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## **Brand Perception: A Review**

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(Received on: November 18, 2016)

### **ABSTRACT**

Brand perception acts as predictor of consumers' purchase behaviour. Brand perception means how consumers perceive and evaluate the products. It is an intangible and overall feeling about a brand. It depends upon the amount of information available to the consumer. In order to understand brand perception, it is important to identify and measure factors such as the characteristics, reliability or performance of products. Advertisement is one of the factors which affect brand perception. The present study seeks to understand the role of brand perception as an indicator of the purchase behaviour.

**Keywords:** Perception, Brand, Stimuli, Stimulus.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this modern age of marketing, brands stand for greatness if the customers are able to identify them in the market place. Brands are actually what consumers say about them. A brand's true identity exists in its perception. Bahn, K. D. (1986) defined perception as "the process of attending to and knowing objects by means of the senses". The purpose of advertising is to get the attention of the target audience towards their message, enable them to learn the contents of the messages, and make appropriate changes in their attitudes and beliefs. Perception is the process by which we interpret sensory data which come to us through our senses.

Brand is essentially the sum of all experiences related to the product, service, and also the companies which make and deliver the product. Brand perception may be the key factor in a customer's decision making process. Brand perceptions are dependent on the functional experiences (speed, quality, reliability, usefulness etc.) and the emotional experiences (feeling, performance, etc.) which the customer associates with the product or the company. Brand perception is developed over time through a variety of sources, such as previous experience or interactions with the brand, customer services, friend and family recommendations, reviews by the reputable sources and advertising.

Brand perception depends on the quality, packaging, price and advertising. Brand perception may also be affected by demographic variables such as income, education and age. It also differs from one brand to another (Munn, H. L., 1960).

Advertisement seems to be an important factor which affects brand perception. After seeing an advertisement, the consumer develops some sort of brand perception which ultimately guides his or her attitude. When a consumer encounters an ad, he may either agree or disagree with the message but he transmits this message to his previous beliefs about the product. Although this may not change his opinion towards the product, but, through communication, audience may react according to the opinion of the communicator. It is believed that the consumers mind can be changed through knowledge.

The elements of brand perception about the product stored in the memory of the consumer links the brand to its attributes. This link varies from consumer to consumer and from product to product. Thus brand perception differs in terms of intensity which may lead to purchase consideration.

Advertising provides exposure on the various product attribute which are likely to be used for evaluating the advertised brand and processing the information. The impact of advertising on brand perception therefore depends upon the attribute exposed and subsequently evaluated. When advertisement provides exposure on product attributes, which are positively evaluated by the consumer, the overall brand perception is likely to be high. Whereas, exposure on product attributes, which are negatively evaluated by the consumer, will lower the overall brand perception. Thus, depending upon the perception of the consumers, advertisement can have different effects.

Advertisement is communication process which affects brand perception. When the consumer is exposed to the ad, he may attend and acquire advertisement cues. The cues are then encoded as information. Due to the rigorous exposure to advertising, the information stays for a considerable period of time in the memory. This information stored in consumer's memory, considered in terms of brand perception, beliefs about the brand and other attributes, effects the consumer's purchase decisions.

When the consumer pays attention to the attributes in advertisement, his ability to process the given information improves, or in other words, the consumer becomes evaluative in his perception towards brands and the chances of purchase consideration becomes more favorable.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

In order to make advertisements more effective, a thorough understanding of the consumer perception and behavior is essential. The study of consumer perception involves understanding the influence of advertising on brand perception; the factors that influences buyers and how these factors can be exploited in order to lead them towards purchase consideration.

### **RESEACH METHODOLOGY**

Research in common parlance refers to a search for knowledge. The dictionary meaning says, research is "careful investigation or inquiry especially through search for new

facts in any branch of knowledge". The present study is theoretical in nature. It relies heavily on literature review.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Bahn, K. D. (1986) defined perception as "the process of attending to and knowing objects by means of the senses". According to him preference formation is a function of perceptual and affective development. He defined preference, as "how much liking is given to the presence or absence of particular stimulus attributes". Preference occurs when a specific stimulus is perceived as having positive affect. The results of this study indicate that the number of dimensions that underlie brand perceptions and brand preferences differ by both cognitive stage and by product category.

Berger, J., Draganska, M., & Simonson, I. (2007) proposed that the variety a brand offers often serves as a quality cue and influences brand choice criterion. According to the authors, product varieties offered by a firm is a key marketing mix variable and are perceived to have greater category expertise or core competency in the category. This in turn, enhances the perceived quality and purchase likelihood. The results of the study indicates that product variety influences perceived brand quality both when evaluating a single brand and also when choosing between brands.

Munn, H. L. (1960) argued that brand perception is largely independent of consumer socio-economic classification. And there appears to be similar brand rating regardless of income, education, or age of the consumer. He further points out that consumer's perception of a specific brand depends upon its physical qualities, container, packaging, price, advertising, promotion, and merchandising. As such, perception differs from market to market and from consumer to consumer. The study identified some of the characteristics on the basis of which product classes are chosen. They are availability of brands within the product class to all members of the social strata, advertisement, price variations, and consumer knowledge of the brands within the product classes. The author states that even if small expenditures are made, factors influencing brand selection, at times can be so complex and subtle that the consumer may not be aware of their existence.

Brown, S. P., & Stayman, D. M. (1992) conducted analysis on pair-wise relationship involving attitude toward the ad. They emphasized that the relative impact of brand cognitions and ad attitudes on brand attitudes can't be ignored and assessing these effects across all available studies seems to be the objective of this research. Another important objective of this paper was to provide a general assessment of the strength of pair-wise relationships between ad attitudes, antecedent and outcome constructs and also to assess the variability of this pair-wise relationship. The results of the study suggested a number of methodological variables which moderated the strengths of relationships found in studies of ad attitudes.

Cohen, R. J. (2014) presented an understanding with regard to the constellation of key psychological dimensions which influence consumer perceptions of products and advertising. With the dimensional qualitative research (DQR) approach to qualitative inquiry, the author presented a systematic, multifaceted, and psychologically sophisticated evaluation of the

subjects under investigation. Behavior, Affect, Sensation, Imagery, Cognition, Interpersonal Relations, Drugs, and Socio-cultural factors (BASIC IDS) provided an important insight into questions, such as “In what ways does the consumer identify with, or fail to identify with personification?” Brand personification is a character who personifies the brand and/ or a character that is a spokesperson for the brand.

Rao, V. R. (1972) defined that consumers' perceptions of alternative brands in the marketplace depends upon the amount of available information. The objectives of the study were to examine the relationship between the amount of explicit information and brand perceptions and also to determine the effect of brand image on perceptions. He attempted to bridge the gap between how stimuli ought to be presented i.e., the information which should be given to the subjects and what particular difference should be caused by varied information. In this paper the author considered two kinds of explicit information, semantic descriptions and attribute profiles of brands. The results of the study suggested significant differences in perceptions of the stimuli because of changes in explicit information provided to the subjects.

Kent, R. J., & Allen, C. T. (1994) defined brand familiarity as reflects of the consumer's level of direct and indirect experiences with a brand. They conducted a factorial experiment varying the familiarity of brands featured in test and competing ads. The authors focused on brand familiarity's role in increasing ad memorability and moderating competitive interference. The findings of the study suggest that established brands have important advantages in advertising. According to the author, consumers recall ad information easily, and they are not much affected by exposure to competitors' ads. The paper further claims that exposure to competitive advertising appears to have little effect on claim recall from ads for well-known brands and the main effect of familiarity suggests that well known brands have important advantages in marketplace advertising.

Haire, M. (1950) describes the dimensions relevant to the consumers and the characteristics of the consumers so that appropriate appeals and media could be used/ chosen. The author argues that what the companies are emphasizing is sizzle rather than the steak. The sizzles are the subjective reaction of the consumer, where as the steaks are the objective characteristics of the product. The author states that the outcome of the experiment proves that motives exist behind the purchase of products by the consumer and these motives are below the level of verbalization because they are socially unacceptable, difficult to verbalize cogently, or unrecognized. The author further states that these motives are intimately related to the decision to purchase or not to purchase and it is possible to identify and assess such motives by approaching them indirectly. The author suggests that the consumer sees the product related to things or people or values in his life, or as having a certain role in the scheme of things, and yet he may be quite unable to response to a direct question to describe these sizzling aspects of the object. Hence, a projective test should be conducted in order to involve the subjects and present them with an ambiguous stimulus question or puzzle that does not quite make sense in it-self and asking them to make sense of it. The logic behind is that in order to make sense, the consumer have to do something and in doing so he projects a part of himself into it. And since, the original stimulus was known before hand, it is easy to identify the parts that were added and in this way information about the person can be obtained.

Childers, T. L., & Jass, J. (2002) developed a conceptual frame work which addresses the impact of type face semantic cues within a marketing context. Typefaces is a term used to denote anything alternate to voice which are used in marketing communications such as print advertising, in-store displays, product packaging, couponing, and brand logos. In situations when the spoken word is simply not feasible to "speak" to consumers, visual images are commonly combined with a written verbal message. Typefaces used in such marketing communications may be the costume or physical appearance of the written words. The authors argue that typefaces are used as visual properties to conceptualize as communicating unique semantic associations to individuals which is distinct from the content of the written words they clothe. Four elements of design, i.e., line, weight, orientation, and size were taken into consideration for the study. The paper investigates typeface associations across varying levels of involvement in terms of their effect upon brand perceptions. The authors claim that these associations also influence the memorability of advertised benefit claims. And memorability was enhanced as the degree of consistency among type face semantic cues, advertisement visual cues, and advertisement copy claims increased. The paper focuses on the extensions of this frame work on obtaining a more complete understanding concerning the semantic path ways through which typefaces convey meaning. The paper suggests that these associations influence consumers' perception of brands and also what they remember about brands.

Kinnear, T. C., & Taylor, J. R. (1973) examined the relationship between the amount of concern for the ecology that buyers indicate and their perceptions of detergent brands. Results show that the level of ecological concern among buyers of laundry products had a marked effect on their brand perceptions. In order to determine the salience that different groups of consumers attach to particular dimensions in their perceptions of laundry products, it is necessary to interpret dimensions in the INDSICAL solution. To facilitate this interpretation, attribute data were collected on the laundry brands in question. The rank order of laundry brands on each of the three dimensions in the groups pace was then correlated with the rank order of brands on each of the 5 attributes on which data were collected-sudsing level, harshness, phosphate content, enzymes, and cleaning power.

## **CONCLUSION**

The question as to why people choose a particular brand instead of others is a very complex one. There exist different reasons, it may be individual liking or conformity or preferences. Literature available on this subject suggests that buyers choose a particular brand for reasons which may either be attributes specific or it may be based on brand performance considerations.

Advertisements attract buyers either through product features or emotional appeals or through claims of comparative superiority of their brands to others. The buyer in its turn evaluates the various product and non-product specific characteristics. Brand perception depends upon the various information that a consumer has received on factors important to him. These factors help to explain brand perception as they are the predictors of purchase behavior.

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