



DEMOGRAPHIC DRIVERS OF BRAND LOVE IN THE INDIAN SMARTPHONE CATEGORY

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Abstract: This empirical study examines whether smartphone users experience love for their smartphone brands and whether there is a relationship between demographic variables and brand love in smartphone users in the Indian context. A personal interview based survey is carried out in two cities in Gujarat state using convenience sampling. Analysis of variance is used to test whether the demographic variables of age, gender, education, occupation and income, are significantly related to brand love for smartphones. The findings confirm that age, gender, education and income are significantly related to strong positive feelings for the smartphone brands. Occupation, however does not have a significant relationship.

Terms–Brand love, Demographic variables, Smartphone, India

INTRODUCTION

The marketing environment in the smartphone category in India is currently highly competitive with the players trying to increase their market shares through innovative offerings. New brands are introduced and the different models of handsets that are launched regularly in the markets can make it very difficult for consumers to choose a handset that is well suited to their needs for communication and entertainment. Consumers find it challenging to compare across brands and handset models to arrive at their choice. Many of the consumers are also very knowledgeable about smartphone features and consider the phone as an extension of themselves. There is very close competition among the brands and switching behavior is quite high.

One way to create loyalty among smartphone users is to carry out marketing activities that result in creating strong positive feelings for the brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand love

Research has shown that it is possible for consumers to develop feelings for objects, products and brands. (Fournier, 1998). However, this feeling is not possible with all products and brands used by consumers. (Thomson et al., 2005). Such strong feelings result in long lasting relationships with products and brands (Belk, 1988). When the positive feelings for a brand are high it is labelled as love for a brand and this was initially documented by Rubin, 1970 and later by Shimp and Madden, 1988). When consumers experience brand love, it leads to desirable outcomes like brand loyalty and positive word of mouth (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

Demographic factors and consumer behavior

Demographic factors are studied in this research as there is support in the literature for a significant association of these factors and brand related attitudes and behavior.

As early as the 1960s, age, gender, income and education are found to be influential factors with respect to information search and evaluation behavior (Koponen, A. (1960). Other consumer behavior variables like impulsiveness and brand loyalty are also linked to demographics. Lower levels of education is associated with higher impulsiveness and lower loyalty to consumer durable brands. At the same time lower income consumers tend to be more impulsive while shopping and not as loyal to consumer durable brands.

With regard to consumer ethnocentrism, Shankarmahesh (2006) has found that age, income, education, race and social class are its antecedents. However, it has a positive correlation with age and a negative one with education level (Caruana & Magri, 1996). Good & Huddleston (1995) noted that older customers have negative attitudes towards foreign products. Also educated customers with high income are less ethnocentric. Similarly, women are seen to be more ethnocentric than men. Watson & Wright (2000) have found that high-ethnocentric consumers are more likely to be female, older, less educated, and less wealthy- than low-ethnocentric consumers.

Taking the example of green branding, age is found to be associated with green brand preferences (Roberts 1996) and females are found to be more pro environmental (Zimmer et al 1994). Education has a strong association with positive environmental behavior as per Zimmer et al 1994, and income is positively correlated with buying green products. (Finisterra et al., 2009).

Other contexts where demographics were found to be related were online buying (Cummins et al (2014), buying behavior in general (Myers et al (1971), recycling behavior Berger (1997), response to market decision variables (McLain & Sternquist, 1991), supermarkets Shiu, E. and Dawson, J. (2001) and purchasing involvement Slama, M. and Tashchian, A. (1985)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the presence of brand love in consumers of smartphone category
2. To study the relationship between demographic factors and brand love

HYPOTHESES

In the current study the following hypotheses are tested:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between age and brand love
- H2: There is a significant relationship between gender and brand love
- H3: There is a significant relationship between education and brand love
- H4: There is a significant relationship between income and brand love
- H5: There is a significant relationship between occupation and brand love

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section discusses the plan for conducting the study and the methods used for the same.

Population and Sample

The population for the study consists of the state of Gujarat in India. Convenience sampling method was followed and a valid sample of 368 respondents was collected.

Data and Sources of Data

The survey was carried out in the two cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara which represent two large cities of Gujarat.

Theoretical framework

The dependent variable in this study is brand love while the independent variables are the demographics of the respondents viz age, gender, education, occupation and monthly income.

Statistical tools

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statics has been used to find the maximum, minimum, standard deviation, mean and normally distribution of the data of all the variables of the study.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Analysis of Variance test was performed to test whether there is an association between the demographic variables and brand love.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assumptions for ANOVA were tested and found acceptable. The data was normally distributed as per Shapiro Wilk's test ($p > .05$). The dependent variable was measured using interval scale and the independent variables have two or more categories for comparison. Each demographic variable category is treated as an independent sample. The results are summarized below:

Sr No	Independent variable	F value	Significance
1	Age	9.543	0.000
2	Gender	18.366	0.000
3	Education	9.636	0.000
4	Occupation	1.21	0.298
5	Income	5.416	0.000

The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in brand love between at least two groups for age ($F=9.543, p=.000$), gender ($F=18.366, p=.000$), education ($F=9.636, p=.000$) and income ($F=5.416, p=.000$).

However, for occupation there was no statistically significant difference in brand love between at least two groups ($F=1.21, p=.298$).

Thus hypotheses H1 to H4 are found to be significant and we can conclude that there is statistical evidence that age, gender, education and income determine the formation of brand love for smartphones.

The F value is insignificant for occupation thus indicating that there is insufficient evidence that occupation determines the formation of brand love. Thus hypothesis H5 is rejected.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that except for occupation, other demographic variables like age, gender, education and income significantly determine the formation of brand love for smartphones.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study has been conducted in only two cities in Gujarat. The results may not be generalisable to the whole country.

Only demographic variables are studied. However, psychographic variables could also be related to brand love.

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