

Exploring the relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing decision: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to identify the importance of brand image in business matters, besides, exploring the relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing decision. The Findings of this research showed that brand image has strong positive influence & significant relationship with Consumer buying behavior. Thus, companies should take all necessary procedures to develop their brand images and maintain their position in the competitive business. This study is descriptive based on the collection and analysis of results of studies, reports, periodicals and books related to the topic of study in order to exploring relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing decision also reviewed the model of consumers decision making process. Based on descriptive study, the researcher has develop some main guideline to develop positive relationship between brand image & consumers purchasing decision.

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Introduction

Nowadays all shareholder looking to maximizing market share to generate more profits and pay a lot of money to keep brand image top in consumers mind. In addition, advertisement, corporate social responsibility and other thing help brand to have a good ranking among competitor.

Strong brand in the market competition is the main goal of many organizations because it allows the creation of a wide range of benefits to organizations including reduced risk, greater profits, cooperation with other parties as well as the opportunity for brand extension. Brand image is also regarded as opinion and consumer confidence in the quality of products produced by organizations and organizational honesty in the products offered to consumers. Besides, advertising is becoming a driving force for any business because it can force people to change their behaviour regarding your product in positive sense [1].

Therefore, we can say that brand image & advertising play an important role in any business to make it successful. In addition, consumers tend to give more weight to products & services connected to a strong brand identity. This provides the brand with enormous credibility which leads to increased consumer trust. Therefore, it became clear that companies use brand image to target specific demographic groups of consumers because it helps to make a connection with consumers and win their loyalty [2].

Research problem

The researcher in this study found out that a lot of managers does not recognize the importance of the

relationship between brand image & consumer purchasing decision. Some managers believe that brand image affect the consumer purchasing decision. Thus, this study will focus on consumer's purchasing decision & determine the factors that affect his decision to buy.

Research objectives:

In fact. Based on previous studies, reports, periodicals and books related to the topic of the study, the main objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1- Identify the meaning of brand image.
- 2- Identify the meaning of consumer's purchasing decision.
- 3- Explore the relationship between brand image & consumer purchasing decision.

Research Methodology:

This study is a descriptive one. It based on the collection & analysis of the results of studies, reports, periodicals and books related to the topic of study in order to explore the relationship between brand image & consumer purchasing decision.

Research Questions

Based on research problems, the research questions of this study are as follows:

- 1- What is the meaning of brand image?
- 2- What is the meaning of consumer purchasing decision?
- 3- What is the relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing decision?

Literature Review:

Brand image:

Brand image is the current view of the customers about a brand. It can be defined as a unique bundle of

associations within the minds of target customers. It signifies what the brand presently stands for. It is a set of beliefs held about a specific brand. In short, it is nothing but the consumers' perception about the product. It is the manner in which a specific brand is positioned in the market. Brand image conveys emotional value and not just a mental image. Brand image is nothing but an organization's character. It is an accumulation of contact and observation by people external to an organization. It should highlight an organization's mission and vision to all. The main elements of positive brand image are- unique logo reflecting organization's image, slogan describing organization's business in brief and brand identifier supporting the key values.

Brand image is the overall impression in consumers' mind that is formed from all sources. Consumers develop various associations with the brand. Based on these associations, they form brand image. An image is formed about the brand on the basis of subjective perceptions of associations bundle that the consumers have about the brand. Volvo is associated with safety. Toyota is associated with reliability.

Brand image develops and conveys the product's character in a unique manner different from its competitor's image. The brand image consists of various associations in consumers' mind - attributes, benefits and attributes. Brand attributes are the

functional and mental connections with the brand that the customers have. They can be specific or conceptual. Benefits are the rationale for the purchase decision. There are three types of benefits: Functional benefits - what do you do better (than others), emotional benefits - how do you make me feel better (than others), and rational benefits/support - why do I believe you (more than others). Brand attributes are consumers overall assessment of a brand [3].

Brand image is developed over through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme, and is authenticated through the consumers' direct experience. See also corporate image [4]. Brand image is the perception of a product, which is a reflection of customers' memory in the product. Brand is defined as an image that can be remembered by the public, which makes a positive brand, relevant and easy to remember by the people [5].

Brand image and brand attitude have a positive impact on the purchasing intention of customers, whereas environmental consequences have negative effect purchase decision [6].

Advertisement have strong positive influence and significant relationship with consumer's buying behaviour. People perceive the brand image with positive attitude. Besides, this study showed that advertisement is a big marketing weapon to attract customer's attention to buy [7].

Perspective	Sources	Definition of brand image
Blanket definitions	Herzog (1963) [8] Newman (1985) [9] Dichter (1985) [10]	Consumers' general perception and impression of a brand Consumers' perception of a product's total attributes Consumers' general impression of the product or service
Meanings and Messages	Noth (1988) [11]	The symbolic meaning embedded in the product or service
	Sommers (1964) [12]	Consumers' perception and recognition of a product's symbolic attribute
	Levy (1973) [13]	The symbolic meaning of purchasing the product or service
Personification	Martineau (1957) [14]	Brand image reflects consumers' characteristics, and they purchase the brand to express themselves
	Bettinger (1979) [15]	The personification of a product, which can be manifested as "adult" and "children"
	Sirgy (1985) [16]	Image of the brand resembles human personality
Cognitive or psychological elements	Gardner & Levy (1955) [17]	Brand image is consisted of consumers' opinion, attitude and emotion toward a brand, which reflects the cognitive or psychological elements of the brand
	Levy (1978) [18]	Consumers' overall impression about a brand or product, which includes recognition, feeling and attitude toward it
	Bullmore (1984) [19]	Consumers' general perception and opinion of a brand's total attributes
	Kapferer (1994) [20]	Consumers' general perception about the brand feature's association

Consumer Purchasing Decision:

In fact, A decision is the selection of an action from two or more alternative choices. Every day we take many decisions and sometimes we wonder how we make these decisions and what is involved in its process. Thus, before we take up simple model of decision making. The consumer-related models of decision making are discussed below:

1- Economic Man Model:

Customer is characterized as an Economic Man, and he makes rational decision.

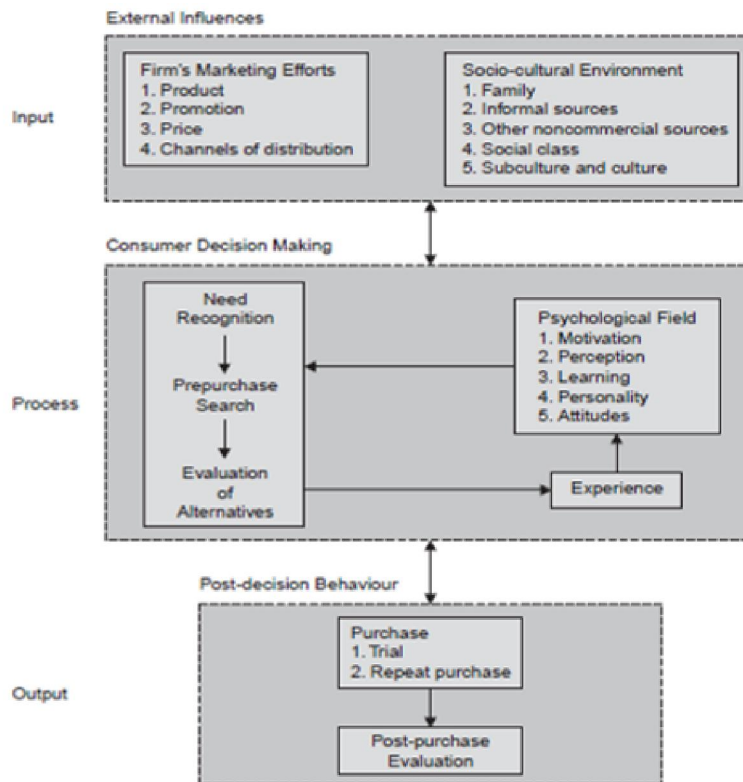
2- Passive Man Model: It is opposite to Economic Man model and describes the consumer as impulsive and irrational purchaser.

3- Cognitive Man Model:

It portrays the consumer as a thinking problem solver. It focuses on the process by which consumers

seek and evaluate information on selecting brands and retail outlets.

The following figure shows the INPUT, PROCESS and OUTPUT MODEL of decision-making. The input factors are the external influences, which are the 4 Ps of marketing. This socio cultural background of family, social class culture etc. forms the input. It is what the consumer is influenced by or what goes into his mind. This is known as input. Next follows the process of decision-making. These need recognition; pre-purchase search which are dealt with in separate chapters in this book. These along with the psychological factors of motivation, perception, learning, personality, attitude and experience form the constituents of Decision Making. Next is the post-purchase decision behavior that is whether the product is bought or not, and whether it is taken for trial or purchased right away.



Model of consumer decision making

There are five stages in consumer decision making:

1. Problem recognition: A consumer recognizes a need to buy a product.
2. Information search: Attempt is made to gain knowledge about the product.
3. Evaluation and alternatives: The products which can fulfill the needs are evaluated in terms of plus and minus points.

4. Purchase action: The actual purchase is made from store after consideration of a number of factors.

5. Post-purchase behavior (followed sequentially): This is how a consumer feels after using the product, i.e., satisfaction or dissatisfaction [21].

Concerning Female consumers' buying behavior, we find it highly & positively affected by branding status, attitude toward a brand, Self-Concepts and

others' opinions. People are now more conscious and involved in branded fashion clothing. Different factors have significant influence on female buying behavior [22].

Perspectives on decision-making

Traditionally, consumer researchers have approached decision-making from a rational perspective. In this view, people calmly and carefully integrate as much information as possible with what they already know about a product, painstakingly weighing the pluses and minuses of each alternative, and arriving at a satisfactory decision. This process implies that steps in decision-making should be carefully studied by marketing managers in order to understand how information is obtained, how beliefs are formed, and what product choice criteria are specified by consumers. Products then can be developed that emphasize appropriate attributes, and promotional strategies can be tailored to deliver the types of information most likely to be desired in the most effective formats [23].

Types of consumer decisions

Extended problem solving

Decisions involving extended problem solving correspond most closely to the traditional decision-making perspective. Based on the importance of the decision, each product alternative is carefully evaluated. The evaluation is often done by considering the attributes of one brand at a time and seeing how each brand's attributes shape up to some set of desired characteristics.

Limited problem solving

Limited problem solving is usually more straightforward and simple. Buyers are not as motivated to search for information or to evaluate each alternative rigorously. People instead use simple decision rules to choose among alternatives.

Habitual decision making

This refers to decisions that are made with little or no conscious effort. Many purchase decisions are made that we may not realize we've made them until we look in our shopping trolleys [23].

Stated that packaging elements like color, packaging material, design of wrapper and innovation are considered important factors when consumers make any buying decision [24].

Brand image at some organization

Apple brand image

Apple considered as a good example to show us the relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing decision.

Apple Inc. uses the Apple brand to compete across several highly competitive markets. Apple's brand has evolved as it has expanded its range of products and services. Originally starting in the late 1970s with desktop computers and then laptops in the

1990s, it took over 20 years before the company expanded into its first major new product area with the launch of the iPod in 2001, followed by iPhone in 2007, iPad in 2010, and now Apple Pay and Apple Watch in 2014.

In the early decades, Apple's brand was very much that of a challenger, bringing easy to use computers to consumers and small businesses in a way that as focused on the needs, individuality, and style of ordinary people, rather than the conformity and technical mandates of big business.

Apple's brand position has evolved, but today's brand is still consistent with these early promises.

Apple's core competence remains delivering exceptional customer experience through superb user interfaces. The company's product strategy is based around this, with the iPhone (with its touch screen "gestures" that are re-used on the iPad), Mac, iCloud, iTunes, and the Apps Store all playing key roles. THE distinctive feature of each of Apple Pay and Apple Watch remains the customer experience of an elegant user interface and simplicity of use.

Starting with a major re-vitalization of the Apple brand when the iPod was launched in 2001, Apple worked hard to harmonize and migrate its brand and its product strategy closer together, to achieve today's position.

Steve Jobs, Apple's co-Founder, described Apple as a "mobile devices company" - the largest one in the world. The company renamed itself Apple Inc. rather than Apple Computer. At the time, this was a significant move, signifying Apple's move beyond being more than a computer company.

The company is now defining itself more broadly than being just a devices company. It has blended its digital content services (eg Apple Music, iTunes, iBooks and App Store) to be a key part of the value proposition to Apple device owners, and (with iCloud in the background) Apple is making many services and functionality which consumers use accessible on whatever (Apple) device they happen to be using at the time, be it on their desk, lap, fingertips or wrist [25].

Apple's branded stores create a unique customer experience. The Apple store creates an interoperability between its hardware devices such as computers, tablets, smart phones, music players and watches that showcase capabilities such as video, music, photography, apps, and software.

A detailed understanding of Apple's customers allowed the company to analyze consumer behavior more effectively analyze tailoring products and brand messages that resonate with the target audience making products that work better and are simple to use.

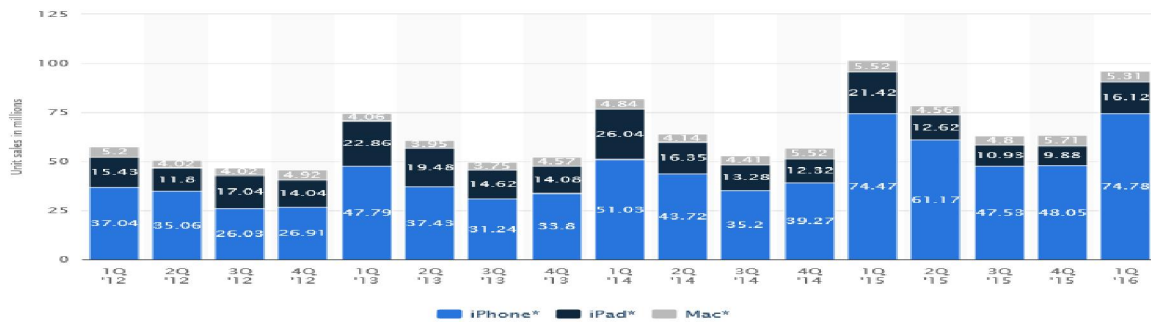
Apple’s marketing communication resonates with its target audience. The central idea of the golden circle theory is, people do not buy what a company does, people buy why they do it. The theory provides evidence of how most companies communicate in an uninspiring manner. Most companies typically communicate by stating what they do, how a company is different or better, and the expectation from the company of a behavior, such as a purchase.

As a result of its marketing communication strategies, consumers have confidence they are purchasing a quality product whether, it is a Mac, iPhone, iPad, iPod or iTunes software. The shared

beliefs between Apple and consumer’s along with positive product and service experiences are critical in establishing the brand in the mind of the consumer [26].

Unit sales of Apple worldwide by product/operating segment from the first quarter of 2012 to the first quarter of 2016 (in millions)

The statistic shows the unit sales of Apple by product/operating segment from the first quarter of 2012 to the first quarter of 2016. In the first quarter of its 2015 fiscal year Apple sold 74.47 million iPhones [27].




Researcher Note

In fact, the strong brand image for Apple Company reflects the sales volume for iPhone, iPad and Mac. The sales growth means that before purchasing each device from Apple, there was a

decision-making process. Besides, when consumers buy more from Apple devices, this shows us the positive relationship between brand image & consumers purchasing decision.

Apple brand value by Forbes: [28]

Rank	Brand	Brand Value	1-Yr Value Change	Brand Revenue	Company Advertising	Industry
#1	 Apple	\$145.3 B	17%	\$182.3 B	\$1.2 B	Technology

Researcher Note

It is clear here that Apple is the most valuable brand in the world with an estimated brand value of about \$145.3 billion, 1-year change: 17%, brand revenue amounted to \$182.3 billion, and a company advertising amounted to \$1.2 billion. All positive numbers for Apple Company show us a high position of image in consumers' mind.

Nike brand image

Nike is considered as a good example to show us the relationship between brand image and consumer purchasing decision.

Nike advertising takes the common hero story and turns it on its head. Instead of inspiring customer loyalty by singling out an external enemy, it pulls out the stops and focuses on an internal foe – our laziness.

Nike advertising knows just how often we battle with our lazy side. Every morning when that alarm goes off and it’s still totally dark outside, the battle begins. When we choose how long to run, the battle continues. This is how Nike marketing uses emotional marketing to inspire customer loyalty. They know that while some people may identify with an external foe, all people identify with an internal one.

Nike brand strategy is excellent on this end because not only is the internal foe someone we can all hate, the hero is the viewer! In one way or another, we are all the hero of our own story, and Nike marketing has long since identified that feeling – and used it to inspire timeless customer loyalty.

So to recap:

- Nike advertising uses the emotional branding technique of Heroism to inspire incredible customer loyalty all over the world. The hero starts from humble beginnings, challenges a foe greater than he, and against all odds, prevails.

- Nike marketing isn't the only group that uses this archetype. Other brands use it by identifying a foe that their viewers can identify with hating and pit their product against it to build stronger customer loyalty.

- Nike brand strategy takes the emotional marketing story of the Hero and turns it inward. You are the hero, and your lazy side is the villain [29].

How Nike Re-defined the Power of Brand Image

Nike, who has refined themselves as an athletic and Fitness Company and not just another shoe company, is just shy of becoming the definition of sports themselves. The Nike Swoosh, one of the most recognizable logos in the world, has made Nike one of the most highly valued and most successful brands today. If any company can translate the importance of creating, protecting, and maintaining a brand for a company, Nike is the perfect example.

Branding is one of the most crucial aspects that creates and defines a company's identity. By building up a brand, a company is taking a series of steps to create value, brand visibility, and make their product desirable. A brand should encompass a lifestyle, give consumers something to identify with, and give the product substance and meaning. Take it from Nike, who's success and dominance in the world of sports has thrived on their ability to construct their brand image, visibility, and giving the company logo extremely high value.

Nike has created superior value by utilizing celebrity endorsers, such as Michael Jordan, to represent their brand. The idea is that the celebrity image is embedded into the consumer's mind and will cause the consumer to associate the endorser with Nike's products, making the brand more desirable and valuable. The sports celebrities convey the idea of athleticism and become this almost heroic, iconic symbol people strive to become. When consumers translate these ideologies and Jordan's iconic stance into the Swoosh, the Nike logo builds incredible value.

Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*, notes three ways Nikes has strived to become the very definition of sports itself, involving sports celebrities, destroying the competition, and selling pieces of the brand "as if it was the Berlin Wall." Nike town, glossy, extravagant stores built in the United States, serve the purpose of making consumers think that Nike's brand is high end and gives consumers a cool user experience. The Swoosh in Nike Town is worshipped as art and a heroic symbol – it defines athleticism, courage, honor, victory, teamwork and all other aspects correlated with sports. The Nike Swoosh has

been made into this cultural dissemination that stands for athleticism, power, fitness, and all other aspects Nike attempts to incorporate into their brand image.

Still don't believe brand is that important? In 1997, Nike spent \$978 million on advertising, marketing and promotion. Nike pours millions into advertising and marketing spending, because keeping their brand visibility is the key in driving future earnings growth.

When it comes to brand visibility, no one does it better than Nike. They have re-defined the power of a brand image and are one of the best represented, culturally understood, and symbolic companies in the United States and in the history of sports. Nike's logo has encompassed a brand that reflects aspects that people strive for in their lives: dominance, authenticity, innovation, winning, and performance. Nike's ability have their brand image encompass these ideologies allows consumers to identify with Nike not for the production of their product, but for the image that the brand embodies [30].

Nike's revenue worldwide from 2005 to 2015 (in million U.S. dollars)

This timeline depicts Nike's revenue worldwide from 2005 to 2015. In 2014, Nike's global revenue amounted to about 27.8 billion U.S. dollars. [31]

Researcher Note

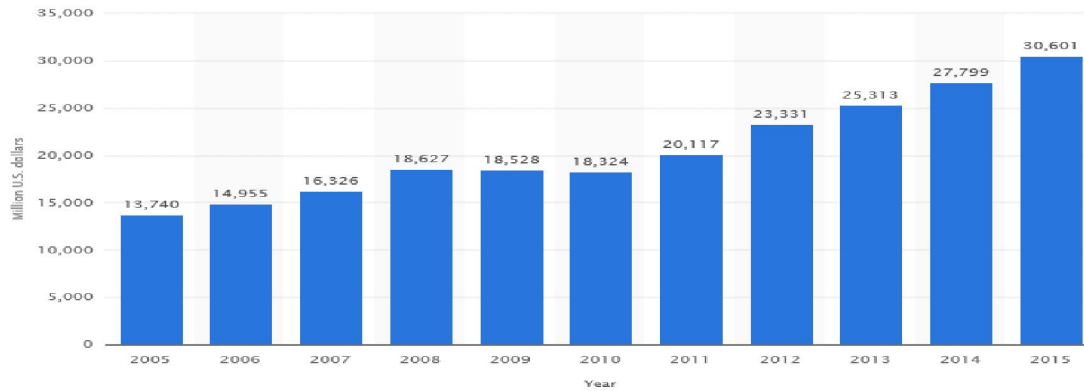
It is clear from this chart that Nike is considered one of the most valuable brand images in the world, actually the marketing strategy for Nike has top among competitor in sports gear, apparel and footwear. The company focuses on using sports legends in football and basketball by means of agreements or sponsorship to market its products all over the world. This technique made the company achieves its goals and increased its revenues worldwide from \$13.740 billion in 2005 to reach \$30.601 billion in 2015. Thus, the strong brand image of the company is well-known in the whole world.

Researcher's analysis of literature review

It is obvious that brand image and brand attitude have a positive influence on the consumer desire to buy any product because people perceive the brand image with positive attitude. In addition, advertising is considered an effective marketing method to attract consumer attention to buy. Thus, we can say that there is a strong relationship between brand image and consumer's buying behaviour since consumers rely on branded products and mostly prefer to buy products with well-known brand names. Besides, packaging elements like colour, design and packaging elements can affect positively on consumer decision to buy. Therefore, we can say that marketing strategies play a vital role in developing the brand of any product. If brand image is managed in effective ways, a business can enjoy maximum number of consumers and can

build long-term profitable relations with consumers

who have a desire to buy these products.



Researcher's Proposal:

By reviewing studies, reports, periodicals and books related to the topic of study researcher has develop some main guideline to develop positive relationship between brand image & customer's purchasing decision.

1- Should select its own brand image that helps it to be saved in the minds of customers all the time.

2- Should make its brand image unique & attractive.

3- Should focus on 4ps and other external factor affected the consumers decision-making process.

4- Should depend on different methods such advertising, color and packaging to achieve its goals besides, having the ability to compete in business world.

5- Should maintain a positive relationship with consumers.

6- Should develop effective marketing strategies in order to be able to compete with other companies.

Conclusion:

As we know, market competition is no longer limited to provide functional attributes of the product itself but has been associated with a brand that can create a special image for its users, especially in the service industry. Besides, People nowadays became conscious about their status and they prefer to use branded products to show off their status symbol. Thus, brand is considered as implied device through which any business can attain the attraction of people and can enjoy the competitive edge. Therefore, this study tried to shed light on the importance of brand image in business and selling products. In addition. It tried to explore the relationship between brand image and consumer's purchasing decision.

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