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EFFECTS OF BRANDING ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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Brands are always considered as a best tool for marketing and business strategy.

As the communication systems are getting advanced day by day, it shrunk the distances, thereby linking markets through flows of information across markets. This trend increased the competition levels as well.

“A brand is defined as a specific name, symbol or design- or, more usually some combination of these- that is used to distinguish a particular seller’s product” (Doyle, 2002).

During the immature stage of consumer behaviour, consumers’ limited experience with modern marketing makes them depend on reputable brands and track records. Sometimes consumers rely on price as a mark of quality. Therefore the brand effect is very important to study. Brands accounted for one-third to one-half of all consumers’ expressions of intent to purchase.

In Indian continent, the consumer’s expectations of product quality in general have been steadily rising, owning to the increase in income and sociological forces, which have prompted high expectations of a better lifestyle. Indian consumers today are looking for aesthetic and social value instead of just focusing on the basic needs of warmth and the protective function of products. Department stores are now crowded with people, but few of the shoppers are serious buyers. Indian consumers are eager to see what is available, especially from among foreign products.

So , a brand, in short, can be defined as a seller’s promise to provide consistently a unique set of characteristics, advantages, and services to the buyers/consumers. It is a name, term, sign, symbol or a combination of all these planned to differentiate the goods/services of one seller or group of sellers from those of competitors. **Some examples of well known brands are Mc Donald’s’, Mercedes-Benz, Sony, Coca Cola, Kingfisher, TATA etc**

Brands are Trustmarks

According to a Time magazine article on product sameness, "you'd have to be a true expert to tease out any meaningful difference among dozens of detergents, cars, cereals, enhanced waters, or running shoes." This perception of sameness points to why many marketers place more emphasis on consumer experiences than brand functionality when building a brand in the minds of consumers. Favorable experiences form strong emotional bonds that convert into brand preference. Millward Brown, a global research agency, says that strong brands are "trust marks." They truncate the decision-making buying process. Consumers can shop without scrutinizing product features and benefits. Moreover, brands routinely command premium prices, because they are trust marks.

Brand Experiences

In a Columbia University research paper titled "Brand Experience: What is It? How Do We Measure It? And Does It Affect Loyalty?" researchers identified five dimensions of the brand experience: sense, feel, think, act and relate. Sense experiences are the sensory or aesthetic qualities of the brand. Feel experiences are the moods or emotions that brands induce in consumers. Think experiences stimulate the imagination and intellect -- "the brand makes me think about the happy times in life." Act experiences stimulate behavioural reactions -- "the brand makes we want to work out." Relate experiences refer to the social context of the brand experience -- "I feel like I'm a member of an exclusive club." Brands might not incorporate all five dimensions of the brand experience. The intensity of relevant experiences, however, drives the strength of brand preference in consumers.

Branding Strategies

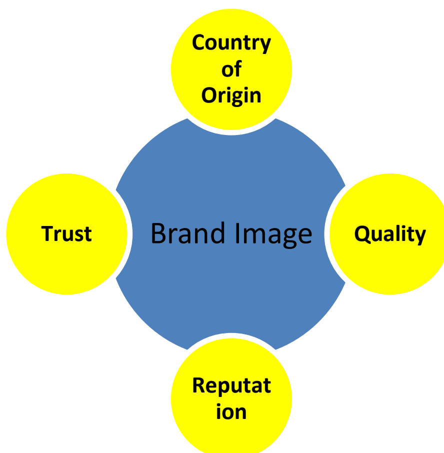
The brand experience incorporates all consumer contact with the brand from advertising and promotions to after-sale customer service. Your customers will evaluate your brand and regulate their behaviour based on these interactions. For instance, poor customer service is toxic to a brand. Branding strategies will differ by product or service category, consumer familiarity and many other variables. You can study successful brands in your category and in other categories. These can be a rich source insight for developing your branding strategies.

Among the many factors that are believed to influence consumer perceptions of products in an age of international competition, country-of-origin (COO) effects, remains the most researched. We can underline that COO is considered an important differentiating factor in consumer attitudes to foreign and local brand names. COO has been defined as the country where the corporate headquarters of the company marketing the product or brand is situated .

Example

India is emerging as one of the most attractive automotive markets in the world, and is poised to become a key sourcing base for auto components. The Indian automotive sector has a presence across all vehicle segments and key components. In terms of volume, two wheelers dominate the sector, with nearly 80 per cent share, followed by passenger vehicles with 13 per cent. Passenger vehicles consist of passenger cars and utility vehicles. The industry had few players and was protected from global competition till the 1990s.

There are four major factors which affect the brand equity : Country of Origin , Quality of brand , Reputation of brand & trust . If you take the example of TATA as a established brand in Indian continent , you find all the below parameters are fulfilled the requirements. The recent launch of Nano car received the warm welcome because of the trust , quality & reputation of the brand. It created consumer trust & emotional attachment . This proved that great brands are not just known & trusted but they are loved !



Consumers are willing to pay more to buy brands because they believe that brands deliver outstanding & desirable benefits. Consumers also stay loyal with the brand because the brand equity is already established and there is no need for any promotional incentives .

For a consumer, brands plays multiple roles like

- Source of product
- Delegating responsibility to the manufacturer of product
- Lower risk
- Less search cost
- Quality symbol
- Deal or pact with the product manufacturer
- Symbolic device

Effects of branding on buyers behaviour:

The basic purchase cycle depends on 4 P's, psychological factors & brand choice. Here branding influences the psychological factors like motivation, learning, perception, belief & attitude.

Normally in high involvement purchases branding plays an important role. In high-involvement decisions, the marketer needs to provide a good deal of information about the positive consequences of buying. The sales force may need to stress the important attributes of the product, the advantages compared with the competition; and maybe even encourage "trial" or "sampling" of the product in the hope of securing the sale.

All in all, the **brands communicate a lot of different things to different people**. Today most successful organizations promote their corporate identity or the corporate company brand to retain, sustain and build their corporate image of the company while continuing with individual brand promotion of their products as well. In such cases we see that the Corporate branding and promotions are trying to communicate a different set of messages to the customers while the product brand promotions convey a totally different message. The corporate branding tries to cultivate and nurture the corporate identify, values and the image while at the product level, the branding promotes the product and its value proposition to the target customers.

Understanding of the different types of branding gives us the understanding that the brands carry a certain power which can be termed as perception combined with an image. Besides, the brand also carries many more components and messages that it tries to convey. Overall you will also note that the brands have the power to gain access to and remain in the sub conscious mind of the viewers. More importantly they use this power to help initiate and strengthen the relationship with the viewers as well as the customers. A brand connects the four crucial elements of an enterprise- customers, employees, management and shareholders.

Brand is nothing but an assortment of memories in customers mind. Brand represents values, ideas and even personality. It is a set of functional, emotional and rational associations and benefits which have occupied target market's mind. Associations are nothing but the images and symbols associated with the brand or brand benefits. And these benefits are the basis for purchase decision.