CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND IMPACT OF BRAND - A STUDY ON SOUTH ZONE OF KOLKATA CITY

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Abstract

Consumer behaviour is the study of when, why, how and where people do and do not buy products. It attempts to understand the buyer's decision-making process, both individually and in groups. Relationship marketing is an influential asset for consumer behaviour as it has a keen interest in the re-discovery of the true meaning of marketing through the re-affirmation of the importance of the customer or buyer. A greater importance is also placed on consumer retention, customer relationship management, personalization, customization and one-to-one marketing. The aim of the present investigation is to study the impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata City. Accordingly, a group of 200 inhabitants (100 male and 100 female) were selected as sample in this investigation. A General Information Schedule and Perceived Impact of Brand on Consumer behaviour Questionnaire were used as tools. The findings reveal that although impact of brand on consumer behaviour is more upon the female than upon the male. Not only this, the more the duration of stay in the same environment, the more is the impact of brand on consumer behaviour. On the contrary, the more the monthly income level, the less is the impact of brand on consumer behaviour. Adequate measures may be taken to create more positive impact of brand on consumer in comparison to the existing scenario.

Key Words : Impact of Brand, Consumer Behaviour, Gender Difference, Duration of stay

Introduction

Consumer psychology is the study of the interactions between consumers and organizations that produce consumer products. Consumer behaviour has been of interest to organizational psychologists since the beginning of the field. Consumer behaviour could be conditioned – and, therefore, predicted and controlled – just like any other kind of behaviour. The study of consumer helps the firms and organizations to improve their marketing strategies. So, consumer behaviour is the study of individuals, groups or organizations and processes they use to select, secure, use and dispose of products, services, experiences or ideas to satisfy needs and the impact that these processes have on the consumer and society. Marketers have to study consumers in particular segment. When consumer is treated as the king of the market, the study of consumer behaviour becomes more important for marketing decisions. Cova and Remy (2007) suggested considering customers being producers who take it upon themselves to weave realities. Literatures refer to individual consumers' cognitive concepts that develop in response to marketing activities (Aaker et al., 2004; Keller, 2003; Tybout and Carpenter, 2001). In a business environment where global competition and rapid transfer of technology in most industries have made differentiation by product features increasingly difficult, brands and branding have attracted rising interest from marketing managers and academics. Consumer psychologists are interested in how well shoppers recognize, identify or recall specific product brands. Much of this research focuses on the ability to discriminate among competing brands of a product. The marketing management team considers brand as being material objects comprising intangible components, ranging from a mark or logo, marked product or a bundle of features (Kotler, 1991; Park and Srinivasan 1994; Aaker,1995) to the entire corporation (Kapferer, 2004; Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Leitch and Richardson, 2003). Brand meaning is often reflected in a specific person or a group of people who may be members of the brand interest group (Sherry, 2007). Brand manifestation continually stimulate social interaction and thereby the reproduction of brand meaning. It is not only the company, which plays an active part in this process by providing substantive as well as communicative staging (Arnold, 2007). Brand interest group members may take different roles depending on both the perceived relevance of and the emotional relationship with manifestations of the brand, the brand meaning or the other members of the interest group, their social roles may range from real brand fanatics through participants to observers (Koll et al., 2007) and from devotees and protagonist to brand antagonist (Pichler and Hemetsberger, 2007). Besides this, each consumer-based brand equity dimension contributes differently to the relationship according to the product category (Pappu et al., 2007). Differentiation is the key priority to today's companies due to the ease of imitation (Gargouri, 2001) and the difficulty of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1990; Ballington, 2002). Brand loyalty represents a favourable

attitude toward a brand resulting in consistent purchase of the brand over time. It is the result of consumers' learning that one brand can satisfy their needs. Brand loyalty is the consumer's conscious and unconscious decision, expressed through intentional behaviour to repurchase a brand continually. The conventional wisdom holds that consumers' brand loyalty is a function of their perception of brand performance. Loyalty may be affected by non-performance factors, such as brand parity, brand market share and loyalty proneness. These results suggest that three effects on loyalty could be more complicated than originally believed (Li, 2009). Brand loyalists perceived that the product category in general provides personally relevant consequences. They strive to buy the "best" brand for their needs. Although the term "loyalty" seems in disrepute in some quarters because of known brand switching, possibly resulting from the many variables operating on purchasers, it is nevertheless important to determine the degree of consistency of preferences and the degree of relationship between preferences and purchasing behaviours. Brand loyalty is a critical element of success, even survival, in today's challenged auto industry (Waldron, 2009).

Consumers make choices under influence of two main factors – a) purpose, need or desire and b) behavioural pattern. The majority of research on family purchase decision-making has been preoccupied with who makes decisions rather than how they are made (Thomson, 2003). Empirical research indicates that some consumers form price expectation which may create impact on their purchase behaviour. A series of studies demonstrate that consumes are inclined to believe that the selling price of a good or service is substantially higher than its fair price. Consumers appear sensitive to several reference points. These results are considered in the context of a four-dimensional transaction space that illustrates sources of perceived unfairness for both individual and multiple transactions (Botton et al., 2003). Consumers are becoming more conscious about the potentially negative impact of brands on human health and environment. Consumers choose ecological products when they do the shopping, not only because it is a healthier option but also because it helps to sustain the environment for future generations. They are prepared to switch products for ecological reasons and stop buying products from companies that cause pollution (Fraj et al., 2007). Considering the above the present investigation has been designed to study the impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata City.

Objectives

1. To study the impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata city.
2. To study whether impact of brand on consumer behaviour depends on monthly income or not.
3. To study whether impact of brand on consumer behaviour depends on duration of stay in the same environment or not.

Hypotheses

1. Impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants of South zone of Kolkata city is differentially associated with gender difference.
2. Impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants of South zone of Kolkata city is differentially associated with monthly income.
3. Impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants of South zone of Kolkata city is differentially associated with duration of stay in the same environment.

Research Design

A group of 200 inhabitants (100 male and 100 female) from South zone of Kolkata city were selected as sample following the purposive sampling technique in this investigation. The pertinent characteristics of the subjects include age between 40 to 50 years, gender as both male and female, education at least graduate, monthly income is Rs 10,001 to Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 20,001 to Rs. 30, 000 and duration of stay in the same environment is below and above 20 years. The tools consist of General Information Schedule and Perceived Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour Questionnaire. The General Information Schedule consists of items like name, address, age, gender, education, occupation, monthly income, duration of stay in the same environment etc. The Perceived Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour Questionnaire consists of 50 statistically significant items in connection with the impact of brand on consumer behaviour answerable in a five point scale, viz., Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) where high score indicates high impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants and vice-versa. Odd-even split-half reliability is 0.80 (Bhattacharya and Mitra, 2009).

Administration, Scoring and Statistical Treatment

A General Information Schedule and Perceived Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour Questionnaire were administered to a group of 200 inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata city by giving proper instruction.

Data were collected and properly scrutinized. Scoring was done with the help of scoring key. Tabulation was done for different groups separately. Frequency and percentages were calculated for general information schedule. Mean and S.D. were calculated for Perceived Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour Questionnaire. Comparisons were made by applying t-test.

Result and Interpretation

The data in Table 1 reveals the characteristic features of the subjects, under study.

Table 1
The Characteristic Features of Subjects

General features	Male	Female	Combined
Age (Mode value)	44 years	42 years	43 years
Education (%)			
Graduate	70.00	75.00	72.50
Post-graduate	30.00	25.00	27.50
Occupation (%)			
Housewife	00.00	40.00	20.00
Business	40.00	20.00	30.00
Service	60.00	40.00	50.00
Monthly Income %			
Rs. 10001-Rs.20000	50.00	50.00	50.00
Rs. 20001-Rs.30000	50.00	50.00	50.00
Duration of stay			
Below 20 years	50.00	50.00	50.00
Above 20 years	50.00	50.00	50.00

Table 2
Gender-Wise Comparison in Terms of Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour

Category	Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour			
	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Male	100	163.75	10.75	4.18*
Female	100	169.85	9.90	

Score range : 50-250   * p < 0.01

High score indicates high impact of brand on consumer behaviour and vice-versa. Data inserted in Table – 2 reveals that the impact of brand on consumer behaviour is more significant among the female group than that of the male group. Brand name, brand loyalty and symbolic meaning are the reasons behind the difference as opined by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata City. Analysis of data further reveals that verification regarding the selection of products and shopping experience are more predominant among the female group than that of the male group which are also the significant causes of the difference between the male and female group in terms of impact of brand on consumer behaviour. When comparison was made between the two groups, significant difference was observed. Thus, the Impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants of South zone of Kolkata city is differentially associated with gender difference is accepted**.**

Table 3
Income Wise Comparison in Terms of Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour

Category	Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour			
Income in Rs.	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
10,001-20,000	100	163.62	10.48	5.38*
20,001-30,000	100	157.27	6.26	

Score range : 50-250   * p < 0.01

High score indicates high impact of brand on consumer behaviour and vice-versa**.** Comparison was also made between the two group of inhabitants whose monthly income is between Rs 10,001 to Rs 20,000 and Rs. 20,001 to Rs. 30,000 in terms of impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants belonging to South zone of Kolkata City (Data inserted in Table -3). Comparative picture reveals significant difference between the two groups. The findings reveal that the less the monthly income of the family, the more the impact of brand on consumer behaviour. After purchase service, limited capacity for purchasing the products are the main reasons for this difference. Thus, the Impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants of South zone of Kolkata city is differentially associated with monthly income is accepted in this investigation.

Table 4
Stay - Wise Comparison in Terms of Impact of Brand on Consumer Behaviour

Duration	Impact of Brand			
	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Below 20 yrs	100	159.31	7.27	11.19*
Above 20 yrs	100	176.20	13.23	

Score range : 50-250   * p < 0.01

High score indicates high impact of brand on consumer behaviour and vice-versa. When comparison was made between the two groups of inhabitants whose duration of stay are below and above 20 years in the same environment of South zone of Kolkata city in terms of impact of brand on consumer behaviour, significant difference was observed (Data inserted in Table - 4). It can be inferred from the findings that the more the duration of stay in the same environment, the more is the impact of brand on consumer behaviour. Familiar local stores, easy mode of transportation, adequate information about the products are the reasons behind the findings. Thus, the Impact of brand on consumer behaviour as expressed by the inhabitants of South zone of Kolkata city is differentially associated with duration of stay in the same environment is accepted in this investigation.

Major Findings

1. Overall impact of brand on consumer behaviour is moderate Brand name, brand loyalty, after purchase

service, verification of the product, symbolic meaning etc. are the significant factors in connection with the impact of brand on consumer behaviour.

2. Male group differ with female group in terms of impact of brand on consumer behaviour. Verification regarding the selection of products and shopping experience are the main reasons behind the difference.

3. The less the monthly income of the family, the more is the impact of brand on consumer behaviour. The reasons behind this are mainly after purchase service and limited capacity for purchasing the products.

4. The more the duration of stay in the same environment, the more is the impact of brand on consumer behaviour. Familiar local stores, easy mode of transportation, adequate information about the products are the reasons behind the findings.

Conclusion

In a business environment where global competition and rapid transfer of technology in most industries have made differentiation by product features increasingly difficult, brands and branding have attracted rising interest from marketing managers and academics. Although there seems to be general agreement that the successful creation and management of strong brands is essential for company success, there are considerable differences in assumptions about : a) what a brand consists of ? b) how a brand develops and c) who participates in that process. There are evidence that a multitude of individuals, groups, and organizations, internal or external to business firms co-produce brand meaning in varying intensities of activity, participation and emotional quality.

In this investigation, there is moderate impact of brand on consumer behaviour and it is comparatively more upon the female group than that of the male group. To reduce quick switch over and maintenance of justified price level, care should be taken so that the impact of brand on consumer behaviour would be beneficial in the near future. As duration of stay creates impact of brand on consumer behaviour, so verification of brand image, brand loyalty and personality should be considered as the significant factors in this regard. It can also be said that there is need to improve the product of a particular brand so that the impact of brand on consumer behaviour is more effective in comparison to the existing scenario.

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