

THE IMPACT OF BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMERS BUYING BEHAVIOUR

¹Udit Agarwal, ²Aanchal Gupta, ³Rahul Bantia

^{1,2,3} Student, School of Business Studies and Social Sciences, Christ, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Abstract: The main objective of this research paper is to study the customers or consumers buying behaviour or the attitude towards selecting a product to be bought by its professional brand image. Brand image has basically become a brand's asset. Moreover, studies have also elaborated on the impact of brand image and brand equity on one another. So this study presents how brand image impacts on a customer's choice and on lower market competitors who do not have good or professional brand image as compared to MNCs. The paper further reveals the dependability of their buying pattern on various terms related to brand image or building brand image. Therefore, keeping in mind the consumer's opinion, companies have started modifying their operations in accordance with the consumers' outlook and focus on fabricating brand image.

Keywords: Brand image, Brand equity, Consumer behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

A strong brand image in the minds of consumers and in the competitive market is the main goal of many firms and organisations because it helps in creation of good scope of market and business for the organisation which helps in numerous opportunities and brand extension. Creation of unique brands becomes the starting point for the brand to strengthen the image of it in the competitive market within the consumers.

Brand image is the key driver of brand value, which refers to customer's general discernment and feeling about a brand and has an effect on customer conduct. For advertisers, whatever their organizations' promoting procedures are the primary motivation behind their promoting exercises is to impact customers' observation and state of mind toward a brand, build up the brand image in customers' mind, and empower shoppers' real acquiring conduct of the brand, in this manner expanding deals, boosting the piece of the pie and creating brand equity.

Brand equity is the concentration of the two academics and specialists; notwithstanding there is no worldview among the brand value thinks about at this point. Most examinations measure brand value from point of view of shopper or from the organization itself. On one hand, a few analysts trust that purchasers' subjective observation (e.g., attitude, satisfaction level of consumer and so on.) of the brand is the way to brand value. In spite of the fact that the utilization choice will be affected by mark highlights and qualities, it is controlled by shoppers' recognition about the brand image. Notwithstanding the difference in purchasers' way of life and the method for data handling, brand image remains the predominant effect factor of utilization choices. Then again, a few analysts trust that brand value ought to be assessed regarding piece of the pie, advertise esteem and income.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customers evaluate some features or attributes of the product before making Keller (1993) stated that brand image changes the attitude of the consumer towards a product which reflects in the choices of it. Image of a brand can be said as a reflection of success of a brand which stays in the memory of the consumer with a positive note and is easily remembered by the people (Aaker, 1997). Selection of the name for the brand plays a major role in the success of brand in future because a strong name shows the ability of differentiation, intensity and the loyalty which is associated with the brand (Wantara, 2008). Brand image also describes the offer of the company which specifies the core meaning associated with the customers and the quality of the product or its services (Winarso, 2012).

Before purchasing a product or before selecting a product a consumer considers some attributes of the choice made by him (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). The picture which is already created by the brand image for the brand in the minds of the consumer is the basis for the consumer and people around them which use that perception as the experience and which lays the basis of selection of the product by other people (Cannon, Perrault & McCarthy, 2009).

Consumer's mind set in regards to the quality of the brand creates a basis for the consumer to select or purchase a product (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Consumers compare the brand image, prices of relative products, corporate image. These perceptions make a great impact on the brand choice (Khraim, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

To observe and study the impact of brand image on consumers purchase behaviour, mainly secondary data was used. Various articles, publications, data present over the platform of internet were used to analyse the impact of brand image on consumer buying behaviour. Through secondary data, the basic idea is to understand and analyse the quantitative data available and also through observations for building a cause and effect relationship. The data provides the direction in obtaining results and interpretation for the same.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

On one hand, the brand image brings growth and development for the well established brands, whereas on the other hand it also overshadows the small medium enterprises which do not have any strong brand image. Market nowadays has become a play of a few big competitors. Due to this bridging gap between small and big brands, the market is moving towards forming an oligopoly for a few industries or sectors. Not all industries but a few in the recent years have eyed emergence of well known brand extending their product line to trap the consumer base in the other industry also. In the past few years, many start-ups have emerged but only a very few out of them are able to earn the brand value and make a place in the hearts of the prospective customers. The well established brands tend to absorb the maximum market share leaving a small share for the rest of the small competitors.

BRAND IMAGE

Brand image creates a sense of belongingness in the consumers' mind because of which the customer finds himself/herself related to the brand in some or the other ways. Here, word of mouth plays a major role as a brand which has a fixed value in the minds of a customer; he further will recommend it to others. Brand image therefore is creating a strong presence of the product that one is selling. Hence, the companies believe in creating a strong uphold within the market and building a brand image. They market and advertise in a way that is most suitable for building and maintaining the brand image. Brand image is a subconscious thinking or image of the brand that leads to customer retention. Experiences and prior knowledge about the brand forms the basis for a strong brand image. Brand image is based on several factors like the brand efficiency, brand service, reputation of the brand. Sometimes, building a brand image requires utilization of capital due to which the small medium enterprises which do not have a hue investment remains in the background. Therefore, most part of the market share is absorbed by the companies with a renowned brand name. The idea is to introduce effective marketing campaigns according to the developed brand equity based on brand image and consumers loyalty towards the brand. Brand image building is a mixture of distinctive identity, unique selling proposition and the trusted brand name attached to it. Once built it can conquer the competitors for the upcoming years.

Brand image thereafter implants seeds for brand loyalty to grow upon. Brand loyalty is calculated by the frequency of the consumer's purchases from the brand or the purchasing intention of the buyer. Brand image creates value perception but one of the differences is that brand image is what is portrayed externally whereas value perception is the customer or consumer's own decision about the actual worth of the brand. Brand image being a broad term has numerous consequences and other chain of benefits. Brands focus on satisfying the consumers' needs and demands, which once done the consumers start associating themselves with the brand. A brand stands by its people and for its people, consumers being its one of the most important asset and the only source of success, the tastes and preference if consumers have a direct impact on the functioning and the stability of the brand.

IMPACT OF BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER'S BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Brand image is formed by the consumers more than it is created by the company. It is a combination of consumer's opinion and attitudes and therefore it has a direct impact on the consumers buying behaviour. A consumer's general perception about the brand will help in measuring the frequency of the consumer's presence at the brand or the store. The purchase behaviour of the customers is a key characteristic in determining the brands future and the long term position.

Previous studies show that customer satisfaction was one of the key drivers in outlining the behaviour pattern of consumers. But in recent years, a gradual shift can be witnessed towards the importance given to the brand image and value. Especially people belonging to high income earning group tend to picture the brand quality from its brand image. The magnitude of influence of brand image might be low but still it forms the majority part of the buying decision. Also, Keller (1993) and Iassar (1995) et al. had the opinion that customers confidence in a brand signifies brand equity. It is the reason why consumers in a few cases are willing to pay a much higher amount for the same product. If the brand or the brand image that it carries fulfils all the requirements of a customer then it becomes easy for the seller to graph the number and frequency of the buyers.

Brand image and customer satisfaction though are two different terms but are highly interconnected in terms of delivering the best valued service. Brand image is maintained throughout the years only when customer satisfaction is catered to. The chain reaction results in the final purchase by the customer. The relationship between the different terms is shown in the following diagram.

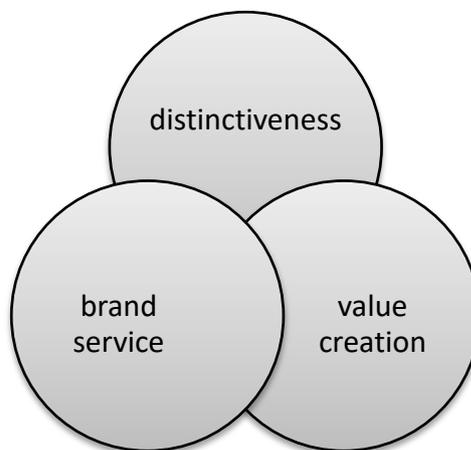


Fig. 1 Building brand image



Fig.2 Process leading to buying decision

The overall impact of brand image on the positioning of the brand also forms the basis for the consumers buying behaviour. The customer reaches the stable buying behaviour for a brand when the assessment of all brands has been completed by the customer. The purchase intention is dependent on the perception about the brand to a great extent. The wrong once done cannot be undone; the loss undergone by the customer due to the poor brand service will have long term effects. Hence, building a strong brand image is highly significant for continued success and customer retention.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Data has been extracted from authentic sources which relate to the impact of brand image on consumer buying behaviour. The following two tables describe how various characteristics rather regular habits of consumers affect the frequency of purchases made. The percentages so extracted are quite high which depict the validity of the statement and the paper. The detailed interpretation of the presented data is given below, which clearly examines the result of the paper and proves how much is the actual dependability on brand image for making decisions about buying pattern and occurrence.

Table 1: Role of brand image in influencing buying behaviour of customers

Advocacy	38%	People recommend a brand they follow on any social networking site
Brand	21%	People often say they purchased it because of the brand was of their choice
Email marketing	64%	People tend to ignore the mails, but they open only if it is from a trusted brand they like

Search	16%	Brand recall increased as it appeared in search results more frequently as compared to other brands
Social media	77%	People look for support and service through social media
Word of mouth	3 times	Brands with higher emotional intensity have 3 times the word of mouth marketing than for any other company with no emotional effect
Familiarity	59%	People believe in using the brand that they are aware of

Table 2: Which brand attribute matters the most?

Trustworthiness	31%
Creativeness	29%
Intelligence	23%
Authenticity	22%
Confidence	21%

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data has been interpreted in a systematic manner and the following judgements have been made. The table1 shows that the various characteristics and habits associated with purchasing decisions are dependent on branding to a great extent either directly or indirectly.

Recommendations: As in the case of advocacy, brand awareness is spread when one recommends it to other. Living in 21st century, people are often swayed away with the recommendations of others and therefore the percentage is as high as 38% of all the customers.

First impression is the last: We are attracted to the things of our choice and hence 21% of the customers claim that they have bought a product because they were akin to the brand.

Pre conceived notions: Brand image also influences the way we pay attention to the emails and other marketing strategies of the other brands. The data depicts that 64% of the customers have a propensity to pay no heed to the emails received from the brand which do not have a strong brand image or are not trusted by the customer.

Rate of recurrence: Search engines also sometimes play a role in advertising the brand, if a brand is on top of the search list is likely to catch the eye of various prospective customers, 16% of the customers agree to the fact that they extract knowledge about a few brands through this source.

Quality of service: Brand image is also built and maintained when one provides the required service, therefore customers seek to gain service through different platforms be it social media, or physical means. Therefore, through the above data we can interpret that a large number of customers buy a product its service or support is available online or through various social media platforms.

The good word: Brand can be known by a few but it is the brand value that helps in spreading awareness about the brand. Therefore the above data clearly shows that a brand marketed through word of mouth have a higher purchasing frequency because word of mouth helps in influencing the other customers to buy the product, hence the number has increased three fold as compared to the companies which are least marketed through word of mouth.

Recognizable: Familiarity to a brand also plays a major role, as a well established brand image catches the eye of many and therefore, it is a driving force in deciding about the brand to buy.

Table 2 shows explore some of the major attributes that place emphasis on developing brand image.

Brand trust: Analysing the most important attribute required for a brand is its trustworthiness. According to the secondary data collected as shown in table.2, customers trust towards the brand is the most important aspect which is looked into. If the brands trustworthiness is tremendous in the market then the brand can undergo any situation or competition in the market.

Attractiveness: As the product is more creative to its substitutes or to its alternatives in the market the consumer will like it and that innovativeness and creativity will lead to success of that product. Because of the presence of similar products in the market with strong competition the brand should be set in a unique manner which should attract the customers in most suitable way.

Authenticity: The originality of the product should be at its fullest. Because if the product is not authentic then the customer will switch to another product and will be attracted towards various other products this will lead to brand failure.

Intellect: The intelligence of the producer and the seller also matters a lot because the way in which the brand is marketed is the most important aspect of the brand. Sellers' efficiency to sell the product determines the success of the brand. So it all lies on the intelligence of the people who sell the brand to the customers. Handling the most difficult situation with great depicts the managerial power of the seller and tracing future accomplishments.

Self assurance: Creating confidence within the minds of the customers is central to the operations of the business, as confidence creation will also lead to word of mouth advertisement for the brand and its product. This will lead to brand success even in the competitive market. All together customers mindset should be in favour of the brand and the customer should be loyal towards the brand. That will automatically lead to victory of the brand over others which were unable to fulfil the brand and customer requirements.

These five attributes are the most imperative attributes of a brand for the customer. If the brand accepts the customers perception in a positive manner it will directly succeed in its market.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research objectives and above results, it can clearly be stated that customers buying theory or their choices depends on the advertisements they see on social networking sites, on televisions and from various other sources. A positive brand image of a brand matters the most for it. Brand trust is also identified as the key relater between brand image and consumers purchase behaviour. Brand image is identified to be customer's confidence in a brand, henceforth the increased confidence leads to increased sales. The above data analysis portrays the role of brand image in influencing the buying pattern of the customers as they tend to rely upon various sources to extract awareness about a particular brand and majority are likely to buy the same brand that they are fond of or they are aware of. Brand image is not individualistic element in marketing rather it is a complex mixture of various attributes like, trustworthiness, creativeness, authenticity, intelligence and confidence. It further doesn't stand alone; instead it influences the magnitude of customer satisfaction which further forms the basis for customer loyalty. Customer loyalty automatically describes the customers buying intention about the product as it showcases the frequency of purchases by the same buyer. Therefore, in conclusion it can be said that brand image highly affects the consumer buying behaviour and along with that it also has adverse effects on the functioning and profitability of other small medium enterprises. The effect can be quantified once the building brand image to building customer loyalty process is completed.

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