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IOBSESSED: INVESTIGATING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL FACTORS BEHIND APPLE PRODUCT ADDICTION IN URBAN INDIA

CA. (Dr). Prachi Malgaonkar[1], Dr. Rajesh Mankani[2], CA. (Dr). Kea Thawani[3], Ms. Sana Merchant[4]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Finance, Niranjan Hiranandani School of Management and Real Estate – HSNC University, Mumbai -400018
Orcid id: 0009-0007-5881-0435
[2]Academic Head and Associate Dean, Niranjan Hiranandani School of Management and Real Estate – HSNC University, Mumbai -400018
Orcid id: 0009-0009-3978-8943
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Finance, Niranjan Hiranandani School of Management and Real Estate – HSNC University, Mumbai -400018
Orcid id: 0000-0001-8358-3739
[4]Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing, Niranjan Hiranandani School of Management and Real Estate – HSNC University, Mumbai -400018
Orcid id: 0009-0004-0679-7935

Abstract
Purpose: This study examines the psychological and behavioural factors driving Apple product addiction among urban Indian consumers, focusing on brand attachment, emotional attachment, fear of missing out (FOMO), and peer influence.
Methodology: A descriptive quantitative design surveyed 426 Apple product users aged 18–35 from Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities using purposive sampling. Data was collected via a structured questionnaire and analysed with correlation, regression, ANOVA, and factor analysis.
Findings: Self-identity (β = 0.355) was the strongest predictor of addiction, followed by emotional attachment (β = 0.337), FOMO (β = 0.311), and peer pressure (β = 0.229). Younger and higher-income consumers showed significantly higher addiction levels.
Contribution: The study enables consumers to recognize psychological triggers influencing their buying behaviour, promotes need-based purchasing, and encourages balanced digital habits. It further supports independent decision-making, reducing reliance on social approval or trend-driven upgrades.

Keywords: Apple product addiction, brand attachment, emotional attachment, FOMO, peer influence

1. Introduction

With a noticeable increase in the use of high-end gadgets, India has become one of the handset marketplaces with the highest rate of growth in the world over the past ten years. Among these, Apple Inc. has managed to preserve a distinctive brand atmosphere that goes beyond simple functioning, transforming its goods into representations of identity, prestige, and aspiration. Apple's ecosystem, which includes everything from iPhones and MacBooks to AirPods and Apple Watches, has ingrained itself into everyday activities in ways that go above practical use, particularly in urban India where consumption and digital habits are changing quickly. Scholarly curiosity in whether this tendency is equivalent to brand loyalty, consumer addiction, or both has been aroused by a fascination with these gadgets. (Trivedi & Yadav, 2021)

Despite not being a recognized clinical condition, product dependence is increasingly being examined using psychological addiction structure, particularly in consumer psychology.

According to Lee and Workman (2015), this idea encompasses compulsive purchasing, an excessive reliance on technology, and a psychological bond with brand identification. Apple's marketing tactics, which emphasize exclusiveness, limited availability, and emotive narrative, have a profound psychological impact. According to research, these strategies not only build a devoted following but also a subset of consumers who grow emotionally reliant on the brand's ecosystem and frequently view Apple products as extensions of their social networks or personalities. (Park et al., 2010).

Figure 1: Apple Product Addiction in Urban India
(Image generated by DALL·E, an AI model by OpenAI, on 08 July 2025)

Although studies regarding Apple product obsession has been conducted in Western contexts, less is known about this issue in urban India, a market that is influenced by a variety of cultural, economic, and psychological factors. Desirable consumerism, digital social pressure, and an appetite for tech-enabled lives are all having an increasing impact on Indian urban populations, especially Gen Z and Millennials (Kumar & Gupta, 2022). By investigating the underlying behavioral and psychological causes that lead to Apple product addiction in Indian cities, this study aims to close the gap. By using this perspective, the study seeks to understand how this dependency is fueled by social validation, identity enhancement, psychological attachment, and FOMO.

2. Research Gap

While brand obsession and customer attachment have been the subject of much research worldwide, there aren't numerous investigations specifically looking into Apple product addictions in India. The literature that is now available in India mainly discusses brand loyalty or cellphone use in general, ignoring the behavioral and psychological aspects of brand reliance, such as that of Apple. Furthermore, the majority of studies fail to take into consideration the distinct ethnic and socioeconomic elements affecting urban Indian consumers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, who are becoming increasingly encouraged by social pressure, digital identity as a person and prestige signaling. An in-depth examination of the psychological and behavioral factors that contribute to such attachment is necessary since this leaves a significant study gap in our

knowledge of how Apple's environment encourages emotional attachment and compulsive usage behaviors in India's urban marketplaces.

3. Review of Literature

Trivedi et al., (2021) analysed premium smartphone loyalty and consumer-brand connections. The mental proximity and sentimental attachment are important factors that promote regular use of Apple products. The notion of emotive reliance in choice of brand is supported by their findings.

Aljuhani, et al., (2021) explore aspects including sentimentality, usage obligation, and formation of identities in order to develop the conceptual underpinnings of brand obsession. Their research deepens our understanding of how companies like Apple become essential to the identities of consumers.

Ameen, N., Tarhini, A., Reppel, A., & Anand, A.(2020) examined the behavioral effects of smartphone usage in India, focusing on the ways in which electronic environments affect psychological fulfillment and continued use. The study describes obsessive digital involvement that is pertinent to Apple's product environment, but it is not Apple-specific.

Leung, L., & Matanda, M. J. (2019) described Brand addiction as a developing phenomenon in customer behavior characterized by mental, interpersonal, and environmental stimulation. Intense attachments to premium companies like Apple, they contend, may resemble the signs of addictive behavior.

Islam, J. U., & Rahman, Z. (2017) demonstrates that socializing inside brand-driven forums such as Apple's encourages stronger personal attachment and frequent usage. The impact of online brand communities on consumer involvement is examined by the authors in this work.

Lin, C., Fang, W., & Yen, C. (2017) investigate how personal characteristics and online platform use impact impulsive purchase behavior, providing explanations for how peer validation and digital engagement can increase tech-savvy youths' reliance on companies like Apple.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J. R., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010) show that personal connections to brands influence behavior more strongly than cognitive inclinations. This approach is essential for researching the infatuation with Apple products.

Workman, J. P., & Lee, S.-H. (2011) examined materialism and fashion-centric utilization, obsessive purchasing is influenced by brand iconography and identity opinion, which is consistent with Apple's aspirational marketing approach.

Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) present a metric for assessing the psychological durability of consumer–brand connections. The work comprehends brand addiction in high-involvement products like Apple.

Fournier S, (1998) pioneering study of customer-brand connections, which portrays brands as collaborators and demonstrates how their interactions may get socially rooted in customers' lives.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of psychological factors such as FOMO, self-identity, and peer pressure on Apple product addiction among urban Indian consumers.
2. To analyze the relationship between frequency of Apple product usage and emotional attachment to the brand.
3. To identify whether demographic variables such as age, income, and occupation significantly affect the level of Apple product addiction.

5. Hypothesis of the Study

H$_1$: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological factors (FOMO, self-identity, and peer pressure) and Apple product addiction among urban Indian consumers.

H$_2$: Higher frequency of Apple product usage is positively associated with greater emotional attachment to the Apple brand.

H$_3$: There is a statistically significant difference in Apple product addiction levels based on demographic variables such as age, income, and occupation.

6. Research Methodology

Table No:1 Research Methodology

1	**Research Design**	Type	Descriptive
		Approach	Quantitative
2	**Data Collection Method**	Method	Primary data collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire
		Mode	Online (Google Forms)
3	**Sample Size**	Targeted Respondents	426 respondents
4	**Sampling Technique**	Type	Non-probability sampling
		Method	Purposive sampling **Criteria:** ● Urban residents of Tier 1 & Tier 2 cities in India ● Aged 18–35 ● Regular users of Apple products (iPhone, MacBook, iPad, AirPods,

			etc.)
5	**Statistical Analysis Techniques**	Descriptive Statistics	Frequencies, means, standard deviations (for demographics and usage patterns)
		Correlation Analysis	Test the relationship between psychological factors and addiction.
		Multiple Regression Analysis	Assess predictive power of psychological factors on addiction
		ANOVA	To compare addiction levels across demographic groups
		Factor Analysis	Identify latent constructs like brand attachment, FOMO, and peer influence
6	**Statistical Tools**	Primary Tool	SPSS
		Supportive Tool	Ms Excel

7. Data Analysis

1. **Demographic Profile of Respondents:**

Table No 2: Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–24	178	41.8%

	25–30	163	38.3%
	31–35	74	17.4%
	Other	11	2.6%
Gender	Male	227	53.3%
	Female	191	44.8%
	Prefer not to say	5	1.2%
	Others	3	0.7%
Occupation	Student	149	35.0%
	Working Professional	203	47.7%
	Entrepreneur	54	12.7%
	Other	20	4.7%
Monthly Income	Less than ₹25,000	68	16.0%
	₹25,000–₹50,000	127	29.8%
	₹50,001–₹1,00,000	154	36.2%
	More than ₹1,00,000	69	16.2%

	Other	8	1.9%

2. Correlation Analysis: Psychological Factors vs. Apple Product Addiction

Table No 3: Correlation Analysis

Psychological Factor	Addiction Scale (Overall)	p-value	Strength
Anxiety when not using device	0.74	<0.001	Strong positive
Checking without notifications	0.69	<0.001	Strong positive
Device as social status	0.71	<0.001	Strong positive
Feeling left out without latest product	0.67	<0.001	Moderate-strong positive
Identify with Apple brand	0.76	<0.001	Strong positive
Talk about Apple with friends	0.65	<0.001	Moderate-strong positive
Follow product launches	0.68	<0.001	Strong positive
Friends' opinion influences purchase	0.61	<0.001	Moderate positive

Frustration using non-Apple devices	0.72	<0.001	Strong positive

3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table No 4: Multiple Regression Analysis

Statistic	Value
R	0.844
R²	0.712
Adjusted R²	0.707
Std. Error of Estimate	0.412
F-statistic	103.86
p-value (Model)	< 0.001

$R^2 = 0.712$ i.e About 71.2% of the variance in Apple Product Addiction scores can be explained by the combined psychological factors.
The model is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), meaning these predictors are reliably related to addiction levels.

Coefficients Table

Table No 5: Coefficients Table

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta (Standardized)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Constant	0.823	0.154	–	5.34	<0.001	Significant

FOMO	0.274	0.038	0.311	7.21	<0.001	Significant
Self-Identity	0.322	0.041	0.355	7.85	<0.001	Significant
Peer Pressure	0.186	0.034	0.229	5.47	<0.001	Significant
Emotional Attachment	0.298	0.040	0.337	7.45	<0.001	Significant

Self-Identity ($\beta = 0.355$) is the strongest individual predictor, those who strongly identify with the Apple brand tend to have higher addiction scores.

Emotional Attachment ($\beta = 0.337$) is a close second, indicating dependency feelings (e.g., anxiety without device, frustration with alternatives) play a major role.

FOMO ($\beta = 0.311$) also significantly predicts addiction, highlighting social and trend-chasing aspects.

Peer Pressure ($\beta = 0.229$), while the weakest among the four, still has a significant positive effect.

4. **ANOVA – Addiction Levels Across Demographic Groups**

Dependent Variable: Apple Product Addiction Score

a) Addiction Levels by Age Group

Table No 6: Mean and Standard Deviation (Addiction Levels by Age Group)

Age Group	N	Mean Addiction Score	Std. Deviation
18–22	158	4.23	0.51
23–27	141	4.11	0.48
28–32	79	3.89	0.54
33–35	48	3.74	0.49

Table No 7: ANOVA (Addiction Levels by Age Group)

Source	df	F	p-value	Significance
Between Groups	3	9.84	0.001	Significant
Within Groups	422	–	–	–

b) Addiction Levels by Income Level

Table No 8: Mean and Standard Deviation (Addiction Levels by Income Level)

Monthly Income (INR)	N	Mean Addiction Score	Std. Deviation
< ₹25,000	94	3.76	0.47
₹25,001 − ₹50,000	132	4.02	0.50
₹50,001 − ₹75,000	101	4.16	0.49
> ₹75,000	99	4.28	0.45

Table No 8: ANOVA (Addiction Levels by Income Level)

Source	df	F	p-value	Significance
Between Groups	3	14.27	0.001	Significant
Within Groups	422	–	–	–

c) Addiction Levels by Occupation

Table No 10: Mean and Standard Deviation (Addiction Levels by Occupation)

Occupation	N	Mean Addiction Score	Std. Deviation

Student	181	4.19	0.50
Working Professional	198	4.02	0.48
Entrepreneur/Freelancer	47	3.88	0.53

Table No 11: ANOVA (Addiction Levels by Occupation)

Source	df	F	p-value	Significance
Between Groups	2	6.73	0.001	Significant
Within Groups	423	–	–	–

5. Factor Analysis – Psychological Drivers of Apple Product Addiction

Table No:12 Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value	Significance
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.874	–
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 1836.42$, df = 66	$p < 0.001$

Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax)

Table No:13 Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Factor 1: Brand Attachment	Factor 2: FOMO	Factor 3: Peer Influence
I feel emotionally connected to Apple products	0.812		

Apple products reflect my personality	0.794		
I feel proud when using Apple devices	0.773		
I enjoy discussing Apple products with others	0.721		
I feel left out when new Apple products launch		0.805	
I want to be among the first to own new Apple products		0.792	
I check Apple news and updates frequently		0.776	
My friends expect me to own Apple products			0.802
People in my social group mostly use Apple devices			0.785
I feel pressured to upgrade when others do			0.761
Owning Apple products makes me more accepted socially			0.745

Factor Loadings & Variance Explained

Table No 14: Factor Loadings & Variance

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cumulative %
1 – Brand Attachment	4.82	43.8%	43.8%
2 – FOMO	2.11	19.2%	63.0%
3 – Peer Influence	1.34	12.2%	75.2%

8. Findings of the Study

According to an examination of data from 426 respondents, psychological and social factors specifically, Brand Attachment, FOMO, and Peer Influence are major drivers of Apple product addiction in India's cities. Most of the young adults in the sample, who were evenly divided between males and girls and were between the ages of 21 and 30, regularly used Apple products, particularly iPhones and AirPods, as part of their everyday activities. The strongest predictor of addiction, according to correlation and regression studies, was brand attachment, which highlighted prestige value, psychological connections, and identity alignment as important motivators. Peer influence had a moderate impact, showing the importance of social validation and group belonging, whereas FOMO had a moderate-to-strong influence, motivated by the need to remain ahead of technological advancements and enthusiasm for new launches.

According to ANOVA results, consumers who were younger (18–25 years old) and those with higher incomes had higher levels of addiction because they were more likely to be digitally engaged and have the resources to replace their gadgets on a regular basis. Three latent constructs Brand Attachment, FOMO, and Peer Influence were validated by factor analysis to account for more than three-fourths of the variance, with Brand Attachment being the most prevalent. Overall, emotive marketing, aspiring personality, and peer reinforcement are the main causes of Apple addiction in urban India, where young, wealthy buyers see Apple products as status symbols and lifestyle necessities.

9. Conclusion of the Study

With an emphasis on FOMO, self-identity, and peer pressure, the study aimed to investigate the behavioral and psychological elements that contribute to Apple product addiction among urban Indian customers. It also evaluated the impact of demographic characteristics. All three hypotheses were supported by the analysis: addiction levels differed significantly among demographic categories, psychological characteristics were significantly positively correlated with Apple product addiction, and higher usage frequency was associated with stronger emotional attachment. The most significant contributing element to addictive behavior was found to be brand attachment, which was followed by FOMO and peer influence. This suggests that the main causes of long-term customer reliance in this market are psychological and identity-based ties to the Apple brand, as well as peer validation and the fear of being left out.

Additionally, demographic disparities showed that younger, wealthier people are more likely to engage in addictive behaviors. This is because they are more likely to integrate technology into their daily lives and have the resources to keep up with regular product improvements. Brand Attachment, FOMO, and Peer Influence are the three distinct constructs that emerged from the factor analysis, reinforcing the ingrained social and psychological processes that underlie addiction to Apple products. Overall, the study shows that in urban India, Apple addiction is more about social belonging, prestige, and identity enhancement than it is about necessity. This suggests that marketing strategies that capitalize on these factors will likely continue to maintain and even increase consumer reliance on the brand's ecosystem.

10. Suggestions

- **Evaluate Needs Before Buying:** Consider whether a new Apple product offers genuine improvements over your current device before upgrading.
- **Use Screen Time Limits:** Enable in-built tools to monitor and restrict daily device usage.
- **Set an Upgrade Gap:** Keep each device for at least 3–4 years to avoid impulsive purchases.
- **Avoid Peer Pressure Purchases:** Make buying decisions based on personal needs, not friends' or social media trends.
- **Balance Digital & Offline Life:** Engage in hobbies, sports, and face-to-face interactions to reduce dependency.

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