the individual considers rational assessments and affective responses prior to generating intent. Over the past few years, the emergence of online platforms and social media has contributed an additional layer of control. Social media allows customers to access information, reviews, and recommendations from peers in real-time, something that can influence their perceptions and purchase decisions (Mazeed & Kodumagulla, 2019).

Marketers and companies often use purchase intention measures to guide product development, advertising campaigns, and customer targeting initiatives. Even with its predictive capability, researchers recognize that the intention-behavior relationship is not always ideal, as other factors like price fluctuations, availability, and time pressures can get in the way of conversion (Morwitz, 2014). Nevertheless, monitoring purchase intention continues to be essential in estimating market potential and optimizing communication strategies.

1.5 Perceived Value

Perceived value is a core concept in consumer behavior studies, identified for its substantial contribution to making or breaking purchase decisions and customer satisfaction (He, 2024; Dodds, 1996). It is most commonly defined as the consumer's overall judgment of the value of a product or service, determined by the balance between perceived benefits and perceived costs

(Boksberger & Melsen, 2011). Although cost and quality used to be the main focus of traditional marketing models, perceived value is presently considered a multi-faceted idea that involves monetary (e.g., price, affordability) as well as non-monetary (e.g., emotional fulfillment, image of the company, social acceptance) aspects.

Several elements help in the creation of perceived value. These are low cost, favorable product attributes, value for money in relation to quality, and the total sense of getting value for money (Kantamneni et al., 2004). Unlike objective terms like price or product characteristics, perceived value is very subjective in nature and differs among people based on their individual preferences, cultural environment, social factors, and marketplace situation (Dodds, 1996; He, 2024). This subjectivity both presents a strategic challenge and opportunity for marketers, who need to find means to maximize the consumer's perception of benefit while reducing perceived sacrifices.

Due to its inherent complexity, perceived value cannot readily be measured through a single statistic. Scholars emphasized the necessity of more sophisticated and trustworthy measurement methods that can reflect the various forms of value perception in different categories of products as well as between cultures (Kantamneni et al., 2004). As a result, for companies, value creation takes not only forms of pricing schemes but also coordination of brand messaging, symbolic imagery, and user experience.

Research Aim:

To explore the effects of religious icon, involvement in products and congruency on consumers purchase intention and perceived value.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

2.1 Religious Symbols in Everyday Life

Religious icons help in consumerism by transforming products into sacred objects that carry spiritual significance, encouraging emotional attachment and loyalty. They elevate commodities to symbols of faith, which enhances their value and desirability.(O'Guinn, T. C., & Belk, R. W. ,1989). In today's world, religious symbols have exceeded their traditional contexts to spread throughout everyday life, which serve as powerful carriers of cultural and spiritual meaning. These symbols often implant sacred significance into ordinary objects, practices, and spaces, which facilitate the sacralization of day to day activities and consumer products. Empirical studies, such as those by Wallendorf and Sherry (1988, 1989), have demonstrated that such momentos and personal possessions acquired during religious visits function as artifacts that memorialize spiritual experiences, thus it helps in transforming everyday objects into sacred tokens. Religious symbols play a fundamental role in everyday life as they act as visual and cultural representation which reinforce social identities and moral values. Geertz (2000) says that symbols reduce complex cultural tales into understandable visual forms which enable shared understanding and social unity. Religious symbols such as the Om, Christian cross, crescent moon, and images of deities are widely inserted in daily environments, including homes, public spaces, and even commercial settings (Riis & Woodhead, 2010). They not only serve spiritual functions but they also act as cultural signs that shape individual and collective identities. Jung (2014) indicates that these symbols obtain their meanings through social interactions and its interpretation, which could vary according to cultural, social, and contextual factors. This flexibility in interpretation allows religious symbols to incorporate multiple layers of meaning, from moral guidance to visual expression.

The integration of religious symbols into secular domains, such as advertising and fashion, highlights their significance in modern social life. Studies have demonstrated that religious symbols can evoke positive emotional responses and reinforce brand trust among consumers sharing related cultural backgrounds (Keenan & Yeni, 2003; Moore, 2005). However, if these symbols are misused or its misinterpretation has also been associated with social controversy and negative reactions. This highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in their placement (Taylor et al., 2010).

Moreover, the social function of religious symbols extends to shape moral and social norms. Durkheim (1995 [1912]) viewed religion as a collective phenomenon that employs symbols to uphold social cohesion and moral order. In everyday life, these symbols serve as tangible representations of collective identity, moral values, and cultural heritage, thus reinforcing societal bonds and social capital.

In summary, the literature shows that religious symbols are prevalent in daily life and acts as powerful carriers of cultural, moral, and spiritual meanings.

2.2 How Consumers Make Meaning: Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism theory is based on the concept that people connect with their society to interpret objects or events they encounter through the symbolic meaning given by their culture. In consumer behavior, this phenomenon is seen in how religious symbolism drives purchases. (Bakar, Lee, and Rungie 2013). Symbolic interactionism is a sociological framework which was introduced by Mead (1934) and it highlights the importance of social interactions and shared meanings and how it could shape individual perceptions and behaviors. According to this paradigm, symbols and signs are not naturally meaningful but their importance is built through social engagement and cultural context (Leigh & Gabel, 1992). This theoretical perspective helps to understand how consumers interpret and find meaning from various social and cultural symbols, including religious signs and icons.

In the domain of consumer behavior where religious signs (icons and symbols) can present as powerful carriers of shared cultural meanings that influence consumer perceptions and emotional responses (Geertz, 2000 [1973]; Jung, 2014). Religious icons, such as images of deities, have a visual similarity and direct connection to their divine counterparts, often evoking vivid emotional reactions rooted in individual and collective religious experiences. Conversely, religious symbols, like the Om or Ichthus, lack a direct visual resemblance but carry connotative meanings that are socially constructed and culturally validated (Ortner, 1973; Riis & Woodhead, 2010).

The interpretation of these signs is highly unexpected upon social interactions and cultural norms. For example, the significance of a religious icon or symbol within advertising is formed on the bases consumers' prior social experiences, religious beliefs, and cultural environment. Such meanings are not stable as they evolve when individuals engage with others and as social

contexts shift (Geertz, 2000 [1973]; Durkheim, 1995 [1912]). This process underlines that consumer responses to religious signs are largely conditioned by socially manifested interpretations, which can evoke strong emotional and symbolic associations and could influence attitudes towards brands.

Empirical studies put emphasis on this dynamic. Dotson and Hyatt (2000) demonstrated that religious cues in advertisements regulate consumer attitudes depending on individual religiosity levels. Similarly, Henley et al. (2009) found that when advertisement is paired with religious symbols, it enhances brand attitudes and purchase intentions when consumers interpret these signs as relevant and meaningful within their cultural context. These findings suggest that the power of religious signs in marketing strongly match consumers' socially built understanding of these symbols which align with the core principles of symbolic interactionism.

To conclude we can say that the application of symbolic interactionism to consumer research highlights that the meanings given to religious signs are the product of active social interpretation, which shape consumer emotional responses, trust, and ultimately purchase behavior, highlighting the importance of cultural and social contexts in marketing strategies that employ religious symbols and icons.

2.3 Product Involvement: Why It Matters

Involvement emphasizes the importance or relation a consumer has with a product, which is often reflected in how much interest, emotional attachment, or value they place on it. It is defined as the importance of a product (Howard & Sheth, 1969). From previous literature, it is evident that the construct product involvement is extremely important in the context of consumer behavior marketed for and in the context of marketing. Iwasaki and Havitz (1998) observed a very strong relationship between product involvement and brand loyalty, which implies that consumers with high involvement seek to cultivate stronger emotional connections and greater commitment to brands and are affected by personal relevance and perceived risk. They also observed that some features of involvement and consumer behavior depend on individual characteristics, cultural elements, and social standards.

Likewise, Ling Chang (2011) noted that attitudes towards products are exceptionally disturbing based on the levels of involvement. High involvement products require deeper information

processing, searching, and evaluation, but get automatic and low effort buying behavior for low involvement products. It found that higher involvement was associated with detailed attention the individuals pay to product features and quality, while for low involvement product decision making was driven

2.4 Congruency: congruent v/s incongruent

Congruity Theory is a framework in psychology explaining how people adjust their attitude to cope with dissonance between their attitudes and evaluations of objects and sources. The theory assumes that when there is an imbalance or some form of incongruence, the individual is burdened with psychological distress which causes them to change their perception in order to bring back balance and restore congruence (Olson, D. W. 1969). In social cognition, congruent information are both relevant and expected, which is traits that match with previous schemas and expectations which makes information easier to process. Heckler, S. E., & Childers, T. L. (1992) emphasizes that congruent information is identified as both relevant and expected, while incongruent information contradicts expectations or relevance, which can increase cognitive effort and elaboration, potentially enhancing memorability by prompting deeper processing, depending on the context.

Previous research has highly explored the impact of congruency between various elements of product packaging and consumer perceptions. Stayman et al. (1992) suggest that consumers respond most favorably when there is a clear match, or congruency, between informational claims and visual elements, which indicates that such congruency enhances perceptions of attractiveness, credibility, and overall healthiness. Mandler (1981) further suggested that congruent stimuli facilitate a fluent processing experience, leading to positive judgments, whereas incongruency may cause cognitive dissonance or suspicion. However, recent findings indicate that moderate levels of incongruency can sometimes stimulate consumer interest and arousal, resulting in more favorable evaluations than strict congruency. Lee and Mason (1999) examine and indicates that unexpected but relevant information in packaging can increase positive responses by enhancing cognitive evaluation and curiosity, which afterwards enhance purchase intentions. This suggests that while high congruency generally encourage trust and familiarity, carefully designed incongruency can serve as a strategic tool to engage consumers and enhance favorable attitudes.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH GAP, OBJECTIVES, and HYPOTHESES

3.1 2.5. Research Gap

Though there is some work on how religious symbols impact consumers, we don't yet know all of how the emotional valence of those symbols, whether they are positive or negative, impacts people's purchase intention of a product. Most work examines religious imagery broadly, without probing to understand how various kinds of icons can create varying reactions. There's not much evidence either of how this effect would vary according to the involvement in the product. For instance, we don't know if individuals react differently to religious symbols when they are considering purchasing a high involvement product (such as a house or a vehicle) as compared to a low involvement product (such as toothpaste or soap). Also there is little understanding of how the congruence or incongruence between a religious symbol and the message being conveyed influences perceived value of the product, or how likely are consumers to purchase it. These shortcomings raise many questions about how religious imagery really functions in marketing, particularly in societies where religion is an important part of everyday life. Thus this study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how the interaction between religious icon valence, product involvement, and message congruence on consumer behavior, and focused on purchase intention and perceived value specifically. Our main research questions for this study are :

- RQ1: What impact do religious icons have on consumer behaviour?
- RQ2: How does involvement in a product effects consumer behavior?
- RQ3: How does the congruency between religious icon and information given effect consumers' purchase intention and perceived value?

3.2 Objective and Hypotheses

Objective 1-To study the effect of religious icons and involvement in a product on consumers' purchase intention.

H1: Purchase intention will increase when high involvement products are shown with a positive religious icon.

H2: Purchase intention will decrease when low involvement products are shown with a negative religious icon

Objective 2-To study the effect of religious icon and congruence on purchase on consumers' purchase intention and perceived value.

H3: Purchase intention will increase when the positive religious icon and information provided are congruent.

H4: Perceived value will decrease when the positive religious icon and information provided are incongruent.

H5: Purchase intention will increase when the negative religious icon and information provided are congruent.

H6: Perceived value will decrease when the negative religious icon and information provided are incongruent.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The study was aimed to explore the effects of religious icon, involvement in products and congruency on consumers purchase intention and perceived value. It consisted of a series of three experiments, where experiment-I attempted to test if valence of religious icons interacts with involvement in product and experiment-II and III attempted to test if valence of religious icons interacts with valence of brand information.

4.1 Experiment 1

4.1.1 Participants

The study was investigated on the students from Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology. It comprised 50 participants ($M = 18.71$, $SD = 4.16$), All participants were self-identified as Hindus and belonged to the age range of 18 to 25 years.

4.1.2 Sampling Procedure

The study used non-random convenience sampling to collect data. Students were approached on campus. Those who were interested and available participated and completed the experiment. Informed consent was taken.

4.1.3 Research Design

The study followed a 2×2 repeated measures design, where independent variables were religious icons (positive v/s negative) and involvement in product (high v/s low) and dependent variable was purchase intention. Participants were exposed to all conditions, which included 4 blocks, 1. Negative icon with high involvement product, 2. Positive icon with high involvement product, 3. Negative icon with low involvement product, 4. Positive icon with low involvement.

4.1.4 Materials/ Tools Required

1. Religious Image

Experimental stimuli comprised four different images selected from an original set of ten images extracted through a Google Search, and Religious book. The images were explored on

two dimensions, including valence (i.e., positive vs. negative) and its intensity (e.g., low intensity to high intensity).

A rating task was conducted through Google Forms with 35 participants. The ten images were embedded in the form, and participants could view them for as long as they desired with the option to zoom in and out. Each image was rated on valence and intensity using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very negative/low intensity, 7 = very positive/high intensity).

2. Canva was used to design and display the stimuli.

3. Description sheet: a brief fictional description for each brand (i.e. Divya shakti, Divya tara, Rudra, Madhuram) were printed on a A4 size sheet.

4. Advertisements: A total of 24 advertisements were created using canva, which were designed exclusively for the experimental study to examine the influence of religious icon valence with product involvement on consumer behavior. Four imaginative multifaceted brands i.e. Divya Shakti, Divya Tara, Madhuram, and Rudra were constructed. Each brand was utilized to support a range of product categories to enable all participants to be exposed to both high and low involvement products.

Each ad included the following:

Brand Name and Religious icon: One of the four imaginary brand names was displayed prominently with a religious icon assigned to each brand.

Product Type: The ads portrayed various product types, including:

Low-involvement products: Toothpaste, handwash, soap (price: ₹20–30)

High-involvement products: Houses (real estate), cars (automobiles), gold (jewelry)

Price Detail: In each ad, the price of the product has been mentioned to represent involvement level (i.e., ₹20 for toothpaste, ₹13.18 lakhs for vehicles, ₹60 lakhs for homes).

Call to Action: "SHOP NOW," "BOOK NOW," or "STARTING FROM" has been used to mimic actual advertisement content.

Visual Layout: The layout has been changed slightly across categories, yet all have had prominent brand/product depiction and pricing to ensure consistency and plausibility.

The ads were then systematically matched with religious icons (positive or negative) and product involvement (positive or negative) based on experimental condition.

5 Purchase intention: The dependent variable, purchase intention, was assessed using a Purchase Intention Scale, with a single item adapted from [O'Callaghan, E. (2017)]. The participants rated their intention to buy the product displayed in the stimuli on a 5-point Likert scale. The intra consistency of the scale, as assessed by the Test-Retest reliability method, which came out to be good ($r = .716$, $N=60$), indicating a high level of reliability.

4.1.5 Procedure

Students within the campus were approached in common areas like the library and multipurpose hall and recruited as participants. They were told about the study, and those who expressed interest were introduced to the experiment. After that, participants were led to an empty classroom for data collection. Participation was completely voluntary, and all subjects provided informed consent.

Participants were told that the study would consist of four brands—Divya Shakti, Divya Tara, Madhuram, and Rudra. Since all of these brands are multifaceted brands selling houses, cars, gold, and other useful daily items (handwash, toothpaste, soap), it was explained. Then they were provided with a brief, identical description of all the brands, printed on an A4 sheet, and were instructed to read the information and keep it with them for reference.

Next, participants viewed a series of stimuli containing advertisements for one of the four brands on each slide. Participants rated their purchase intention simultaneously for each slide within 7 seconds, using a response sheet provided to them. If a participant missed the opportunity to rate one slide, they were instructed to skip that space and continue rating the rest of the advertisements. Missed slides were repeated at the end of the task so that subjects could complete their ratings.

All this took 8 minutes. Participants were thanked for their time and received a short debriefing about the purpose of the study.

4.1.6 Precautions

1. There was no external disturbance such as anyone entering the premises.
2. All participants were identically exposed to the stimuli on the same screen.
3. Participants were tested in small groups to minimize distractions.

4. Participants were asked to leave the room once all of them finished. This was done to minimise disturbance.
5. No engagement on phone or any other electronic device was permitted while giving response.
6. Participants were encouraged to ask questions to the primary data collector in case of a doubt.
7. Participants were Not allowed to talk amongst themselves or engage in discussion while giving responses.

4.2 Experiment 2

4.2.1 Participants

The study was investigated on the students from Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology. It is composed of 100 participants ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.93$). All participants were self-identified as Hindus and belonged to the age range of 18 to 25 years.

4.2.2 Sampling Procedure

Same as experiment 1

4.2.3 Research Design

The study followed a between subject design, where Between subject factor was congruency (Positive information with positive religious icon; Negative information with positive religious icon) and dependent variable was purchase intention and perceived value. Involvement in product (high involvement products) and valence of religious icon (positive religious icon) was held constant.

4.2.4 Materials/ Tools Required

1. Information Given: To validate the stimuli, a rating task was conducted with 35 participants. In which information in the heading of mission, vision and core value were

provided and participants were asked to read them. Each information was rated on valence and intensity using a 7 point likert scale (1= low intensity, 7= high intensity), as result the information was selected for positive mission, vision, core value and negative mission, vision, core value.

2.Wix: Two custom-built websites were designed and displayed with the Wix Website Editor to mimic real-world brand settings. Each site was the fictional multi-faceted brand Divya Shakti and was built to portray various experimental conditions. The sites contained details of high-involvement products like real estate, cars, and gold, as well as respective price points (e.g., ₹60 lakhs for homes, ₹13.18 lakhs for vehicles, and ₹7,440 per gram for gold). To control symbolic variables, all sites featured a positive religious icon centrally located on the page. Brand information (based on its mission, vision, and core values) were then manipulated to present either congruent (positive icon with positive information) or incongruent (positive icon with negative information) conditions. In this way, participants could browse a dummy brand website as they would while searching online in an actual consumer shopping situation prior to rating purchase intention and perceived value.

3. Purchase intention: same as experiment

4. PERVAL scale: The dependent variable, perceived value, was assessed using a Purchase Intention Scale, with PERVAL scale by Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. N. (2001)The participants rated their intention to buy the product displayed in the stimuli on a 5-point Likert scale.

5. Religious image as selected from pretest

4.2.5 Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to different conditions. In each condition participants were informed that they have to evaluate a brand named divya shakti which is a multifaceted brand selling houses, cars and gold. Then participants were shown a website on a screen and were instructed to read and explore its content carefully as they would have to rate this brand after exploring the website, then they were asked to rate their purchase intention and perceived value.

All this took 8 minutes. Participants were thanked for their time and received a short debriefing about the purpose of the study.

4.2.6 Precautions

Same as experiment 1.

4.3 Experiment 3

4.3.1 Participants

The study was investigated on the students from Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology. It is composed of 100 participants ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.01$). All participants were self-identified as Hindus and belonged to the age range of 18 to 25 years.

4.3.2 Sampling Procedure

Same as 1st and 2nd experiment

4.3.3 Research Design

The study followed a between subject design, where Between subject factor was congruency (Positive information with positive religious icon; Negative information with positive religious icon) and dependent variable was purchase intention and perceived value. Involvement in product (high involvement products) and valence of religious icon (positive religious icon) was held constant.

4.3.4 Material

1. Information Given: To validate the stimuli, a rating task was conducted with 35 participants. In which information in the heading of mission, vision and core value were provided and participants were asked to read them. Each information was rated on valence and intensity using a 7 point likert scale (1= low intensity, 7= high intensity), as result the information was selected for negative mission, vision, core value and negative mission, vision, core value.

2. Wix: Two custom-built websites were designed and displayed with the Wix Website Editor to mimic real-world brand settings. Each site was the fictional multi-faceted brand Divya Shakti and was built to portray various experimental conditions. The sites contained details of high-involvement products like real estate, cars, and gold, as well as respective price points (e.g., ₹60 lakhs for homes, ₹13.18 lakhs for vehicles, and ₹7,440 per gram for gold). To control symbolic variables, all sites featured a negative religious icon centrally located on the page. Brand information (based on its mission, vision, and core values) were then manipulated to present either congruent (negative icon with positive information) or incongruent (negative icon with negative information) conditions. In this way, participants could browse a dummy brand website as they would while searching online in an actual consumer shopping situation prior to rating purchase intention and perceived value..

3. Purchase intention: same as experiment 1 and 2.

4. PERVAL scale: same as experiment 2

5. Religious image as selected from pretest

4.3.5 Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to different conditions. In each condition participants were informed that they have to evaluate a brand named divya shakti which is a multifaceted brand selling houses, cars and gold. Then participants were shown a website on a screen and were instructed to read and explore its content carefully as they would have to rate this brand after exploring the website, then they were asked to rate their purchase intention and perceived value.

All this took 10 minutes. Participants were thanked for their time and received a short debriefing about the purpose of the study.

4.3.6 Precautions

Same as experiment 1 and 2

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 29) is used to compute descriptive and inferential statistics. Tables for each hypothesis testing are discussed underneath.

5.1 Experiment 1:

Aim: To explore the impact of religious icon and involvement in a product on consumer's purchase intention.

Hypotheses:

H1: Purchase intention will increase when high involvement products are shown with a positive religious icon.

H2: Purchase intention will decrease when low involvement products are shown with a negative religious icon

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for involvement of products and valence of images

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
HIP	51	21.00	8.00	29.00	20.61	4.07
HIN	51	22.00	6.00	28.00	18.31	4.59
LIP	51	20.00	6.00	26.00	18.25	4.15
LIN	51	18.00	9.00	27.00	17.65	3.79
Valid N (listwise)	51					

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics summarizing the involvement of products and valence of images. The results showed that the mean score for high-involvement positive (HIP) products was $M = 20.61$ ($SD = 4.07$), while high-involvement negative (HIN) products had a mean of $M = 18.31$ ($SD = 4.59$). Low-involvement positive (LIP) products had a mean of $M = 18.25$ ($SD = 4.15$).

= 4.15), and low-involvement negative (LIN) products had the lowest mean score at $M = 17.65$ ($SD = 3.79$). These results indicate that product involvement and valence have an influence on participants' ratings, as high-involvement products generally get higher scores than low-involvement products.

Table 2: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

Within-Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	χ^2	df	p	Greenhouse- Geisser	Huynh- Feldt	Lower- Bound
Conditions	0.858	7.440	5	.190	0.908	0.965	0.333

Table 2 shows Mauchly's test of sphericity. The results suggested that the assumption of sphericity was not violated, $W = 0.858$, $\chi^2(5) = 7.440$, $p = .190$.

Table 3 : Multivariate Tests

Effect	Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	Partial η^2
Conditions	Pillai's Trace	0.293	6.631	3.000	48.000	< .001	0.293
	Wilks' Lambda	0.707	6.631	3.000	48.000	< .001	0.293
	Hotelling's Trace	0.414	6.631	3.000	48.000	< .001	0.293
	Roy's Largest Root	0.414	6.631	3.000	48.000	< .001	0.293

Table 4: Pairwise Comparisons of conditions

Comparison (I-J)	Mean Diff. (I-J)	SE	p	95% CI Lower Bound	95% CI Upper Bound
1 - 2	2.294*	0.780	.030	0.150	4.438
1 - 3	2.353*	0.648	.004	0.572	4.134
1 - 4	2.961*	0.718	< .001	0.989	4.933
2 - 1	-2.294*	0.780	.030	-4.438	-0.150
2 - 3	-0.059	0.858	1.000	-2.298	2.180
2 - 4	-2.353*	0.648	.002	-3.989	-0.718
3 - 1	-2.353*	0.648	.004	-4.134	-0.572
3 - 2	0.059	0.858	1.000	-2.298	2.298
3 - 4	-0.667	0.729	1.000	-2.432	1.099
4 - 1	-2.961*	0.718	< .001	-4.933	-0.989
4 - 2	2.353*	0.648	.002	0.718	3.989
4 - 3	0.668	0.669	1.000	-2.445	1.229

Table 4 shows a chain of pairwise comparisons which examined the differences between four levels of conditions. The results showed significant differences between some groups. Specifically, Group 1(High involvement positive) was significantly different from Group 2 (High Involvement negative), $p = .030$, Group 3(low involvement positive), $p = .004$, and Group 4(low involvement negative), $p < .001$. Group 2 and Group 4 also showed a significant difference, $p = .002$.

However, no significant differences were detected between Group 2 and Group 3, $p = 1.000$, or between Group 3 and Group 4, $p = 1.000$.

These results show that Group 1 differs significantly from the other groups.

With this test, H1 (Purchase intention will increase when high involvement products are shown with a positive religious icon.) is accepted .

5.2 Experiment 2:

Aim: To explore the impact of congruent and incongruent information on consumer's purchase intention and perceived value in a high involvement product with positive religious image.

Hypotheses:

H3: Purchase intention will increase when the religious icon and information provided are congruent.

H4: Perceived value will decrease when the religious icon and information provided are incongruent.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

	Purchase Intention		Perceived Value	
	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent
Valid	56	52	56	52
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.321	2.962	4.585	3.988

Std. Deviation	0.811	0.989	0.724	1.147
Minimum	1.000	1.000	3.320	1.050
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.740	6.000

Table 5 shows descriptive analysis investigating the differences in Purchase Intention and Perceived Value under Congruent and Incongruent conditions. Details of congruent and incongruent conditions are mentioned in Chapter 4: Methodology

For Purchase Intention, participants in the Congruent condition ($M = 3.321$, $SD = 0.811$) had higher scores than those in the Incongruent condition ($M = 2.962$, $SD = 0.989$).

For Perceived Value, the Congruent condition ($M = 4.585$, $SD = 0.724$) also showed higher scores than the Incongruent condition ($M = 3.988$, $SD = 1.147$).

Table 6: Independent samples t-test

Measure	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	SE <i>d</i>
Purchase Intention	2.07	106	.041	0.40	0.20
Perceived Value	3.26	106	.001	0.63	0.20

Table 7 shows an independent samples t-test that compares purchase intention and perceived value across different conditions.

The results indicate a significant difference in purchase intention between groups, $t(106) = 2.07$, $p = .041$, Cohen's $d = 0.40$, which means a small to moderate effect size.

A significant difference was found for perceived value $t(106) = 3.26$, $p = .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.63$, suggesting a moderate effect size.

These findings suggest that congruent information and incongruent information significantly influence both consumer purchase intention and perceived value, which supports H3 (Purchase intention will increase when the religious icon and information provided are congruent) and H4 (Perceived value will decrease when the religious icon and information provided are incongruent). Hence both H3 and H4 are accepted.

5.3 Experiment 3:

Aim: To explore the impact congruent and incongruent information on consumer's purchase intention and perceived value of a brand in a high involvement product with negative religious image.

Hypotheses:

H5: Purchase intention will increase when the religious icon and information provided are congruent.

H6: Perceived value will decrease when the religious icon and information provided are incongruent.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics

	PI_Negative Icon		PERVAL_Negative Icon	
	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent
Valid	50	50	50	50
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.620	3.320	3.719	4.353
Std. Deviation	1.048	0.794	1.078	0.954
Minimum	1.000	2.000	1.790	2.320
Maximum	4.000	5.000	5.630	6.260

Table 7 shows descriptive analysis summarising the impact of congruency on Purchase Intention (PI) and Perceived Value (PERVAL) with a Negative Icon.

For PI (Negative Icon), the Incongruent condition ($M=3.320$, $SD=0.794$) showed higher scores compared to the Congruent condition ($M=2.620$, $SD=1.048$).

For PERVAL (Negative Icon), the Incongruent condition ($M=4.353$, $SD=0.954$) also resulted in higher scores compared to the Congruent condition ($M=3.719$, $SD=1.078$).

Table 8: Independent samples t-test

Measure	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	SE <i>d</i>
Purchase Intention	3.77	98	.001	0.75	0.21
Perceived Value	3.12	98	.002	0.62	0.21

Table 8 shows Independent samples t-test comparing the differences between congruent and incongruent conditions for Purchase Intention (PI) with a Negative Icon and Perceived Value (PERVAL) with a Negative Icon.

For PI (Negative Icon), there was a significant difference between conditions, ($t(98) = 3.77$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.75$), which means that the incongruent condition had higher purchase intention scores compared to the congruent condition.

Similarly, for PERVAL (Negative Icon), a significant difference was, ($t(98) = 3.12$, $p = .002$, Cohen's $d = 0.62$), which means that perceived value was higher in the incongruent condition compared to the congruent condition.

These findings suggest that congruent information and incongruent information significantly influence both consumer purchase intention and perceived value, which rejects H5(Purchase intention will increase when the religious icon and information provided are congruent) and H6 (Perceived value will decrease when the religious icon and information provided are incongruent). Hence both H5 and H6 are rejected.

5.4 Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was conducted to make sure that the experimental stimuli were effective. It was done using a rating task. Participants were asked to rate the religious icon valence (positive vs. negative) and its intensity. Similarly for information selection valence (positive vs. negative) and its intensity to validate the required distinctions in the stimuli.

5.4.1 Religious Icon

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics: Positive Images

	I1	I4	I7	I10
Valid	43	43	43	43
Missing	129	129	129	129
Mean	3.326	3.581	3.419	3.605
Std. Deviation	1.063	1.258	1.332	1.256
Minimum	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000

Table 9 shows descriptive statistics investigating four positive image conditions (*I1*, *I4*, *I7*, and *I10*). The mean scores ranged from 3.326 (*I1*) to 3.605 (*I10*), indicating moderate ratings on a

5-point scale. The standard deviations ranged from 1.063 (I1) to 1.332 (I7), showing some variability in responses.

Table: 10: Mauchly's test

Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. χ^2	df	p	Greenhouse- Geisser ϵ	Huynh- Feldt ϵ	Lower Bound ϵ
Intensity	0.799	9.157	5	0.103	0.864	0.926	0.333

Table 10 shows Mauchly's test investigating the assumption of sphericity for intensity ratings. The results were not statistically significant, $W = 0.799$, $\chi^2(5) = 9.157$, $p = .103$, which means that the assumption of sphericity was met.

Because the p-value is greater than .05, no correction for violations of sphericity is required. However, Greenhouse-Geisser ($\epsilon = 0.864$) and Huynh-Feldt ($\epsilon = 0.926$) estimates are provided for reference.

Table 11: Within Subject Effect

Sources	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Intensity	2.297	3	0.766	1.679	0.175	0.038
Residuals	57.453	126	0.456	—	—	—

Table 11 shows a repeated-measures ANOVA summarising the effect of intensity on the dependent variable. The results showed that the effect of intensity was not statistically significant, $F(3, 126) = 1.679$, $p = .175$, $\eta^2 = .038$. This means that there was no significant difference across intensity levels. The small effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.038$) also show that intensity consider for only 3.8% of the variance in the dependent variable, which is relatively low.

Table 12: Post Hoc Comparisons- Intensity

Comparison		Mean		95% CI		95%	
CI	SE	df	t	Cohen's	Cohen's	Cohen's	p
Diff.		(Lower)	(Upper)	d		d	
		(Lower)	(Upper)	(Lower)		(Upper)	
				Bon		f</sub>	
1-2	-0.256	-0.669	0.157	0.149	42	-1.715	-0.208 -0.549 0.134 0.562
1-3	-0.293	-0.579	0.393	0.176	42	-0.530	-0.076 -0.471 0.320 1.000
1-4	-0.279	-0.714	0.156	0.157	42	-0.227	-0.227 -0.587 0.134 0.499
2-3	0.163	-0.227	0.553	0.141	42	0.132	0.132 -0.187 0.452 1.000
2-4	-0.023	-0.362	0.315	0.122	42	-0.019	-0.019 -0.294 0.256 1.000
3-4	-0.186	-0.522	0.149	0.121	42	-0.151	-0.151 -0.427 0.125 0.793

Note. P-values and confidence intervals are adjusted for multiple comparisons using the Bonferroni method.

Table 12 shows a post hoc comparison using Bonferroni correction summarizing differences in intensity across four conditions. The results showed that none of the comparisons reached statistical significance after correction.

For instance, the comparison between Level 1 and Level 2 revealed a non-significant mean difference of -0.256 (95% CI [-0.669, 0.157]), $t(42) = -1.715$, $p = .562$, $d = -0.208$. Similarly, the difference between Level 1 and Level 3 was -0.293 (95% CI [-0.579, 0.393]), $t(42) = -0.530$, $p = 1.000$, $d = -0.076$, also indicating no significant difference. The comparison between Level 1 and Level 4 yielded $t(42) = -1.775$, $p = .499$, $d = -0.227$, showing no significant effect.

Likewise, comparisons between Level 2 and Level 3 ($t(42) = 1.155$, $p = 1.000$, $d = 0.132$) and Level 2 and Level 4 ($t(42) = -0.190$, $p = 1.000$, $d = -0.019$) did not show significant differences. Lastly, the contrast between Level 3 and Level 4 yielded a mean difference of -0.186 (95% CI [-0.522, 0.149]), $t(42) = -1.536$, $p = .793$, $d = -0.151$, was also had no statistically significant effect.

As the result suggests image 1 and 7 were selected as positive stimuli for experiment 1.

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics: Negative Images

	I2	I3	I5	I6	I8	I9	I11
Valid	43	43	43	43	43	43	43
Missing	258	258	258	258	258	258	258
Mean	3.419	3.209	3.558	3.419	3.186	3.163	3.070
Std. Deviation	0.982	1.206	1.098	1.220	0.982	0.998	0.936

Minimum	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000

Table 13 shows Descriptive statistics summarising intensity ratings of negative images across seven items (I2, I3, I5, I6, I8, I9, and I11). The results showed the mean ranging from 3.070 (I11) to 3.558 (I5), suggesting a moderate level of intensity across all negative images.

The standard deviations ranged between 0.936 (I11) and 1.220 (I6), suggesting some variation in responses. These findings show that participants' intensity ratings of negative images were relatively consistent, as there were no extreme deviations in responses.

Table 14: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity for Intensity

Source	Mauchly's W	Approx. χ^2	df	p	Greenhouse- Geisser ϵ	Huynh- Feldt ϵ	Lower Bound ϵ
Intensity	0.363	40.270	20	.005	0.748	0.848	0.167

Table 14 shows Mauchly's test of sphericity investigating whether the assumption of sphericity was met for the intensity variable. The test was statistically significant, $W = 0.363$, $\chi^2(20) = 40.270$, $p = .005$, which means the sphericity assumption was violated. As the assumption was not met, adjustments to the degrees of freedom should be put in using either the Greenhouse-

Geisser ($\varepsilon = 0.748$) or Huynh-Feldt ($\varepsilon = 0.848$) corrections to lessen the risk of high Type I errors in the analyses.

Table 15: Within-Subjects Effects for Intensity

Sources	sum of squares	df	mean square	f	p	η^2
Intensity	8.040	6	1.340	1.894	.082	.043
Residuals	178.246	252	0.707			

Note. Type III Sum of Squares. Mauchly's test of sphericity indicates that the assumption of sphericity is violated ($p < .05$).

Table 15 shows a repeated-measures ANOVA summarizing the effect of intensity on the dependent variable. Findings showed that the effect of intensity was not statistically significant, $F(6, 252) = 1.894$, $p = .082$, $\eta^2 = .043$. This says that intensity levels do not differ significantly across conditions.

Table 16: Post Hoc Comparisons – Intensity

Comparison		Mean		95% CI		95%		95%		95%	
CI	SE	df	t	Cohen's	Cohen's	Cohen's	p	d	d	d	_f
Diff.		(Lower)		(Upper)		(Lower)		(Upper)		Bon	
1-2	0.209	-0.414	0.833	0.193	42	1.086	0.196	-0.339	0.786	1.000	
1-3	-0.140	-0.725	0.446	0.193	42	-0.717	-0.129	-0.703	0.496	1.000	
1-4	2.220**	1.045	3.395	0.185	42	1.198×10 ¹	2.220	1.088	2.911		
<.001**											
1-5	-0.233	-0.369	0.830	0.185	42	-1.258	-0.218	-0.348	0.764	1.000	
1-6	0.349	-0.166	0.864	0.181	42	2.894	0.327	-0.165	0.804	0.564	
2-3	-0.349	-0.978	0.280	0.193	42	-1.294	-0.230	-0.803	0.376	1.000	
2-4	0.235	-0.366	0.837	0.185	42	1.301	0.225	-0.383	0.774	1.000	
2-5	0.027	-0.718	0.765	0.185	42	0.130	0.023	-0.674	0.718	1.000	
2-6	0.309	-0.210	0.765	0.173	42	1.793	0.313	-0.179	0.743	1.000	
3-4	0.140	-0.546	0.825	0.212	42	0.658	0.131	-0.514	0.776	1.000	
3-5	0.343	-0.106	0.976	0.154	42	2.201	0.374	0.000	0.806	0.659	

4-5	0.233	-0.365	0.830	0.179	42	1.301	0.225	-0.381	0.772	1.000
4-6	0.256	-0.325	0.886	0.179	42	1.425	0.240	-0.311	0.781	1.000
5-6	0.116	-0.380	0.563	0.158	42	0.842	0.190	-0.276	0.450	1.000
6-7	0.093	-0.292	0.478	0.119	42	0.781	0.087	-0.276	0.450	1.000

Note. p-values and confidence intervals adjusted for multiple comparisons using the Bonferroni method.

p < .001 indicates statistical significance.

Table 16 shows A post hoc analysis using Bonferroni correction summarising pairwise comparisons between intensity levels. The comparison between Level 1 and Level 4 yielded a statistically significant difference, $t(42) = 11.98$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.220$, 95% CI [1.088, 2.911]), which shows a significant difference between these two.

Other pairwise comparisons were not statistically significant after Bonferroni correction, which means that differences between most levels were not strong enough to reject the null hypothesis. The effect sizes for other comparisons ranged from small to moderate, with Cohen's d values between 0.023 and 0.374.

As the finding suggests image 3 and 6 were selected as negative stimuli for experiment 1.

5.4.2 Information Given

Table 17: Mission

Descriptive Statistics

	Mission_Positive	Mission_Negative
Valid	36	on 36
Missing	65	65
Mean	3.444	3.583
Std. Deviation	0.843	0.806
Shapiro-Wilk	0.863	0.829
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	< .001
Minimum	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000

Table 17 shows descriptive statistics summarizing Mission_Positive and Mission_Negative conditions. Both conditions. The mean scores for Mission_Positive ($M = 3.444$, $SD = 0.843$) and Mission_Negative ($M = 3.583$, $SD = 0.806$) show relatively similar responses.

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to examine the normality of the data distribution. The results were statistically significant for both Mission_Positive ($W = 0.863$, $p < .001$) and

Mission_Negative ($W = 0.829$, $p < .001$), which means that the assumption of normality was violated. Therefore, non-parametric tests may be more appropriate for further analysis.

For Valence: Mission

Table 18: Case Processing Summary

Variable	N(valid)	%(valid)	N(Missing)	%(Mission)	N	%(Total)
Vision * Valence	72	100.0%	0	0.0%	72	100.0%

Table 18 shows a case processing summarizing the completeness of the data for the Vision $\times$ Valence interaction. Findings show that all 72 cases (100%) were valid, with no missing data (0 cases, 0% missing). This means that the dataset is complete and suitable.

Table 19: Cross Tabulation of Mission and Valence

Mission	Valence	Negative (n=25)	Positive (n=21)	Neutral (n=26)	Total (n=72)
Negative	Count	19	7	10	36
	Expected Count	12.5	10.5	13	36
	% within Mission	52.8%	19.4%	27.8%	100%
	% within Valence	76.0%	33.3%	38.5%	50.0%
	% of Total	26.4%	9.7%	13.9%	50.0%
Positive	Count	6	14	16	36
	Expected Count	12.5	10.5	13	36
	% within Mission	16.7%	38.9%	44.4%	100%
	% within Valence	24.0%	66.7%	61.5%	50.0%

	% of Total	8.3%	19.4%	22.2%	50.0%
Total	Count	25	21	26	72
	Expected Count	25.0	21.0	26.0	72
	% within Mission	34.7%	29.2%	36.1%	100%
	% within Valence	100%	100%	100%	100%
	% of Total	34.7%	29.2%	36.1%	100%

Table 19 shows chi-square crosstabulation investigating the relationship between Mission type (Negative vs. Positive) and Valence categories (Negative, Positive, Neutral). The results showed that for the Negative Mission condition, 52.8% of responses were of Negative valence, while 19.4% were Positive and 27.8% were Neutral. On the other hand, for the Positive Mission condition, only 16.7% of responses were of the Negative valence category, while 38.9% were Positive, and 44.4% were Neutral.

The expected counts indicated that more participants in the Negative Mission condition rated the valence as negative than expected, and similarly more participants in the Positive Mission condition rated the valence as positive than expected. With this pattern potential association between Mission type and Valence perceptions could be concluded.

Table 20: Chi-Square Test

Test	χ^2	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	10.478	2	.005
Likelihood Ratio	10.879	2	.004
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	10.463	2	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.982	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	72		

Table 20 shows the chi-square test of independence investigating the association between Mission type (Negative vs. Positive) and Valence categories (Negative, Positive, Neutral). According to the results there was a significant association between Mission type and Valence, $\chi^2(2) = 10.478$, $p = .005$, which means that valence ratings have a significant difference depending on whether the mission was positively or negatively framed.

The Likelihood Ratio Test also confirmed this effect, $\chi^2(2) = 10.879$, $p = .004$. Additionally, the Linear-by-Linear Association test suggested a significant trend, $\chi^2(1) = 6.982$, $p = .008$, indicating a linear relationship between mission framing and valence ratings.

These results approve the validity of the experimental manipulation. This signifies that negative missions were more likely to be rated negatively by the participants, and positive missions were more likely to be rated positively by them.

Table 21: Symmetric Measures

Measure	Value	p
Phi	.381	.005
Cramér's V	.381	.005
N of Valid Cases	72	

Table 20 shows the symmetric measures indicating an association between the categorical variables. The Phi coefficient ($\Phi = 0.381$, $p = .005$) represents a strong relationship and Cramér's V ($V = 0.381$, $p = .005$) also supports this finding.

This means that the relationship between the variables is unlikely to be due to chance.

For Intensity: Mission

Table 22: Paired Samples T-Test

Measu re 1	Measur e 2	W	z	d f	p	Ran k- Bis eria l Cor rela tion	SE Ran k- Bis eria l Cor rela tion
Missio n_Pos itive	- Missio n_Neg ative	5 6. 50 0	- 0 . 9 4 7		0 . 3 1 5	- 0.2 61	0.2 69

Vision: Test

Table 23 Descriptive Statistics

Vision_Negative	Vision_Positive
-----------------	-----------------

Valid	36	36
Missing	65	65
Mean	3.472	3.500
Std. Deviation	0.941	0.941
Shapiro-Wilk	0.891	0.788
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	0.002	< .001
Minimum	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000

Table 23 shows Descriptive statistics summarizing Vision_Negative and Vision_Positive conditions. The mean score for Vision_Negative was 3.472 (SD = 0.941), and the mean for Vision_Positive was 3.500 (SD = 0.941).

A Shapiro-Wilk test was used to evaluate normality. Findings showed that the Vision_Negative scores significantly violated normality, $W = 0.891$, $p = .002$, and the Vision_Positive scores also showed a significantly violated normality, $W = 0.788$, $p < .001$.

Table 24: Case Processing Summary

Variable	Valid (N)	Missing (N)	Total (N)	Valid (%)	Missing (%)	Total (%)
vision_+ve*	72	0	72	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
vision_-ve						

Table 24 shows Case Processing Summary summarising that the total number of cases investigated to study the relationship between Vision_Positive and Vision_Negative was 72. There were no missing cases (0%), which meant that all 36 participants provided valid responses for both variables.

Table 25: Cross Tabulation of Vision_Positive and Vision_Negative

Vision	Valence	Negative (n=25)	Positive (n=21)	Neutral (n=26)	Total (n=72)
Negative	Count	22	10	4	36
	Expected Count	11.5	20.5	4	36
	% within Mission	61.1%	27.8%	11.1%	100%
	% within Valence	95.7%	24.4%	50.0%	50.0%
	% of Total	30.6%	13.9%	5.6%	50.0%
Positive	Count	1	31	4	36
	Expected Count	11.5	20.5	4.0	36.0
	% within Mission	2.8%	86.1%	11.1%	100%
	% within Valence	4.3%	75.6%	50.0%	50.0%

	% of Total	1.4%	43.1%	5.6%	50.0%
Total	Count	23	41	8.0	72
	Expected Count	23	41	8	72
	% within Mission	31.9%	56.9%	11.1%	100%
	% within Valence	100%	100%	100%	100%
	% of Total	31.9%	56.9%	11.1%	100%

Table 25 shows chi-square crosstabulation investigating the relationship between vision type (Negative vs. Positive) and Valence categories (Negative, Positive, Neutral). The results showed that for the Negative vision condition, 61.1% of responses were of Negative valence, while 27.8% were Positive and 11.1% were Neutral. On the other hand, for the Positive vision condition, only 2.8% of responses were of the Negative valence category, while 86.1% were Positive, and 11.1% were Neutral.

The expected counts indicated that more participants in the Negative vision condition rated the valence as negative than expected, and similarly more participants in the Positive vision condition rated the valence as positive than expected. With this pattern potential association between Mission type and Valence perceptions could be concluded.

Table 26: Chi-Square Test

Test	χ^2	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	29.930 ^a	2	< .001
Likelihood Ratio	34.942	2	< .001
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	33.080		< .001
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.601 ^b	1	< .001
N of Valid Cases	72		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.00.

b. The standardized statistic is 3.950.

Table 26 shows the chi-square test of independence investigating the association between vision type (Negative vs. Positive) and Valence categories (Negative, Positive, Neutral). According to the results there was a significant association between vision type and Valence, $\chi^2(2) = 29.930^a$, $p = <.001$, which means that valence ratings have a very significant difference depending on whether the vision was positively or negatively framed.

The Likelihood Ratio Test also confirmed this effect, $\chi^2(2) = 34.942$, $p = <.001$. Additionally, the Linear-by-Linear Association test suggested a significant trend, $\chi^2(1) = 15.601^b$, $p = <.001$, indicating a linear relationship between vision framing and valence ratings.

These results approve the validity of the experimental manipulation. This signifies that negative vision were more likely to be rated negatively by the participants, and positive vision were more likely to be rated positively by them.

Table 27: Symmetric Measures

Measure	Value	p
Phi	.645	<.001
Cramér's V	.645	<.001
N of Valid Cases	72	

Table 27 shows the symmetric measures indicating an association between the categorical variables. The Phi coefficient ($\Phi = .645$, $p <.001$) represents a very strong relationship and Cramér's V ($V = .645$, $p <.001$) also strongly supports this finding.

This means that the relationship between the variables is unlikely to be due to chance.

Table28: Paired Samples T-Test

Measure 1		Measure 2	W	z	d	p	Rank-Biserial Correlation	SE Rank-Biserial Correlation
Vision_Negative	-	Vision_Positive	185.000	-0.410		0.677	-0.089	0.213

Table 28 shows Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted to compare vision_Positive and vision_Negative scores. Findings showed that there was no significant difference between the two conditions, $W = 185.0$, $z = -0.4$, $p = 0.6$. The rank-biserial correlation was used to measure the effect size which came out to be -0.089 ($SE = 0.213$), representing a small effect.

Core Values: T-Test

Table 29: Descriptive Statistics

	Values_Positive	Values_Negative

Valid	34	34
Missing	67	67
Mean	3.235	2.971
Std. Deviation	0.699	0.834
Shapiro-Wilk	0.761	0.786
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	< .001
Minimum	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	4.000

Table 29 shows Descriptive statistics summarizing Values_Negative and Values_Positive conditions. The mean score for Values_Negative was 2.971 (SD =0.834), and the mean for Values_Positive was 3.235(SD =0.699).

A Shapiro-Wilk test was used to evaluate normality. Findings showed that the Values_Negative scores significantly violated normality, $W = 0.786$, $p = < .001$, and the Values_Positive scores also showed a significantly violated normality, $W = 0.761$, $p < .001$.

Table 30: Case Processing Summary

Variable	Valid (N)	Missing (N)	Total (N)	Valid (%)	Missing (%)	Total (%)
vision_+ve*	72	0	72	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
vision_-ve						

Table 30 shows Case Processing Summary summarising that the total number of cases investigated to study the relationship between Values_Positive and Values_Negative was 72. There were no missing cases (0%), which meant that all 36 participants provided valid responses for both variables.

Table 31: Cross Tabulation of Values and valence

Mission	Valence	Negative (n=25)	Positive (n=21)	Neutral (n=26)	Total (n=72)
Positive	Count	3	26	5	34
	Expected Count	11.5	15.0	7.5	34
	% within Mission	8.8%	76.5%	14.7%	100.0%
	% within Valence	13.0%	86.7%	33.3%	50.0%
	% of Total	4.4%	38.2%	7.4%	50.0%
Negative	Count	20	4	10	34
	Expected Count	11.5	15.0	7.5	34.0
	% within Mission	58.8%	11.8%	29.4%	100%
	% within Valence	87.0%	13.3%	66.7%	50.0%
	% of Total	29.4%	5.9%	14.7%	50.0%
Total	Count	23	30	15	68
	Expected Count	23.0	30.0	15.0	68.0
	% within Mission	33.8%	44.1%	22.1%	100%
	% within Valence	100%	100%	100%	100%
	% of Total	33.8%	44.1%	22.1%	100%

Table 31 shows chi-square crosstabulation investigating the relationship between Mission type (Negative vs. Positive) and Valence categories (Negative, Positive, Neutral). The results showed that for the Negative Mission condition, 58.8% of responses were of Negative valence, while 11.8% were Positive and 29.4% were Neutral. On the other hand, for the Positive Mission condition, only 8.8% of responses were of the Negative valence category, while 76.5% were Positive, and 14.7% were Neutral.

The expected counts indicated that more participants in the Negative Mission condition rated the valence as negative than expected, and similarly more participants in the Positive Mission condition rated the valence as positive than expected. With this pattern potential association between Mission type and Valence perceptions could be concluded.

Table 32: Chi-Square Test

Test	χ^2	df	p
Pearson Chi-Square	30.365 ^a	2	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	33.800	2	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.829	1	.050
N of Valid Cases	68		

Table 32 shows the chi-square test of independence investigating the association between core values type (Negative vs. Positive) and Valence categories (Negative, Positive, Neutral). According to the results there was a significant association between values type and Valence, $\chi^2(2) = 30.365$, $p = <.001$, which means that valence ratings have a very significant difference depending on whether the vision was positively or negatively framed.

The Likelihood Ratio Test also confirmed this effect, $\chi^2(2) = 33.800$, $p = <.001$. Additionally, the Linear-by-Linear Association test suggested a significant trend, $\chi^2(1) = 3.829$, $p = .050$, indicating a linear relationship between vision framing and valence ratings.

These results approve the validity of the experimental manipulation. This signifies that negative core values were more likely to be rated negatively by the participants, and positive core values were more likely to be rated positively by them.

Table33: Symmetric Measures

Measure	Value	p
Phi	0.567	<.001
Cramér's V	0.567	<.001
N of Valid Cases	72	

Table 33 shows the symmetric measures indicating an association between the categorical variables. The Phi coefficient ($\Phi = 0.594$, $p = .017$) represents a strong relationship and Cramér's V ($V = 0.420$, $p = .017$) also strongly supports this finding.

This means that the relationship between the variables is unlikely to be due to chance.

Table 34: Paired Samples T-Test

Measure 1	Measure 2	W	z	d	p	Rank-	SE
				f		Biseria	Rank-
						l	Biseria

						Correlation	1 Correlation
Values_Positive	-	Values_Negative	79.00	1.664	0.078	0.505	0.294

Table 34 shows Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted to compare values_Positive and values_Negative scores. Findings showed that there was no significant difference between the two conditions, $W = 79.000$, $z = 1.664$, $p = 0.078$. The rank-biserial correlation was used to measure the effect size which came out to be -0.089 ($SE = 0.213$), representing a small effect.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This study explored the interaction between religious icon valence, product involvement, and message congruence on consumer behavior, and focused on purchase intention and perceived value specifically. Three experiments were conducted to test six hypotheses based on symbolic interactionism and congruity theory. The findings provide useful insights for marketers who seek to engage consumers within culturally sensitive advertising environments.

Experiment 1: effect of Religious Icon Valence and Product Involvement

Hypothesis 1 was ‘purchase intention would increase when high-involvement products were shown with a positive religious icon (HIP)’. The results supported H1. The mean purchase intention score when participants were exposed to high-involvement products paired with positive religious icons ($M = 20.61$, $SD = 4.07$) was the highest among all four conditions. Pairwise comparisons showed that HIP was significantly different from HIN, LIP, and LIN conditions: high-involvement negative ($p = .030$), low-involvement positive ($p = .004$), and low-involvement negative ($p < .001$). These findings indicate that a positive religious icon can increase a consumer's purchase intention when it is a high involvement product or the product is personally significant and demands careful consideration.

This lines up with previous study by Hameed et al. (2020)., In their study which explored how consumers respond to celebrity endorsements across high- and low-involvement product categories. Their study uses a descriptive research design with a single cross-sectional method and systematic random sampling. 600 questionnaires were distributed, with 450 complete responses used for analysis, focusing on clustering products based on involvement levels. Products were clustered into high involvement (e.g., land/house, automobiles) and low involvement (e.g., cool drinks, snacks) categories based on mean values. They reported consumers who evaluated high-involvement products were involved in more thoughtful processing and responded more strongly to symbolic or emotionally charged cues. This indicates that high-involvement products activate deeper cognitive engagement, making consumers more susceptible to symbolic elements like religious imagery.

While the main idea of Chaiken's (1980) Heuristic-Systematic Model primarily focuses on message involvement, its central claim that high significance leads to systematic (deep) processing is still applicable when personal involvement is tied to the product itself, as in our study. Thus, the deeper engagement with symbolic content in the HIP condition aligns with systematic processing.

Lowrey (1998) also suggests that message structures which are cognitively engaging (e.g., syntactically complex sentences) are more powerful under high motivation. By analogy, symbolic stimuli like religious icons, which require interpretation, are also more impactful when cognitive effort is high as with high-involvement products.

Hypothesis 2 was 'purchase intention would decrease when high-involvement products were shown with a negative religious icon (HIP)'. Although the lowest mean purchase intention was for the LIN (Low involvement, Negative icon) condition ($M = 17.65$, $SD = 3.79$) as depicted by the descriptive statistics, but the result was not statistically significant when compared with the LIP (Low involvement, Positive icon) condition ($p = 1.000$). which means that even though the trend aligns with H2, the hypothesis is not statistically supported.

This could be explained by the Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1980), which claims that low personal relevance (in our case, due to product type) leads to heuristic processing which is a cognitive strategy that enables individuals to make quick judgments and decisions using mental shortcuts or simple rules of thumb, often relying on cues like the attractiveness or credibility of the communicator rather than detailed evaluation of the message content. While efficient, this approach can lead to less reliable judgments and potential biases due to its reliance on superficial factors. Participants when exposed to low-involvement products may have processed the ads superficially, and complex symbolic cues like negative religious icons were not conspicuous enough to influence their judgments. The research by Chaiken, 1980 includes multiple experiments investigating the effects of communicator likability, personal relevance of the message, and the quantity of persuasive arguments on opinion change. Subjects responded to messages based on varying levels of personal relevance and the perceived likability of the communicator. The results indicated that both the likability of the communicator and the personal relevance of the message significantly impacted the persuasive effectiveness of the communication which means systematic processing can lead to stronger attitude changes in cases of high personal relevance, while heuristic cues like communicator likability can influence attitudes in situations of low personal relevance.

Lowrey (1998) further supported that complex message structures fail to make an impact under low motivation. This is similar to our LIN condition. As in syntactic complexity, negative symbolic cues (negative religious icon) also require deeper processing to be persuasive. The experiment by Lowrey (1998) used a 2x2x2 factorial design, manipulating syntactic complexity, argument strength, and involvement. Participants were presented with booklets featuring advertisements. Involvement was manipulated by offering participants a free sample either of the target product (high involvement condition) or a bar of soap (low involvement condition). After reviewing the ads, participants completed a response booklet, which included measures of involvement assessed using 7-point Likert scales. A three-way interaction was found between syntactic complexity, claim strength, and involvement. For simple syntax, strong claims were more persuasive. For complex syntax, high-involvement participants had more positive attitudes for strong claims, while low-involvement participants did not differentiate between strong and weak claims.

Hameed et al. (2020) examined consumer response to celebrity endorsements across high- and low-involvement products. Their study found that consumers of low-involvement products were more responsive to straightforward cues like presence of a celebrity, but not necessarily more complex or deeper messaging, hence this supports the idea that negative symbolic elements may go unnoticed in low-involvement conditions.

Experiment 2: Effect of Congruency with Positive Religious Icons

The results of experiment 2 confirmed the H3 and H4, in that consumer purchase intention and perceived value were significantly higher in the congruent condition (positive icon with positive brand information) than in the incongruent condition. These findings are in line with the theoretical framework of congruity theory, which suggests that individuals are motivated to maintain cognitive consistency between different elements of a message (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955).

The results also align with Schema Congruity Theory (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989), which suggests that consumers' evaluation of a new stimuli is based on how well they match with existing mental schemas. In reference to Mandler's hypothesis, which posits that moderate incongruity between a product and its schema can lead to more favorable evaluations compared to both complete congruity and extreme incongruity. Three experiments were conducted to validate this hypothesis, indicating that moderate incongruities are positively valued due to the

interesting cognitive engagement they provoke. In contrast, extreme incongruities typically lead to negative evaluations as they result in frustration rather than resolution. The authors argue that the overall structure of attributes associated with a product, rather than merely the presence of congruent or incongruent features, significantly influences consumer perception and value.

Hence Symbolic harmony is maintained when a positive religious icon is paired with a positive message (congruent condition) and it leads to a smoother cognitive processing which may result in higher purchase intention.

On the other hand, in the incongruent condition, the positive icon (which carries sacred, or moral connotations) was paired with a negative brand message (conveying threat, or risk), which created symbolic dissonance. This mismatch disrupted cognitive consistency and reduced the convincing appeal of the product. Mandler's (1982) supports this interpretation, which suggests that moderate incongruity may induce interest and could have a positive effect, but extreme incongruity or dissonance (e.g., positivity clashing with negativity) may result in negative affect and cause lower evaluations.

The concept of processing fluency refers to the ease with which a stimulus is processed, affecting various judgments (Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004) further gives insight. This concept can apply to both perceptual fluency, which is concerned with the ease of identifying the physical attributes of a stimulus, and conceptual fluency, related to the ease of understanding the meaning of a stimulus in relation to existing semantic knowledge structures. High processing fluency is often positively marked, meaning that stimuli that are processed fluently tend to elicit more favorable responses or judgments from perceivers, particularly in the context of aesthetic appreciation. In congruent combinations where symbolic and message cues are similar, these are easier to process and generate a pleasant response, often interpreted as liking or truth. In the incongruent condition, even though the icon itself was positive but the message was negative, this mismatch probably disrupted the fluency, which resulted in reduced liking and trust in the brand's narrative

This lines up with research by van Trijp, which shows the importance of congruency in product-claim-package design, in which Two independent variables were manipulated in a 2×2 combination design, with product (milk, apple juice) as the first within-subjects factor, and picture (running figure, a bone) as the second within-subjects factor. Dutch consumers were

selected because they consider health aspects of food as an important criterion in their grocery shopping. Dependent variables included evaluative measures, purchase intention and consumers' understanding of congruency

Her findings suggest that the combination of health claims with congruent products leads to favorable product perceptions and purchase intention which means consistent symbolic cues and other elements increase perceived naturalness, trust, and purchase intention.

The findings are also in line with O'Guinn and Belk's (1989) work on religious symbolism in consumer spaces, where religious imagery makes consumer goods and settings sacred. However, when such symbols are paired with incongruent or morally doubtful messages, the sacralization effect may backfire. Consumers may perceive the brand as inauthentic or manipulative, resulting in resistance or disengagement.

Experiment 3: Effect of Congruency with negative Religious Icons

Contrary to our hypotheses (H5 and H6), the results from Experiment 3 showed that participants those were exposed to incongruent content, where a negative religious icon (a demon) was paired with positive brand messaging reported higher purchase intention and perceived value than those in the congruent condition, where both the icon and brand information were negative. These findings challenge traditional congruency-based expectations and need to have a closer look at how negative symbols and information interact in consumer judgment.

Aligning with the results Heckler and Childers (1992) provide another useful perspective through their work on incongruency in marketing communication. They conducted three experiments manipulated relevancy and expectancy in a full factorial design using print ads and an incidental learning situation was used, with subjects evaluating ads and completing memory tasks over two sessions. The research confirms the two-dimensional conceptualization of incongruency (relevancy and expectancy) in ad processing and they showed that if incongruent visual-verbal pairings still seem relevant, it can actually enhance memory and consumer engagement. They argued that when consumers experience something unexpected, they tend to process it more deeply and try to make sense of the mismatch. This extra cognitive effort can lead to a stronger impression of the brand. In our case, the demon image paired with the positive brand mission vision and core value, leading to participants to engage more deeply

with the content and perhaps reframe the negative icon as a symbol of resilience, strength, or transformation.

Interestingly, the research by Gräf and Unkelbach (2016) on halo effects and information valence helps further explain our results. Through a series of four experiments, they showed that positive information tends to create stronger halo effects than negative information, especially in trait assessments. This is because positive traits tend to be more similar and interconnected, allowing them to generalize more easily. On the other hand, negative traits are more distinct, leading to more isolated evaluations. When this comes to our study, in the congruent condition the positive brand information may have activated a broader, more balanced impression of the brand, allowing it to overshadow the negative religious image and the strength of negativity likely limited so that such a halo effect could form.

Another possible explanation for this result comes from the negativity bias, which is well-documented across psychological literature. Baumeister et al. (2001) stated that bad is stronger than good in almost every area of human experience, from impression formation to emotional memory. Their review highlights how negative information tends to be more important, enduring, persisting, and impactful than positive information. In our study, the congruent condition (negative icon paired with negative brand values) may have created a cognitive overload of negativity, making the brand less appealing. Participants may have felt disconnected or interpreted the brand as threatening or not trustworthy.

Further support which is the impact of cultural symbolism in advertising comes from the study by Muralidharan, La Ferle, and Sung (2017), they worked on culturally congruent green advertising in India and the U.S. They found that Indian consumers responded more positively to messages that lined up with their collectivist cultural values, and that ad novelty played a significant role in consumer engagement. While their study was focused on green advertising, the broader point remains highly relevant, which is that the cultural context deeply shapes how messages are interpreted, especially when religious or moral themes are involved. So, pairing a demonic image with a positive brand message may not have felt contradictory to participants, but instead could have been interpreted as symbolic of overcoming adversity or channeling power for a good cause.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Conclusion

This research begins to investigate how the emotional tone of religious icons (valence), the level of consumer involvement in a product, and the alignment between icon and message (congruency) shape their intention to purchase and how valuable they perceive the product to be. With the help of three carefully designed experiments, it became clear that religious imagery doesn't work alone. Instead, its impact depends on how much the consumers are emotionally connected, how much the product is relevant to them, and how well it fits within the overall message being communicated.

The first experiment showed that the valence of religious icons has an impact on consumer's purchase intention. People were more inclined to buy when they saw positively valenced religious imagery, compared to negative ones. This suggests that uplifting religious cues can take consumer behavior in favorable directions. But product involvement is an equally important factor. Here, the effect of religious imagery was stronger when the product was personally important to consumers. In other words, when people really cared about the product, they paid more attention to the symbolism and responded more emotionally to it, as seen in the study that they were more attentive while rating the high involvement products like house, car and gold then low involvement products like toothpaste , soap and handwash.

In experiment 2, the focus was shifted to how well the positive religious icon was matched with the marketing message and The results revealed that people were more likely to view the product positively and also consider buying it when the valence of the icon matched with the overall message(congruent condition). But purchase intention and perceived value declined when there was a mismatch in valence of icon and brand messaging (incongruent condition), which indicates that congruence enhances effectiveness and incongruency decreases the impact.

Experiment 3, where the negative religious icon was paired with the marketing message(negative v/s positive). The findings suggested an unexpected but valuable understanding into how people respond to brand messaging where religious imagery is involved. The results do not support the idea that matching a negative image with negative information would be more effective (congruent condition), but showed that people responded

more positively when the brand shared positive mission, vision and core values even when paired with a negative religious icon like a demon. This shows that incongruent combinations can also be sometimes favorable for a brand. When viewers face tension between what they see and what they read, they may engage more deeply, think more critically, and form more favorable impressions especially when the positive elements like brand messaging offer hope, transformation, or purpose.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the field of consumer psychology by demonstrating how the religious icon valence, product involvement, and message congruency shape purchasing behavior. It expands existing research on symbolic consumption and persuasion by showing that positive religious icons boost purchase intentions, especially for high-involvement products. Also, the study provides novel understanding of the role of message incongruence, which suggests that mismatched religious imagery and brand messaging under some conditions may provoke deeper thinking and more favorable evaluations. These findings challenge the traditional assumption that congruence is always beneficial, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of symbolic influence in marketing.

7.3 Practical implications

The findings provide an insight for marketing strategy and brand communication. Positive religious imagery which is a symbol of peace, hope, or inspiration can be particularly effective in advertisement for high-involvement products, where emotional resonance plays an important role in decision-making. When Such symbols are thoughtfully used, it can induce deep connection in consumers and reinforce brand values.

Marketers may think about using incongruent imagery strategically. The tension caused when negative icons are paired with positive messaging can attract attention and induce thoughtful evaluation, which have a potential of enhancing brand memorability and favorability. This suggests that if incongruence is handled carefully, it can be a benefit rather than a liability.

Cultural and ethical sensitivity is essential when incorporating religious symbols into advertisements. Misrepresentation or superficial use of sacred imagery have a risk of audiences hatred and could damage brand reputation. This is why marketers should make sure that they

use the religious elements very respectful and are contextually informed, and aligned with the values of the target audience.

The research also points out the importance of storytelling in brand communication. When positive narratives involving transformation, hope, or purpose are combined with symbolic elements, brands can create emotionally powerful and culturally relevant campaigns that induce deeper consumer engagement and trust.

These insights are valuable for global marketing strategies in which the variations in cultural interpretation and religious symbolism must be kept in mind in order to maintain relevance and authenticity across a diverse consumer population.

7.4 Limitations

This study also has some limitations. First of all the experiments were carried out in a controlled environment and may have limited generalization to real world consumer behavior. Second, the study was restricted to a small subset of religious icons, and did not consider the differences in religious tradition, iconography, and meaning between cultures. Third, we did not have a systematic way of estimating or controlling for the participants' religiosity, which could have contributed to the variation in the participants' responses to the religious stimuli. Also the demographic diversity is limited. Future research could conduct cross-cultural studies as well as field experiments on a diverse population. Moreover, long-term influences of religious iconography on brand perception and consumer trust would also shed further lights about sustainability of such marketing strategies.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study: The Effects of Religious Icon, Involvement in Products, and Congruency on Consumers' Purchase Intention and Perceived Value

Investigator:

Bhawna Sharma
 Masters in Psychology (specialization- clinical)
 Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology
 Contact: bsharma_ma23@thapar.edu

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study that aims to explore how the presence of religious imagery, the level of product involvement, and the congruency between religious icons and brand information effects consumers' purchase intention and perceived value of products.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will take part in one of three experiments:

- In **Experiment 1**, you will be shown a series of advertisements combining various religious icons with high and low involvement products. You will be asked to rate your intention to purchase each product.
- In **Experiments 2 and 3**, you will view a brand website (designed for the study) with either positive or negative brand information paired with a religious icon. You will then be asked to evaluate your intention to purchase and your perceived value of the product.

The session will approximately take **8–10 minutes**. You will complete the task on a computer screen in a classroom setting. Your responses will be collected using a response sheet or digital form.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without facing any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Risks and Discomforts

No known significant risks are associated with participating in this study. However, some individuals may experience discomfort if they find religious imagery emotionally or personally sensitive. You are free to skip any stimuli or discontinue your participation at any point.

Benefits

No direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of consumer psychology, branding, and the influence of cultural and religious symbols in marketing.

Confidentiality

All data collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential. No personally identifying information will be collected. The results will be used for research purposes only and may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences, but your identity will never be disclosed.

Right to Ask Questions

If you have any questions about this research or your participation, please feel free to ask now or contact the researcher at any time using the contact information provided above.

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you indicate that:

- You have read and understood the information above.
- You voluntarily agree to participate in the study.
- You are between 18 to 25 years of age and self-identify as Hindu.

Participant's **Name:** _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's **Name:** _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Purchase intention Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

A. Demographics

Name:

Age:

Course you're pursuing:

contact info:

Instructions:

-You will be presented with different multifaceted companies including real estate, automobiles, gold jewellery, and essential self-care products.

-For each slide or trial, carefully read the information provided for the companies and evaluate your purchase intention.

-You will go through 24 slides, each depicting a new slide presenting a company and you have to rate 1 questions mentioned on a 5-point Likert-type scale (from

1 = 'Strongly disagree' to 5 = 'Strongly agree')

-You can go through the questions mentioned on the next page.

1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral,

4- Agree, 5- Strongly agree,

Slide number	I would like to buy this product
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	

Appendix C: Description sheet:

Divya Shakti

ABOUT US

Welcome to Divya Shakti, a vibrant and multifaceted brand dedicated to enriching your life through a diverse array of offerings, including real estate, automobiles, gold jewellery, and essential self-care products. Based in the heart of Jaipur, India, we pride ourselves on our global reach and commitment to excellence.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

At Divya Shakti, we believe in making a positive impact. Our CSR initiatives focus on education, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment. Through various programs, we have supported over 2000 individuals, investing 20% of our profits into local initiatives that uplift communities and foster development.

Genesis of Our Brand

Divya Shakti was founded with a vision to create a brand that not only excels in business but also embodies values of integrity, quality, and social responsibility. Our journey began with a small team driven by a passion for excellence and a commitment to serve diverse markets. Over the years, we have evolved into a global entity, guided by our core principles and an unwavering dedication to our customers.

Global Presence

With a footprint that extends across 6 countries, Divya Shakti is not just a local brand but a global entity. Our international partnerships and collaborations allow us to bring the best of global trends and innovations to our customers. We serve a diverse clientele, with 45% of our sales coming from international markets.

Appendix D: Advertisement

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGOwdQtNLs/B6coZgCpMZHfGBgwJzflgQ/edit?utm_content=DAGOwdQtNLs&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

Appendix E: PERVAL scale

- 1.has consistent quality
- 2.is well made
- 3.has an acceptable standard of quality
- 4.has poor workmanship (*)
5. would not last a long time (*)
- 6.would perform consistently
7. is one that I would enjoy
8. would make me want to use it
- 9.is one that I would feel relaxed about using
- 10.would make me feel good
- 11.would give me pleasure
12. is reasonably priced
13. offers value for money
- 14.is a good product for the price
- 15.would be economical
- 16.would help me to feel acceptable
17. would improve the way I am perceived
- 18.would make a good impression on
- 19.other people would give its owner social approval

(*) reverse scored