

Understanding Profiles of Indian Collectors and their Preferences

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Abstract

Collectable market is a virtual or a physical place where different collectors all over the world comes to trade the different collectable items as per their preferences. Collecting items entertain and enrich the individuals, socially, aesthetically and culturally. In order to understand this notion further, the collectible goods are further distinguished under the labels of objects, ideas or experiences (with or without tangible illustrations of these experiences). Mainly, collectors begin with general collections and narrow down as their knowledge increases. Collectors extensively collect items by spending time and funds to perform this activity, adding items to their assortments because of various reasons like pleasure enrich values to improve knowledge of collectibles, to become a part of a social group and to develop a self- identity. However, it is important to state that Interestingly, almost no study has provided a psychographic account of the buyers of the actual artwork and collectibles. However, according to researchers, there are other motivations that include expected price fairness (economic); social acceptability and group identification (normative); aesthetics, pleasure and immersion (hedonic); culture (intellectual); and harmony. Apart from these motivations, there are other collecting motives such as envy psychological security financial security, legitimization play, and power. Furthermore, individuals extend themselves through their possessions and collections tend to be important and personal to the collector, it follows that some collectors likely use their collections to express their individuality and identity. Their need for individuality would also possibly serve as a motivating factor driving collecting behaviours.

Key words: Collectable market, collectable items, collectors, collections, objects, profiles of collectors.

1. Introduction

Collecting is a global practice and can be observed at every corner of the world. In the Western world, almost one-third of the population count themselves as collectors, collecting being an innate part of their lives (Belk, 1995). This paper focuses on understanding the demographic as well as sociographic profiles of the Indian collectors. The paper also focuses in explaining the different preferences of the Indian collectors for the different collectibles.

Especially in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature.

The current research paper starts with defining who a collector is and delves into the various profiles and preferences of Indian Collectors and the results based on the conducted study.

2. Defining Collector & Collecting

Collecting demands ownership, however, a museum curator who procures objects for the museum may not be termed as a collector as he might be doing it as a job for the museum or might be utilizing his expertise to get appropriate and unique objects for the museum. A museum curator can be termed as a collector when he has a strong sense of belongingness towards the object and may go an extra mile to procure and protect the collectible and being termed as an institutional collector. He should also personally be collecting some objects of importance to be termed as a collector. It cannot be denied that groups and families have been involved in institutional collecting, a true collector always seeks an individual identity and thus that feeling encourages him to collect and emerge as a collector. An individual collector is thus an individual who has a strong sense of belongingness towards an object and once a collectible enters his collection, the object becomes non-ordinary and non-utilitarian and gains special attention. For some collectors, the collectible has the status of being sacred (Belk, 1989).

Researchers highlight that items related to art or books in many cases already have a sacred character, however, there are objects like postage stamps, jewellery, dolls which gain this sacred character, once they become a collectible as they stop serving their original use (Belk, 2013; Pearce, 2012). Thus, it can be deduced that individuals interested in acquiring, storing and maintaining objects due to their emotional or religious or historical significance are known as collectors. Prior studies illustrate that collectors are a distinctive section of consumers who possess a nature or habit of collecting as a part of leisure activity that develops as behavioural intention (Ajzen & Driver, 1991). Furthermore, the behavioural intention determines their attitude which helps them to evaluate the specific characteristics in the collected object. Collectors passionately acquire the objects with an affective state of mind and enjoy the collecting process itself (Belk, 2013; Muensterberger, 2014; Sloman et al., 2005). Their obsession with physical objects might originate from the collector's needs and wants, prompting inclination or disinclination towards collecting.

Collectors generally refer to themselves as suffering from a rage, a madness, an addiction, a compulsion, or an obsession. Because collecting is generally a socially approved activity, which does not require such an explanation as stigmatizing in the way that it would be for an alcoholic, a compulsive gambler, or a drug addict. Claiming such an addiction amusingly frees collectors of answerability for their behaviour. Majorly, such collectors are not out of self-control to an extent that they cannot help or stop themselves from purchasing ever more objects for their collection due to their cravings. Some collectors actually are out of control because there is an uneasy fear behind such confessions.

For example, there is a collector of Disney cartoon character replicas who is described in Belk et al. (1988): A recovering polydrug abuser, he described his current collecting behaviour as an addiction. He has accumulated a large collection of Mickey Mouse memorabilia and often obtained his "Mickey fix" in lieu of paying rent or meeting other financial obligations. The thrill of collecting and displaying these objects eventually threatened his well-being, so he stopped collecting "cold turkey" (p. 549).

Collecting is "the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences", Belk (1995, p. 479). By doing so, collectors develop their skills acquired through experience (Belk, 1995) and gain awareness of facts about new things (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Collecting objects with distinctive features not just require efforts and resources but also need time to search and step in a deal for assortments (Gelber, 1992). However, despite the collection's distinctive logics, there is a tendency of an individual to acquire the objects which creates new meanings and provide leisure and satisfaction to them. Collecting behaviour indicates the ability to procure and promote rare things even if it is hard to find. Such resource acquisition abilities provide them 'flow of experience' (Nordsletten & Mataix-Cols, 2012).

Gelber (1992) explains collecting objects as an engaging activity that provides leisure, for instance, stamp collection which even reflects the business activities (sale and purchase as per the requirement). By doing so, the collectors can bestow their leisure opportunity with functional activity. Furthermore, Olmsted (1991) argued that the rationale for collecting is recreation but it is rather ambiguous how an individual derives leisure from accumulating items with no definite utilitarian value. It is not evident, why individuals have such motives. Carey (2008) stated that collecting objects is justified by the aim of set-completion. According to Muensterberger (1994), due to deep feelings of fear and fluidity from childhood, collectors thus look for psychological security.

Collecting is a real problem, as Goldberg and Lewis (1978) explained: "Obsessed collectors ... are driven. The acquiring of a certain artefact or a rare gem becomes a matter of life and death (Goldberg & Lewis, 1978). The fascination of a collector overrules every other aspect of his life and he devotes every minute to thinking and planning how to obtain the next object for his range of collection or how to display it.

Thus, it can be understood from the above discussion that collecting is different from accumulation as the phenomenon of accumulation does not have selectivity. Since there is no systematisation in accumulation it does not possess any category description. In other words, it can be said that it is about not disposing items which the collector possesses whether they qualify as collectible or not. The next section of the paper considers various reasons which make collectors go an extra mile to collect objects which may have psychological as well as financial importance for them.

3. Profiles of Indian collectors: This section discusses the demographic as well as sociographic profiles of the collectors selected for the study.

Gender: Gender is one of the socio-demographic variables which seems to be significant determinants of collecting activities (Belk, 1991; Coca, 2001; Danet & Katriel, 1989; Formanek, 1991; Pearce, 1994). The data is collected from male as well as female collectors. The frequency distribution of the gender is shown below:

Table: Frequency Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	255	77.3 %
Female	75	22.7 %

Education Level: Educational level of the collectors is related to collecting historical and artistic items, with respect to collection sizes (Belk, 1995). As a hobby the collection provides educated participants with a sense of creativity, achievement and a work environment where they are feeling as their own bosses (Edwards, 2017; Gelber, 1991). In the study the responses are collected from collectors with different education backgrounds. The frequency distribution of the education background of the respondents is shown below:

Table: Frequency Distribution

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Senior Secondary	57	17.3%
Graduate	131	39.7%
Post Graduate	91	27.6%
Professional	51	15.5%

Marital Status: The responses are also collected from collectors with different marital status. The frequency distribution of the marital status of the respondents is shown below:

Table: Frequency Distribution

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Married	249	75.5%
Unmarried	81	24.5%

Profession

Gelber (1991) observed that hobbies of different types increase during the Great Depression of the 1930's. The people in media, education, government agencies engaged themselves in hobbies. The profession is supposed to provide the people a sense of creativity and achievement, and a work-like environment in which they were have the feeling of their own bosses (Edwards, 2017; Gelber, 1991). Collecting is a complex hobby and also related to work profession as it contained elements of speculation and exploitation. People select the hobbies because they provided a pleasurable relief or enjoyment from work. The profession of the people provides the reason to join the hobbies which are socially acceptable, the underlying reasons for the collection habits. This is due to similarities between work and collection hobbies, not in their differences (Menninger, 1942; Noy, 1968; 1969). In the study the responses are collected from the collectors who are in different professions. The frequency distribution is shown below:

Table: Frequency Distribution

Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Job/Service	132	40.0%
Business	95	28.8%
House wife	44	13.3%
Retired	59	17.9%

Family Connection

Collectible objects become more important than people. Few of the fanatic collectors progressively alienate themselves from friends and family, occasionally even becoming suspicious that others will take away their prized possessions (Goldberg and Lewis, 1978). In the study the respondents were asked whether anyone else in their family collects or not? The results of the frequency distribution is shown below:

Table: Frequency Distribution

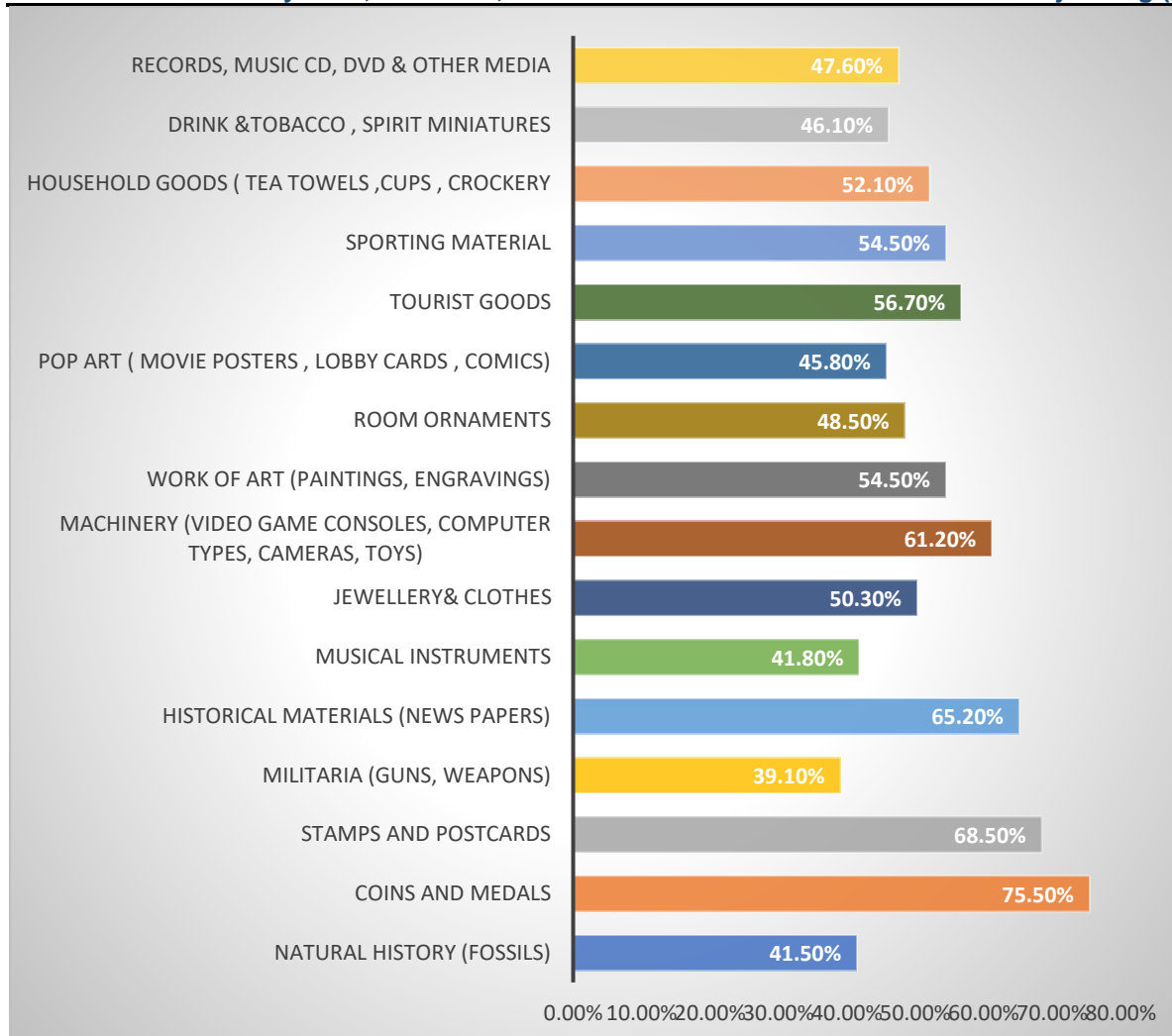
Family collects	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	269	81.5 %
No	61	18.5 %

4. Preferences of collecting the different collectibles

There are a number of objects found as collectibles which are in the collections of the different collectors. In the study the respondents were requested to provide the information about the different objects which are in the collections. The list of different collectibles are provided to the respondents and they are allowed to provide the multiple ticks on the given choices. The results of the frequency distribution are shown below:

Table: Frequency Distribution

Collect	Yes	No
Natural History (Fossils)	137 (41.5%)	193 (58.5%)
Coins and Medals	249 (75.5%)	81 (24.5%)
Stamps and Postcards	226 (68.5%)	104 (31.5%)
Militaria (Guns, weapons)	129 (39.1 %)	201 (60.9%)
Historical Materials (News Papers)	215 (65.2 %)	115 (34.8%)
Musical Instruments	138 (41.8%)	192 (58.2%)
Jewellery& Clothes	166 (50.3%)	164 (49.7%)
Machinery (Video Game Consoles, Computer types, Cameras, Toys)	202 (61.2 %)	128 (38.8%)
Work of art (Paintings, Engravings)	180 (54.5%)	150 (45.5%)
Room Ornaments	160 (48.5%)	170 (51.5%)
Pop Art (Movie Posters , Lobby Cards , Comics)	151 (45.8%)	179(54.2%)
Tourist Goods	187 (56.7%)	143 (43.3%)
Sporting Material	180 (54.5%)	150 (45.5%)
Household Goods (tea towels ,cups , crockery	172 (52.1%)	158 (47.9%)
Drink &Tobacco , spirit miniatures	152 (46.1%)	178 (53.9%)
Records, Music CD, DVD & other media	157 (47.6%)	173 (52.4%)



Items in collection

The collectors were requested to provide the information about the number of collectibles they have in their collection. The number of items is divided into five categories. Table reported the frequency distribution of the responses.

Table: Frequency distribution- Items in the collection

Items in collection	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 10	29	8.8%
11 to 20	51	15.5%
21 to 50	73	22.1%
51 to 100	86	26.1%
Above 100	91	27.6%

Do you belong to a collector's club or group?

The collectors in the survey were requested to provide the information whether they are the members of a collector club. Table reported the frequency distribution of the responses.

Table: Frequency distribution- Start thinking as collector

Collectors Club or group	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	252	76.4%
No	78	23.6%

Where do you get items of your collection

Source of getting items	Yes	No
By purchase	249 (75.5%)	81 (24.5%)
Birthday	70 (21.2%)	260 (78.8%)
Swapping	212 (64.2%)	118 (35.8%)
From collector's club	189 (57.2%)	141 (72.8%)
Informal Contacts	175 (53%)	155 (47%)
Others	141 (42.7%)	189 (57.3%)

Where did you buy the collectibles item

Source of getting items	Yes	No
Shop	48 (14.8%)	281 (85.2%)
Online auction	267 (80.9%)	63 (19.1%)
Another private collector	111 (33.6%)	219 (66.4%)
Internet	209 (63.3 %)	121 (36.7%)
Real auction	63 (19.1%)	267 (80.9%)

Extent (How much) the collector can spend to get something they need: In the study the respondents were requested to provide their response that how much they usually spend when they need something to get. The four choices were provided to the respondents. The frequency distribution of the responses is shown below:

Table: Extent (How much) the collector can spend to get something they need

Extent of amount Spend on need	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Rs 500	36	10.9 %
Rs 500 to Rs 5000	145	43.9 %
Rs 5000 to Rs 10000	99	30.0 %
More than Rs 20000	50	15.2%

5. Conclusion

Profiles

The result indicates that most of the respondents are male collectors (77.3%). The data is collected from the 22.7 % female collectors. The collection of the material requires a lot of time, passion and motivation, monetary resources which are mostly not available with the females. Thus, males are found to be engaged in collection of the collectibles. The male dominance in fact started from the stage of adolescence in most collecting areas due to the reason that men continue to control more financial resources (Rigby and Rigby, 1944). Men exercise more creative potential that women can express more broadly (Baekeland, 1981). Collection is considered as an aggressive and competitive activity more closely associated with male gender role socialization (Belk and Wallendorf, 1997). Collecting is more common among men who have more leisure time to engage in collecting activities (Pearce, 1994). (Baekeland, 1981) stated that habits of collecting objects is gender based. Women collect objects which are personal, rational, decorative and based on the relationships. However, men's collecting behaviours are impersonal, thematic and historical. In other words, collecting habit is deeply connected to the inner sensations of an individual. Moreover, collecting habits provide a feeling of security to the people which prepare them psychologically to invest money in buying the objects.

Education Level

The result indicates that most of the respondents are collectors are graduate (39.7%), 27.6 are postgraduate, 15.5 % are professionals and 17.3 percent are senior secondary level.

Marital Status

The result indicates that most of the respondents are collectors are married (75.5%) and 24.5 % of the collectors are unmarried. The married collectors are more involved with the collection practices. This is due to the reason that with age this habit also developed and the collectors after marriage are more focused towards the collection of the objects.

Profession

In this study, results clearly indicate that 40.0% of the respondents belong to job/service profession. It is find out that 28.8% respondents have business as profession.13.3% collectors are housewife and retired respondent percentage is 17.9%. The collectors in jobs/service are more engaged with collection hobbies as it provides an enjoyment and relief to them from their stressful work environment. It is also observed that

few of the collectors are collecting items which are associated with their profession such as a surgeon collects old surgical tools, or a barber collects straight razors (Reece, 1914). Another example is an entomologist who collects the objects like labels, sprayers, manuals and even advertising giveaways. These objects may be useful for teaching students about the history of entomology. These collectibles are associated with the history of collector's profession and is the tangible manifestations of the past (Whitford et al., 2001). Previous studies suggest that many collectors go for the collection of the objects as a professional who wanted to see the things in a new way (Mantoan, 2019).

Family Connection

Based on responses received it is analyzed in this study that 81.5% respondents agree that someone in their family collects collectibles. On the other hand, 18.5% respondents do not have anyone in family who used to collect collectibles.

Preferences for different collectibles

In this study it is found that 41.5% respondents collect natural history (Fossils) and 58.5% do not collect natural history (fossils). 75.5% respondents collect coins and medals whereas collectors who do not collect coins and metals are found to be 24.5%. Stamps and postcards is collected by 68.5% respondents and 31.5% do not collect stamps and postcards. Similarly, Militaria (guns, weapons) is collected by 39.1% respondents and 60.9% do not collect militaria (guns, weapons). 65.2% respondents are found to be collecting historical material (newspapers) and 34.8% respondents do not collect historical materials (newspapers). Musical instruments is collected by 41.8% respondents on the other hand 58.2% respondents do not collect musical instruments. Furthermore, it came out in this study that 50.3% respondents collect jewellery and clothes and 49.7% do not collect jewellery and clothes. Machinery (video game consoles, computer types, camera, toys) are collected by 61.2% respondents and 38.8% respondents do not collect it. Respondents who collect work of art (paintings, engravings) are 54.5% and 45.5% respondents do not collect work of art. Room ornaments are collected by respondents that is 48.5% whereas 51.5% do not collect room ornaments. 45.8% respondents are agree to collect pop art (movie posters, lobby cards, comics) and 51.5% do not collect it. Respondents who collect tourist goods are found to be 56.7% and 43.3% respondents do not collect tourist goods. 54.5% respondents collect sporting material and 45.5% respondents do not collect sporting material. Household goods (tea towels, cups, crockery) is collected by 52.1% respondent on the other hand 47.9% respondents do not agree to collect household goods. Drink & tobacco, spirit miniatures are collected by 46.1% respondents and 53.9% respondents do not collect it. Records, music CD, DVD and other media is collected by 47.6% of respondents and 52.4% respondents are found to be not agree to collect records, music CD, DVD and other media.

Items in Collection

Most of the collectors have more than 100 items in their collection (27.6%) followed by the 51 to 100 items in their collection (26.1%), 21 to 50 items in the collection (22.1%), 11 to 20 items (15.5%) and less than 10 items (8.8%). It is observed that most of the collectors have the target to reaching beyond 100 items in their collection as soon as possible.

Association with a collectors group

Most of the respondents accepted that they are the members of a collector's club (76.4%). Rest of the respondents (23.6%) denied that they are the members of any club.

Sourcing the Collection

Most of collectors buy the collectibles from the online auction (80.9%) which is one of the major sources of providing the collectibles. The next most popular source of the collectibles is internet (63.3%). Few of the collectors buys the collectibles from the other collectors (33.6%), real auction (19.1%) and shops (14.8%)

Money Willing to spend for an Item =

The results reported that most of the respondents (43.9%) are willing to spent Rs 500 to Rs 5000 in the situation when they want to get something. This is followed by 30 percent of respondents who are willing to spend Rs 5000 to Rs 10000 to buy the collectibles. Very few respondents (15.2 %) of the respondents found willing to spend more than Rs 20000 to buy the collectibles. Lee and Malmendier (2007) observed that 42% of online auctioneer eBay's final auction price mostly ended above the MRP of the same product offered elsewhere on the same website. Bidders usually have willingness to spend money to buy the collectibles which increases usually in the competitive auction.

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