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Brand positioning and customer perception towards apparels – A study in Bangalore

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Abstract

The brand building is done over a period of time by the companies. The exercise of brand building involves an enormous amount of time and effort on the part of the companies. Brand acceptance by the consumers involves the acceptance of the quality, aesthetic value, perceived value and also uniqueness, social value, utility value, uniqueness with the brand, gets an acceptance. Brand sells the products and generates revenue for the organisations.

Brand building requires the organization to work out the market segmentation. This would help the organization to focus on the positioning of the brand with the products in the market. The segmentation can be based on age, demography, income levels, orientation like Desi or Videsi etc. Over a period of time the brand gets ingrained in the minds of the customers. Brand becomes product personified. The effort of the marketers is paid back at this juncture where the brand loyalty gets the repeat sales. Value is created over a period of time in brand building.

Keywords: Brand, value creation, segmentation, quality, consumer, customer loyalty

1. Introduction

Brands serve several valuable functions. At their most basic level, brands serve as markers for the offerings of a firm. For customers, brands can simplify choice, promise a particular quality level, reduce risk, and/or engender trust. Brands are built on the product itself, the accompanying marketing activity, and the use (or non-use) by customers as well as others.

Brands thus reflect the complete experience that customers have with products. Brands also play an important role in determining the effectiveness of marketing efforts such as advertising and channel placement. Finally, brands are an asset in the financial sense. Thus, brands manifest their impact at three primary levels – customer-market, product-market, and financial-market. The value accrued by these various benefits is often called brand equity.

2. Meaning and Definitions

The American Marketing Association (AMA) definition of a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors"¹

Loyalty: When the people positive experience with a memorable brand, they are more likely to buy that product or service than competitive brand.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a consumer's preference to buy a particular brand in a product category. It occurs because consumers perceive that the brand offers the right product features, images or level of quality at the right price.

Branding is the process of creating distinctive and durable perceptions in the minds of customers. A brand is persistent, unique business identify intertwined with associations of personality, quality, origin, liking and more.

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¹ A Study on the Influence of Brand Loyalty Towards Branded Apparels for Men at Dindigul, Volume III Issue-II July 2011

3. Importance of Branding

1. Branding is a tool for sales promotion in the market.
2. Branding aid in knowing the customer's requirements
3. It facilitates easy advertisement and publicity
4. It creates special consumer preference over the product.

4. Brand Positioning

Brand positioning sets the direction of marketing activities and programs – what the brand should and should not do with its marketing. Brand positioning involves establishing key brand associations in the minds of customers and other important constituents to differentiate the brand and establish (to the extent possible) competitive superiority (Keller et al. 2002). Besides the obvious issue of selecting tangible product attribute levels (e.g., horsepower in a car), two particularly relevant areas to positioning are the role of brand intangibles and the role of corporate images and reputation.²

5. Examples of Brand-Positioning Strategy

Quality Positioning

The quality of a given product is one of the most important components of a company brand, and can be combined with other positioning strategies rather easily. Since every business is trying to emphasize its commitment to quality, a good way to distinguish yourself from competitors is to narrow your focus to one area of expertise, thereby branding the company as a high-quality and trusted specialist.

Value or Price Positioning

There are two ways to approach value or price positioning, both of which are crucially dependent on quality. One approach is to use a high-end tack, which exploits the psychological belief that the more expensive something is, the more intrinsically valuable it must be. You can also cement your brand as the provider of high-quality, value-priced products or services. A good example of this strategy is Southwest Airlines. In a tough economy, its policy of offering affordable flights as well as promising free checked luggage has allowed it to flourish while other airlines struggle.

Benefit Positioning

Communicating the unique benefits of a product or service has long been a popular brand position. With this strategy, the goal is to highlight your company's most powerful attributes — attributes no competitor can claim and that are valuable to the consumer. Consider the popular and ever-bored Maytag repairman: Maytag built its brand on the benefits of owning a machine that almost never requires repair. Similarly, Colgate toothpaste uses a benefit strategy with an effective message: Brush with Colgate and prevent cavities and gingivitis, a benefit promise that appeals to consumers.

Problem and Solution Positioning

Positioning a brand as the solution to a consumer's problem is also a powerful strategy. The idea is to demonstrate that your company has the power to relieve customers of whatever problem they may be facing, both quickly and efficiently. For example, prepackaged chopped vegetables

solve the consumer's problem of time-consuming food preparation in a snap.

Competitor-Based Positioning

Business is nothing if not competitive. Therefore, with this positioning strategy, a company takes aim at one or several competitors to demonstrate its superiority among others offering the same type of product or service. Car insurance companies often employ this strategy to establish a powerful brand by comparing their rates or service to those of other companies. The message is that consumers should cancel their old policies and purchase their coverage from a different and better insurer.

Celebrity-Driven Positioning

Hiring celebrities as spokespeople or to endorse a company's product or service is a popular way to position a brand. The goal is to garner brand awareness and recognition by associating your company with a glamorous individual. While this is an expensive route to take, the consumer tends to trust celebrities implicitly because she's familiar with their faces. This familiarity inspires buyers to follow the celebrity's lead or to emulate him, making this strategy ideal for selling luxury goods or athletic apparel.³

6. Apparels Fashion

The apparel fashion plays a paramount role in shaping apparel consumerism. As lifestyles change, fashion in India is becoming more diversified, as in the Western countries. Technology, ideas and lifestyles are moving concurrently and quickly. Companies and brands that offered monotonous and mundane products for years, have now multiplied their product ranges and new appealing styles, shapes and forms are being launched each season by them. Identification of the role of apparel as a sign of business success is not a new concept. A review of related literature revealed that self-image/product image congruity was related to an individual's behavior to a particular item and that apparel products had symbolic meaning. Studies have considered the relationship between the self and apparel and have taken into account the various aspects of the self such as actual self-image and ideal self-image. If the image of an outfit were a positive match with the self-image, including both the actual self and the ideal self, the apparel item would be worn most of the time.⁴

7. Customers Behavior Towards Buying

Variations in customers like and dislike, the cognitive growth and motivation force them to act in various ways in purchasing clothing's products (Lalitha. A, Ravikumar, J.and Padmavali, K., 2008). Individual may not act in the same way always, customers act consistently and we have tried to figure out the customers in below groups according to their buying behavior.

- A habit determined group of brand loyal consumers who tend to be satisfied with the product or brand last purchased.

² Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities, August 2004 Revised February 2005 Second Revision May 2005

³ <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/examples-brandpositioning-strategy-25213.html>

⁴ ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Retail Management ISSN 0976-7193 (Print) ISSN 2349-2317 (Online) Volume 5 Issue 2, April (2014)

- A price cognitive group of consumers who decide principally upon the basis of price or economy comparison.
- Group of customers who emphasize on products quality like design, style, raw materials etc.
- Group of customers who buy products being attracted on aesthetic and functional properties of those products.
- A cognitive group of consumers who are sensitive to rational claims.
- An impulse group of consumers who buy on the basis of physical appeal and are relatively insensitive to brand name.
- A group of emotional reactors who respond to product symbols and are heavily swayed by images.
- A group of new consumers who haven't yet stabilized the psychological dimensions of their behavior.⁵

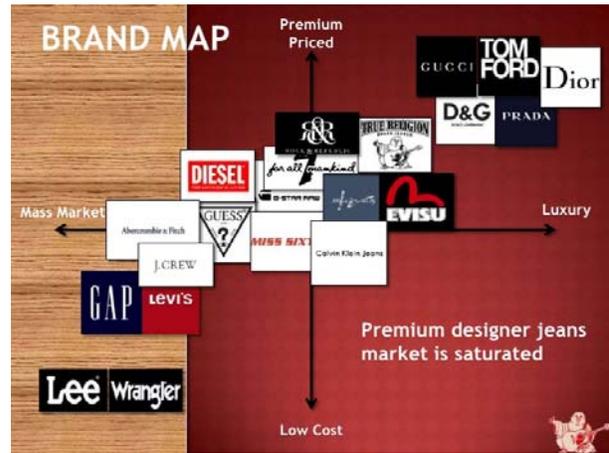
Table 1

Apparel is the most profitable segment of the Indian retail market today		
Category	Typical retailer margins	Description
Food	15-20%	• More than 80% organized retail in India is food – however margins are not as high
Apparel	35-50%	• Highest retailer margins through apparel • The more organized segments like men's formals provide the highest returns
Electronics	5-10%	• Household appliances may provide as much as 8-10%; however categories like cell phones may be as low as 5-6%

Source: Share of Indian apparel retail market (McKinsey Report, 2010)⁶

8. Global Brands in Indian Apparel Retail Market

Since the inception of Indian economic reforms in late 80s, the apparel sector has been the principal benefactor for global brands (Saxena & Dutta, 2013). Though India has a rich heritage of textiles, Indian consumers have always looked to the western world for inspiration due to the impact of British colonial history and the ever-increasing diaspora. Global brands have rising acceptability among the increasing Indian affluent and middle class due to the rising consumer base and the rapidly growing economy (Saxena & Dutta, 2013). These brands have positioned themselves in the premium-end of the market. On the contrary, Indian companies have been enthusiastically supporting the rise and acceptance of the global brands among the Indian consumers. Currently there are over 200 global brands in the Indian apparel retail market and the numbers are increasing rapidly (Saxena & Dutta, 2013).



Source: true-religion-brand-jeans-in-china

Fig 1

9. Demand in Major Cities⁷

The Indian cities are the major consumer of the denim products. The total consumption of denim trousers in the 15 major cities is estimated at 21.46 million pieces. The table below provides the consumption of denim trousers in 15 major cities of the country. The total consumption in these 15 cities accounts for 11.6 percent of the total consumption of all denim products. As regards to the share of these cities they exceed more than a fifth of the total urban consumption. Mumbai leads in the use of denim trousers followed by Delhi. Kolkata as a metro city ranks at 8th position while Hyderabad, Chennai, Lucknow, Bangalore and Kanpur are ahead in the consumption as against Kolkata. The smaller cities like Indore, Chandigarh, Coimbatore and Guwahati have made adequate dent in the consumption of denim trousers.

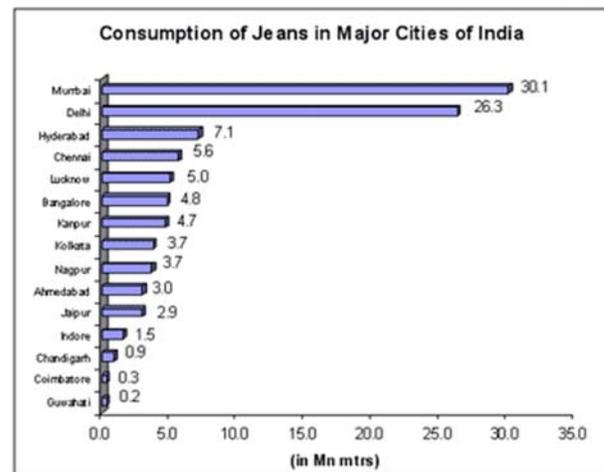


Fig 2

10. Scope of the Study

The study is restricted to the city of Bangalore wherein the samples are chosen in the teenage group.

11. Purpose of the Study

The brand building does not result from accidents. It requires a thoughtfulness and imaginative planning from the

⁵ European Scientific Journal March 2014 edition vol.10, No.7 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431s

⁶ Brand Analyses of Global Brands Versus Local Brand in Indian Apparel Consumer Market by Aniket Sengupta, University of Kentucky, ase233@g.uky.edu, July 21, 2014.

⁷ Fibre to Fashion.com World of Garment-Textile-Fashion

companies to establish themselves in the market. Every company to gain competitive advantage in the market must establish brand therein so that consumer is able to identify the brand with some uniqueness. The present study explores the unique value propositions with the associated brands. It also explores how brand impacts the purchasing of jeans products?

12. Objectives

To understand branding and Brand Positioning Strategy

To examine various brand Positioning Strategies

To offer constructive suggestions

13. Sample Size

A sample of 40 respondents in the city of Bangalore using sample brand of jeans are chosen for the study.

14. Literature Review

Table 2: Literature Review

SL. No	Year	Description
1	2004	Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities
2	2013	Branding of Clothing Fashion products: Fashion Brand Image Development by Marketing Communication Approach
3	2011	A Study on the Influence of Brand Loyalty Towards Branded Apparels for Men at Dindigul
4	2014	Customer Perceptions in Buying Decision Towards Branded Bangladeshi Local Apparel Products
5	2016	Impact of Brand Positioning on Customer Purchase Decision of Men Apparel Brands In Udupi
6	2012	Consumers' Attitude Towards Branded Apparels: Gender Perspective
7	2016	A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Branded Apparels With Reference to Bangalore City.
8	2014	A Study of Customer Perception of Youth Towards Branded Fashion Apparels in Jalandhar City

- Kevin Lane Keller, Donald R. Lehmann (2004)⁸ opines that branding has emerged as a top management priority in the last decade due to the growing realization that brands are one of the most valuable intangible assets that firms have. Driven in part by this intense industry interest, academic researchers have explored a number of different brand-related topics in recent years, generating scores of papers, articles, research reports, and books. It identifies some of the influential work in the branding area, highlighting what has been learned from an academic perspective on important topics such as brand positioning, brand integration, brand equity measurement, brand growth, and brand management. The research also outlines some gaps that exist in the research of branding and brand equity and formulates a series of related research questions. Choice modeling implications of the branding concept and the challenges of incorporating main and interaction effects of

branding as well as the impact of competition are discussed.

- Md. Mazedul Islam and Adnan Maroof Khan (2013)⁹ contend that the preference of consumers for readymade branded apparels is fast changing which is caused by the creation of personality and status with the quality and comfort they deliver. Customers have become highly brand conscious presently. Hence, brand image is a significant factor in choosing the product or brand to buy. Driven by the competitive environment in fashion business, marketers have realized that creating a favorable brand image is a key to win larger market share in its market niche.
- An understanding of brand image can provide better foundation for developing a more effective marketing program. The understanding of consumers' desires, behavior and of the purchase process of fashion products is extremely important to the design of fashion products collections as well as to the placement of these products in the market. A fashion product must satisfy the demands of the target customers, so the main idea (message) behind the brand (sender) must reach the consumer (receiver).
- P.S. Venkateswaran, N. Ananthi, U. Geetha, Binith Muthukrishnan. K (2011)¹⁰ study the influence of brand loyalty on apparel's buying behavior of consumers at Dindigul. Rising costs of living around the world cause consumers to stretch their incomes more thinly, meaning necessities are being weighed against apparel. Fashion must have value and purpose and truly resonate to the consumer. Strong brands with consistent powerful messages can create loyalty and a sense of worth that transcends the burden of choice. Branding may communicate several meanings to the consumer, which include the attribute, benefit, value, culture, personality, and user. In addition, branding will indicate the importance of loyalty, awareness, quality, association and others.
- Md. Mazedul Islam, Muhammad Mufidul Islam, Abu Yousuf Mohammad Anwarul Azim, Md. Russel Anwar and Md. Mijan Uddin (2014)¹¹ propound that the garment manufacturing sector earned \$19 billion in the year June 2012, one of the impoverished nation's biggest industries. Bangladesh is the world's second largest exporter of clothing after China. Readymade garments make up 80 percent of the country's \$24 billion in annual exports. Consultancy firm McKinsey & Company said that Bangladesh could double its garments exports in the next 10 years. Definitely it is news that our local apparel products are trying to satisfy the need of local customers along with strengthening the countries economical growth. So, knowing the customers desired requirements when they purchase such local apparel brand products are mandatory to better clothing's brand developments. Brand management holds the key in the modern markets, particularly in case of Bangladeshi local apparel

⁹ Research Journal of Engineering Sciences, ISSN 2278 – 9472 Vol. 2(4), 28-33, April (2013), Res. J. Engineering Sci.

¹⁰ A Study on the Influence of Brand Loyalty Towards Branded Apparels for Men At Dindigul, Volume III Issue-II July 2011.

¹¹ European Scientific Journal March 2014 Edition Vol.10, No.7 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431

⁸ Brands And Branding: Research Findings And Future Priorities, August 2004, Revised February 2005, Second Revision May 2005.

- markets. Bangladeshi people are very traditional in clothing's choice.
6. Rizwana Begum and K.S. Sarala (2016)¹² feel that brand positioning is the key of marketing strategy. A strong brand positioning directs marketing strategy by explaining the brand details. Effective brand positioning is contingent upon identifying and communicating a brand's uniqueness, differentiation and verifiable value. Positioning is the base for developing and increasing the required knowledge and perceptions of the customers. In this background, the present study aims at examining the impact of attributes of brand positioning on consumer purchase decision for men apparel brands in Udipi.
 7. Namita Rajput, Subodh Kesharwani and Akanksha Khanna(2012)¹³ study the relationship between consumers' decision-making styles and their choice between domestic and imported brand clothing is investigated using a sample of Indian consumers. The researcher analyze the significance of demographic profile of consumers affecting the purchase decision of branded garments and to observe from gender perspective the consumer awareness about different apparel brands available in the Indian market and also to find out whether there is a significant difference in total expenditure on branded apparels done by males vis- a - vis females. The results exhibit no significant differences in the brand awareness, shopping frequency and shopping expenditure between males and females.
 8. Prof. Lakshmi Narayana. K, Dr. Sreenivas D L (2016)¹⁴ investigate the relationship between the factors which affects the buying behavior towards branded apparels in Bangalore city. The Data has been collected from the respondents who presently living in Bangalore city and regular buyers of branded apparels. The study offers insights and evidence about the relationship between the variables which impact consumer buying behavior for branded apparels. In the study under consideration, the results indicate that there is significant relationship between reference group and purchase intention also promotion, Store attributes, product attributes, Income of the respondent and occupation have positive significant relation between consumer buying behavior.
 9. Syed Tabrez Hassan, Bilal H Hurrah, Amit Lanja (2014)¹⁵ opines that as in this competition era, from business point of view, we must be aware about the customer needs & wants & what a consumer expects from a company. We should have this information or a customer database if we want to stay in the market and to develop a competitive edge in the market. After conducting this study we must be able to understand what customers want from a brand, why they switches to other brand, what are the factors which force them to purchase branded apparels. By analyzing these, company can formulate the strategies as per the

customer needs & deliver them the products which consumer wants from the company, which will be profitable for the company.

The relationship between consumers' decision-making styles and their choice between branded and non-branded clothing is investigated using a sample of consumers of Jalandhar City only. The research investigates youth of Jalandhar city to examine if any factor dominates in their buying behavior for apparel. In addition, consumer attributes (i.e., apparel involvement, brand consciousness, reference group, social class, and other factors) and personal characteristics were investigated separately and in relation to the purchase behavior of youth.

15. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 3: Duration of Usage of Jeans

Duration	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 3 Years	11	27.5
3 to 5 Years	12	30.0
5 to 8 Years	7	17.50
8 Years and Above	10	25.00
Total	40	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

27.5% of the respondents have been using the jeans for less than three years. 30% of the respondents have been using the jeans for three to five years. 17.5% of the respondents have been using the jeans for five to eight years. 25% of the respondents have been using the jeans for eight years and above.

Table 4: Attributes In The Jeans

Attributes	No. of Respondents
Quality	12/40 (30.0)
Durability	18/40(45.0)
Price	23/40(57.5)
Looks	29/40(72.5)
Brand Image	28/40(70.0)
Aesthetic Value	24/40(60.0)
Brand Ambassador	17/40(42.5)
Company Reputation	26/40(65.0)
Gifts and Discounts	23/40(57.5)

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

A question was posed to the respondents regarding the attributes in the jeans they look for while purchase. 30% of the respondents look for quality in the jeans. 45% of the respondents consider durability. 57.5% of the respondents consider price as an important attribute. 70% of the respondents look for brand image.60% of the respondents consider aesthetic value.42.5% of the respondents look for brand ambassador.65% of the respondents consider company reputation. 57.5% of the respondents look for gifts and discounts.

¹² ISSN: 2231-5063 Impact Factor : 3.4052(UIF) Volume - 5 | Issue - 10 | April - 2016, International Multidisciplinary Research Journal.

¹³ www.ccsenet.org/ijms, International Journal of Marketing Studies, Vol. 4, No. 2; April 2012

¹⁴ Asia Pacific Journal of Research ISSN (Print) : 2320-5504 ISSN (Online) : 2347-4793

www.apjor. www.apjor.com, Vol: I. Issue XLII, August 2016

¹⁵ ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Retail Management ISSN 0976-7193 (Print) ISSN 2349-2317 (Online) Volume 5 Issue 2, April (2014), www.elkjournals.com.

Table 5: Unique Value Proposition With The Brands Identified

Unique Value Proposition	Lee	Levi Strauss	Wrangler
Price	25/40 (62.5)	32/40 (80.0)	23/40 (57.5)
Benefits	29/40 (72.5)	14/40 (35.0)	21/40 (52.5)
Price Range	27/40 (67.5)	33/40 (82.5)	27/40 (67.5)
Advertisement	26/40 (65.0)	29/40 (72.5)	21/40 (52.5)
Utility	25/40 (62.5)	28/40 (70.0)	21/40 (52.5)
Quality	20/40 (50.0)	31/40 (77.5)	23/40 (57.5)
Rough Use	31/40 (77.5)	29/40 (72.5)	23/40 (57.5)
Impressions	23/40 (57.5)	28/40 (70.0)	18/40 (45.0)

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

Out of the three brands of jeans selected for the study, the unique value proposition in the jeans were identified and the responses were collected indicate that, Lee brand was indicated by 57.5% of the respondents to have impressions. 70% of the respondents feel the impressions for Levi Strauss jeans. Quality was held for the Wrangler jeans by 57.5% of the respondents. Utility was considered as a unique value proposition by 70% of the respondents for the Levis Strauss brand. Price range was held by 67.5% of the respondents for Lee brand.

Table 6: Stimulations Associated With The Brands

Brands	Sensory Stimulation	Cognitive Stimulation
Lee	23 (57.5)	19 (47.5)
Levi Strauss	11 (27.5)	11 (27.5)
Wrangler	06 (15.0)	10 (25.0)
Total		

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

Stimulations impact the brand selection of the products. The sensory and cognitive stimulations were identified for the three brand under consideration. The responses indicate that, 57.5% and 47.5% of the respondents felt the sensory stimulations and cognitive stimulations respectively to be impacting the purchase decisions in case of Lee jeans.

16. Conclusion

Branding plays a very crucial role in the selection of fashionable products. Apparel section has gained a lot of momentum over a decade and half making it lucrative for the marketers to tap the segment and earn profits. The various sales promotions like stock clearance sales, seconds sale, factory sales, special offers and the like done in this segment is well accepted and received from the customers. The brand acceptance and the retention in the market are interlinked. What needs to be done is the customer engagement with the brand.

17. Suggestions

1. The brands must identify the product attribute levels in the products and work on it.
2. Brand intangibles identified by the product must transcend into the physical products.
3. The jeans market is long existing and sustained its position as fashionable apparel in the apparel market. Must continue bring in innovation in the forms of jeans.
4. Brand consciousness with the jeans market is growing and the segment has to be updated with the time and trends.

5. Global jeans products have maintained uniformity of styles and apparel codes, what needs to be done in this regard is the blending with desi mindset.

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