AN ANALYSIS OF BRAND EQUITY OF CONSUMERS WITH REGARD TO "SHOPPING GOODS" IN "CONSUMER GOODS" CATEGORY IN TOP 6 CITIES OF GUJARAT

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Abstract

Brands help to identify and differentiate goods and services of one organisation from those of another. They simplify shopping, aid in the processing of information about products and let the buyer feel confident of purchase decision. Powerful brands maintain interactions that repeatedly result in high value experiences. Such brands allow organisations to capitalise on the strong long term customer relationship leading to brand equity. No doubt, rapid changes taking place in the global market and the increased competition among firms made "Brand Management" an important strategic task. Good brand management brings about clear differentiation between products, ensures consumer loyalty and preferences and may lead to a greater market share.

The consumer product industry in India, which includes design, development, manufacturing, and sale of different categories of consumer products has witnessed an upsurge over the last few years and continues to boom even today. India's consumer product industry is one of the largest in the world. The consumer products market is always highly competitive due to the availability of a number of alternatives and substitutes. In a highly populated country like India there is a potential market for the consumer goods. Hence, the researcher has chosen consumer products under three categories for the present research. The attitudes, responses and perceptions of the customers of the consumer products towards branding are identified and measured under the title "AN ANALYSIS OF BRAND EQUITY OF CONSUMERS WITH REGARD TO "SHOPPING GOODS" IN "CONSUMER GOODS" CATEGORY IN TOP 6 CITIES OF GUJARAT".

Keywords: Consumer, Brand Equity, Shopping Goods.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern times reflect significant changes in the marketing strategies adopted by organizations that want to secure a competitive advantage. With the advent of social media marketing and its huge impact on the masses, the marketing game and gimmicks have changed upside down. Organizations are struggling with change consumer behavior, economic stagnation, environmental deterioration, high speed Effects of technological progress, political instability, and change economic and other social issues.

Marketing itself as an evolving subject and the theories, models and methods of marketing keeps aligning themselves with the changed trends, societal changes, behavioral changes, generational changes in the market. Given this scenario, Marketing becomes a very tough task to cope up with for the marketer.

However as it is said, modern times change the arena of the marketing game but the rules

remain the same. Some of the major concepts of marketing still hold good in these dynamic times. One such major concept is "Branding".

Branding has evolved as an important characteristics of modern marketing strategies and is now regarded as a significant organizational tool (Kotler, 2000). The visual and symbolic attributes connected with brand names have become the baseline for product differentiation. Branding is key tool employed for successful marketing of products and offerings. Branding however is not a new concept, it has been here since many years. Brand helps to pinpoint the differentiation in the goods and services of one organization and makes it different from other. Branding is also an important attribute that creates a personality, identity and overall image of a product or offering.

From the customer's point of view, brands simplify shopping, aid in the processing of information about products and make them feel confident of their purchase decision. Brands are viewed as the hearts of consumer business (Kapferer1992). A significant, communicative and educative role is playing by brands among customers. Brand is considered as a symbol of quality and it facilitates them to make their decisions in purchases. In the present globalised market, brands are the key drivers of economic and market value of a business.

2.   Conceptual   Framework   of Branding

In simplified words, "brand is a name, term symbol, design or combination of them which is directed towards identification of goods or services of one marketer or group of marketers to make it different from those of the competitors."

It is simply a process of basic visual, verbal and written characteristics associated with an offering or that the marketer tends to associate. However, one way to look towards brand is the interaction of the brand with people. The most powerful brands maintain interactions that repeatedly result in high-value experiences.

Such brands allow organisations to capitalise on the strong long term customer relationship that results from these experiences. The process of assigning and establishing brand is termed as branding and the positioning of brand in the minds of customers can be referred to as brand equity building and brand equity represents the value and strength of customer relationship. Brands are highly regarded as the important sources of capital for business.

The term has different meaning attached to it; a brand can be defined as a name, logo, symbol and identity or a trademark. Prasad and Dev (2000) also state that a brand can be seen to include all tangible and intangible attributes that a business stands for. As a result of the rapid changes in the global market and the increased competition experienced between firms, "Brand Management" has become more important. Good brand management brings about clear differentiation between products, ensures consumer loyalty and preferences and may lead to a greater market share. Aaker (1991) is of the view that establishing and managing brand should not be taken to be the core operating target for most industries, but should also be seen as a source of competitiveness. In other words value is added to a brand when the brand is able to compete successfully with other brands.

At this juncture, it becomes important to understand some key terms associated with the concepts of branding. The current research paper is based completely on the below mentioned key terms.

2.1 Branding Terminologies

1)   Brand Quality: Brand quality is defined as the recognition of product quality, which has an influence on consumer purchasing behavior. Often defined with the definition of "Quality" given by Galvin (2000)

2)   Brand Demand: Often called as "Value for money" is the perceived value created in the minds of consumer by consumption of a particular brand. In other words, it also means whether the brand is delivering the value, monetary or non-monetary, more than its price.

3) Brand Prestige: Brand Prestige is an expression of evaluative judgment that conveys high or low status, which depends on life experiences, knowledge and an awareness of competing brands.

4) Brand Reliability: Brand reliability is one of the key factors in assessing consumer trust, which is a key to the success of your brand. It is based on the consumer's belief that the brand can accomplish its value promise. In its root form, reliability is the expectation that the brand will consistently perform as envisioned by the customer or not.

5) Emotional Branding: Emotional branding is the process of forming a relationship between a consumer and a product or brand by provoking their emotions. Marketers achieve this by creating content that appeals to the consumer's emotional state, ego, needs, and aspirations.

6) Brand COO: Brand COO is defined as Country of Origin of the brand. This pertains to Classification of Consumer Goods:

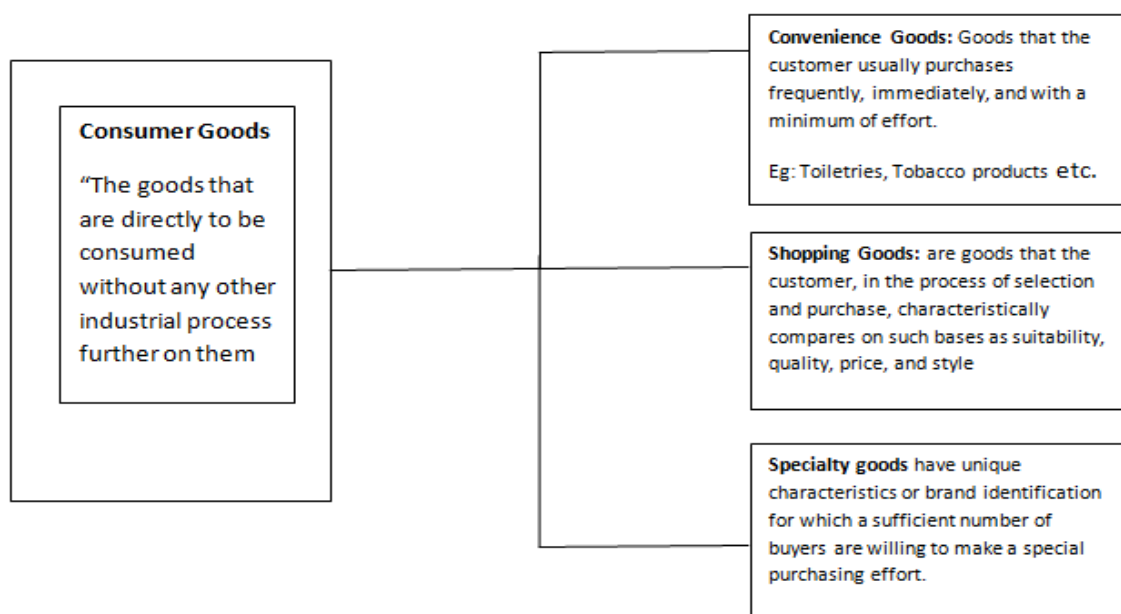the ethnocentric or non ethnocentric feeling of the consumers.

7) Brand Perceived Quality: Brand Perceived Quality differs from Brand quality in a manner that it focuses on what consumer is expecting as benefit from the brand over the real benefits that the brand is claiming to.

8) Brand Uniqueness: The differentiating feature whether tangible or non tangible that the brand tends to claim and offer is called Brand Uniqueness.

2.2 Concept of Consumer Goods:

Manufactured consumer goods are sold to the consumers for consumption purposes. Further processing is not required before consumption. It is defined thus "Manufactured consumer goods or products include all those which are destined for use by ultimate consumers or households in such a form that they can be used without commercial processing."

Figure 1(Classification of Consumer Goods)

Consumer Goods

"The goods that are directly to be consumed without any other industrial process further on them

Convenience Goods: Goods that the customer usually purchases frequently, immediately, and with a minimum of effort.

Eg: Toiletries, Tobacco products etc.

Shopping Goods: are goods that the customer, in the process of selection and purchase, characteristically compares on such bases as suitability, quality, price, and style

Specialty goods have unique characteristics or brand identification for which a sufficient number of buyers are willing to make a special purchasing effort.

The focus of this research is on the shopping goods. Basically shopping goods are the goods which are bought frequently by the consumer and the process of buying requires a little effort on selecting the product, information search about the product and related other matters.

Examples of Shopping goods are consumer durables (white goods), fashion goods (apparel, shoes & accessories) etc.

The current research focuses on the brand equity that different brands of consumer

durables and fashion goods create on the minds of consumers and its impact on their purchasing behavior.

3. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Kotler (1991) has pointed out that advertising refers to packaging products, services, organisations or individuals in a variety of ways that clearly deliver a certain benefit, stimulation, identification or reason to explain what consumers are thinking about and why they buy products.

Edison J.C. (1993) indicates that media exposure is very high among the respondents with respect to all the media considered, i.e., television, radio, magazines and newspapers. However, with regard to the frequency of exposure to advertisements in different media, wide variations exist. Television advertisements have the maximum exposure while radio advertisements have the least.

Belch & Belch (1998) find that advertising is also a type of communication. It is actually a very structured form of applied communication, employing both verbal and non-verbal elements that are composed to fill the specific space and time determined by the sponsor. Effective communication through advertisement leads the consumers toward the purchasing of brand.

Adelaar (2003) advocates that the promotional strategy of advertising provides a major tool in creating product awareness and conditions the mind of a potential consumer to take final purchase decision. The advertiser's primary mission is to reach potential customers and influence their awareness, attitudes and buying behaviour.

Ravi Vikram (2007) is of the opinion that television brand advertisement for fast moving consumer goods creates the highest impact on consumers' buying habits compared to other consumer durables and electronic products.

Rajagopal (2011) reveals that the shopping behaviour of urban consumers at retail stores in response to radio advertisements is highly influenced by the physical, cognitive and economic variables. Radio advertisements propagating promotional messages on sales of products invite quick response to the supermarkets and department stores. Listeners of radio commercials are attracted towards advertisements, which are more entertaining while disseminating the message.

Uti Charles Amechi1 (2012) proves that advertising facilitate consumer choice; it enables consumers to purchase goods as per their budget requirement and choice. Right choice makes consumer happy and satisfied. Purchase advertising, therefore, is a veritable tool that plays an important role in the marketing process. The money spent on advertising in general and this form of advertising in particular should no longer be seen as "expenditure"; it is part of the "investment" required for successful business execution which should have measurable returns on investment (ROI). Advertisement promotes the sale of goods and services by informing and persuading consumers to buy

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Scope of the study

The study is conducted in top 6 municipal corporations headquarters of the state of Gujarat namely, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar. The study focuses on consumer goods segment especially on the 'shopping goods' category with special reference to consumer durables like TV, Refrigerators and Mobile handsets. Also the study focuses on fashion apparels, shoes and accessories. The researcher intends to find out the top brands prevailing in the minds of consumers in each segment and also proposes to describe the reasons why a particular brand is trending as number one on the basis of certain branding features as explained in "introduction" part of the paper. Keeping in mind, the above perspectives the researcher has framed the following title:

"An analysis of brand equity of consumers with regard to "shopping goods" in "Consumer Goods" category in top 6 cities of Gujarat".

4.2 Research Gap:

From the review of available literature, it can be seen that brand marketing of different categories of consumer products form a new area of study and that the brand purchasing behaviour of customers of different categories of branded goods in this industry has not yet been considered anywhere in the earlier studies. The earlier studies indicate either the buying behaviour of FMCG brands or the customer-based brand equity of FMCG in a detailed manner. But the impact of branding and brand promotional activities on customer behaviour of different categories of consumer goods at one time is totally uncovered and untapped by the researchers especially in an industry where a large number of brand conscious customers prevail.

4.3 Objectives

• To understand the significant differences in various brand attributes of brands pertaining to shopping goods segment in the minds of consumers of top 6 cities of Gujarat.

• To analyze the differences among the reasons of consumers for favouring or non favouring brands in shopping goods segment

• To know the brand popularity of different brands in each segment of shopping goods category

4.4 Sampling Plan

• Sampling Method: Non Probability Convenience Sampling

• Sampling Unit: Consumer of Shopping Goods from an age bracket of 18 & above

• Sample Size: 100 Consumers from top 6 cities of Gujarat.

4.5 Data Collection Instrument:

The data will be collected through structured questionnaire with specific questions pertaining

to the specific brand attributes that the researcher needs to measure. The eight branding attributes that the researcher tends to measure are as follow:

a) Brand Quality

b) Brand Demand

c) Brand Prestige

d) Emotional Branding

e) Brand Reliability

f) Brand COO

g) Brand Perceived Quality

h) Brand Uniqueness.

5. Analysis & Interpretation:

One of the objective of the researcher was to find out the most popular and favoured brand in each category of the selected goods which are rated as favourite brand by the consumer. A simple question was raised in the structured questionnaire and based on this following results were found

Figure 2 (Brand Popularity Chart) (Consumer Durables)
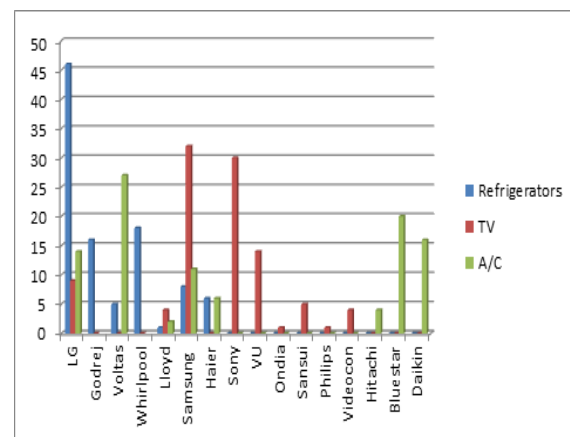
On close observation to this graphical representation, it might be concluded that in the refrigerator segment, LG is the most popular brand, in Television Segment Samsung and Sony are popular which is followed by Bluestar and Daikin in Air conditioner segment. There are a few brands which market all the three types of white goods but an indepth observation to this chart leads us to believe that not a single

multi manufacturing brand is popular in all three categories of consumer durable. This in turn gives idea that the consumer have a different niches for each segment and they do not visualize a brand as superior in all the categories of consumer durables.

Furthermore, the following results were found in the mobile handset category:

Figure 3 (Brand Popularity Chart) (Mobile Handsets)
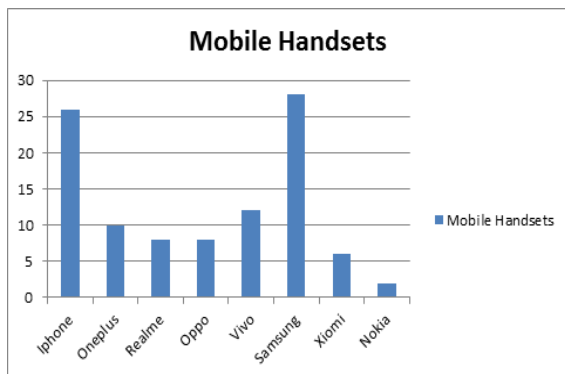
Looking into this graphical representation, it is evidently seen that Iphone and Samsung are the most popular brands in the minds of consumers when it comes to mobile handsets. Furthermore in the apparels and accessories segments the following results were found.

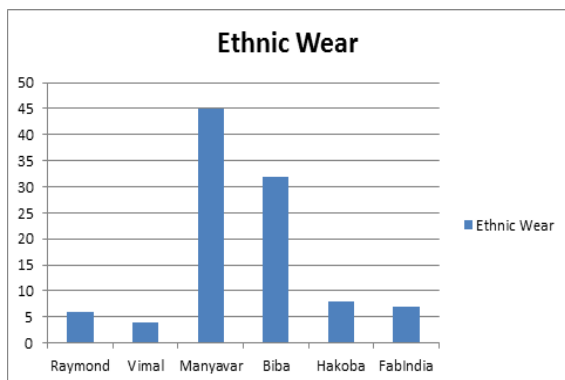Figure 4 (Brand Popularity Chart) (Ethnic Wear Apparels)
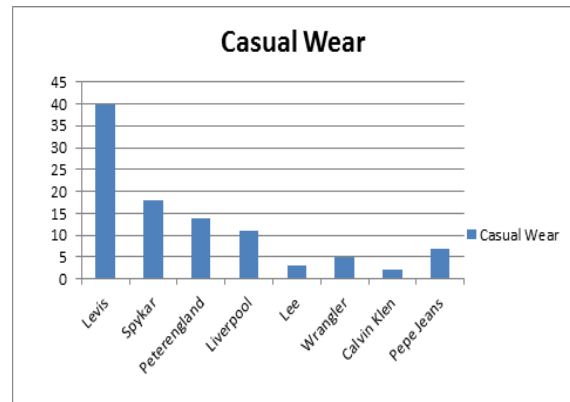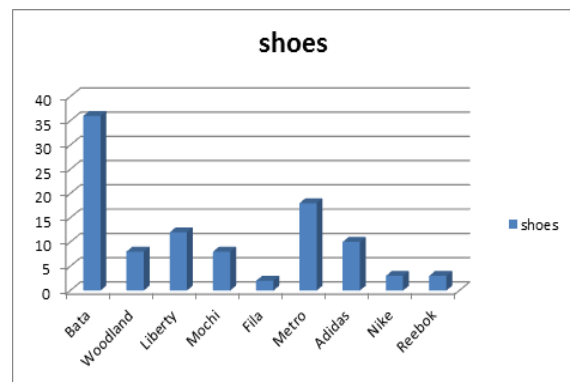

Figure 5 (Brand Popularity Chart) (Casual Wear)

Figure 6 (Brand Popularity Chart) (Shoes)

From the above graphical representations there are certain things which are evident. In the apparel category of shopping goods, brands like Manyavar and BIBA are leading in the brand popularity. On the other hand, in the casual wear segment, Levis and Spykar are leading. In the shoes segment, BATA is leading the chart.

5.2 Hypothesis Testing

Validation

Before moving into hypothesis testing it becomes very important for the researcher to understand the data collected through the structured questionnaire. The researcher ran Chronbach Alpha test to understand the validity of the data. Using the data and the formula, the chronbach alpha value comes down as follows:

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{K}{K-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum V_i}{V_T} \right)$$

α = 0.71

In order to satisfy the objective of understanding the differences among the consumers for different brand attributes that they value the most, the researcher had specifically asked the consumers to give rank from 1 to 10 (1 being the best and 10 being the worst) to 10 brand attributes namely, Brand Image & Power, Availability & Durability, Easiness to use, Features, Quality & Performance, Reputation of the manufacturer, Value for money, Advertisement attractiveness, Reliability and After Sales Service.

The following hypothesis was set:

H=0: The Brand Ranking Attributes are Equally Rated

H=1: The Brand Ranking Attributes are not Equally Rated.

As ranking was used, non parametric test was preferred and the researcher has used "Friedman Test" for the same. Friedman test uses the $\chi 2$ value to test the hypothesis. The following formula and parameters were used

$$\left[\frac{12}{nk(k+1)} \sum_{i=1}^{k} R_i^2\right] - 3n(k+1)$$

n = 100; k = 10; Ri2 = 3067672, df = 4

Using the above parameters, the $\chi 2$cal comes to 46.55. Using the alpha value of 0.05 and df of 4, the $\chi 2$tab happens to be 16.91. As the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value, the null hypothesis stands rejected. This means that there are significant differences in the brand ranking attributes given by the consumers. This to be put in simple words, mean that not all consumers favour brands on single parameter.

Furthermore, an another objective of the researcher was to understand the reasons why a particular brand becomes the most favoured brand of the consumer. The researcher asked the following questions in order to measure the reasons for selection of a brand by consumers and the consumers were asked to rate the questions from a scale of strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing. The following hypothesis was framed:

H=0: There is no significant difference between the reasons given by consumers for favouring a particular brand

H=1: There is a significant difference between the reasons given by consumers for favouring a particular brand

The collected data is as follows:

Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
This Brand always maintain high level of Quality	78	78	2	2	0
It is worth the price it command	73	22	2	3	0
It is truly popular & going to maintain its popularity for many years (Brand Popularity)	70	21	6	2	1
It has something that no other brand has (Brand Uniqueness)	65	19	11	3	2
It evokes a feeling of confidence and pride among itsusers (Emotional Attachment)	70	19	6	3	2
It is a very reliable brand and has some safe feelings associated with it (Brand Reliability)	53	33	6	5	3
I feel confident about the features and reliability of the brand (Brand Perceived Quality)	70	21	6	2	1
I feel the brand is good coz its from a point of origin which is known for quality (Brand COO)	78	18	2	2	0

Single factor Anova test was used on the above data to test the hypothesis framed and the result was as follows:

ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	F crit
Between Groups	27242	4	6810.5	69.132	2.6415
Within Groups	3448	35	98.514		
Total	30690	39			

From the above result it is evident that Fcal is 69.132 and Ftab is 2.6415 which leads to rejection of the null hypothesis. It can be said that there are significant difference among the

reasons given by consumer for favouring any particular brand.

5.3 Overall Findings

• The consumers of the top 6 cities of Gujarat do have their favoured brands in all "shopping goods" category. However the attributes for favouring brands have a significant difference. This in turn, means that there are multiple parameters that affect the brand equity and those parameters often change from consumer to consumer which makes it very difficult for marketer to market his/her offering.

• The different reasons for favouring a particular brand, change from consumer to consumer and also from the category of the goods.

• LG, Samsung and Bluestar lead the shopping goods category of Refrigerators, TV and A/C respectively as most favoured brands.

• Iphone and Samsung lead the shopping goods category of Mobile Handsets as most favoured brands.

• Manyavar and BIBA lead the shopping goods category of ethnic wear segment as most favoured brands.

• Levis lead the shopping goods category of casual wear segment as most favoured brand.

• BATA lead the shopping goods category of shoes segment as most favoured brand.

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