Customer Perception And Preference Towards Branded Products (With Special Reference To Television Sets)

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People begin to develop preferences at a very early age. Some babies like apple juice, others water. Some kids play softball, others read. Some people thrive in the city and some need the quiet of the country. Some drink Coke while others prefer Pepsi. Our preferences are part of what makes us who we are. And the brands we seek out reflect our preferences. The competition among brands is fierce. In every product category, consumers have more choices, more information and higher expectations than ever before. Jockeying for position in a consumer's preference set requires an aggressive strategy and constant vigilance. The marketer's principal objective is typically to build a relationship with buyers, rather than merely to make a single sale. Ideally, the essence of that relationship consists of a strong bond between the buyer and the brand. The choice of an individual strategy or combination depends mainly on the nature of the branded product or service. The success of the strategy depends heavily on the marketer's understanding of the preference building and bonding process.

Brands are successful because people prefer them to ordinary products. In addition to the psychological factors, brands give consumers the means whereby they can make choices and judgements. The secret to successful branding is to influence the decisions ie., the way consumers perceive the product, and brands can affect the minds of the consumers by appealing to the information acquired and analysed. Information inflow on brands and outflow through inter-personal communication may act as a device to coordinate consumer expectations of the purchasing decisions of other consumers in markets with consumption externalities. The belief that individual difference in brand preference or choice behaviour are caused by personality differences has not always been supported by empirical research. The psychographic variables like emotions associated with the brand image constitute the personality of a brand. The experiment on the variety seeking behaviour of consumers discussed in this paper argues that the perceptions of brand name with reference to brand risk and brand differences have been the prime factors in making buying decisions for new brands among consumers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To evaluate the customers' perception (the promotional factor of purchase) towards the purchase of branded products.
2. To know whether the demographic variables of the respondents have influence on brand preference of television sets.
3. To know the role of the family members in information search about the brand they possess.
4. To know the important variables that influence the respondents in purchasing his/her own brand of television.

HYPOTHESIS

The study is based on the following hypothesis framed:

1. There is no significant relationship between the demographic variables of the respondents and their perception towards purchase of branded products.
2. There is no significant difference between the demographic variables of the respondents and their brand preference.
3. The ranking of the respondents regarding the role of family members in information search about the brand they possess does not differ.
4. The ranking of the respondent regarding the variables which influences them to purchase his own brand of television does not differ.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the study is explained below.

Data and Sources of Data: The study is based mainly on primary data. Primary data have been collected through the issue of questionnaire to the customers of retail electronic outlets / showrooms in Coimbatore district. Personal

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observations and discussions with the customers and regular visits to the retail electronic outlets / showroom have also helped to understand the customers' perception and customers' attitude towards brand preference of television.

Sample Selected For The Study: The Questionnaire was circulated to 200 customers of various retail electronic outlets / showrooms. The sample respondents are selected on the basis of convenient sampling method.

Area of the study: The study area is limited to Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu. Coimbatore is identified as one of the fast developing metros of India. It is poised for a spectacular growth in the near future. Coimbatore being an industrial area, many retail outlets have established their branches here.

Period of Study: The study was undertaken during the period of June 2008 to December 2008.

Framework of Analysis

♦ Cross tabulation (Two-way analysis) ♦ T-test ♦ ANOVA ♦ Chi-square analysis

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Time factor was considered to be a major constraint.
2. The survey was conducted only in Coimbatore district. Hence, the results from the study may or may not be applied to other areas. Further, the survey method which was adopted for collecting the data in this study has its own limitations.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study is divided into four main headings based on its objective.

OBJECTIVE I: To evaluate the customers' perception (the promotional factor of purchase) towards purchase of branded products.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF THE RESPONDENTS AND CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION

Customers are guided by both rational and emotional responses to products and perception of products. Customers' perception and the concomitant management of a brand is especially important today as the electronic industry continues its phenomenal growth, while facing new competition from other large displays. Hence, it was intended to analyze the customers' perception towards the branded products. Customers' perception towards branded products is measured by using 28 statements with five-point scaling such as strongly disagree -1 to strongly agree-5. The respondents were classified into low, moderate and high perception levels based on the overall score on their opinion using mean ± 0.5 (SD) classifications.

AGE GROUP OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between age group of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 depict the relationship between the age and Customers' Perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the respondents who are below 25 years (50.0%) and between 25 to 35 years (46.67%) have high perception, majority of them who are between 35 to 45 years (56.0%) have medium level of perception and majority of them who are above 45 years (70.59%) have low level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.2 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .000, there is a significant relationship between age group of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1.1
Cross Tabulation of Age and Respondents Perception of Branded Products

Age	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below 25 yrs	1	6.25	7	43.75	8	50.00	16	100.00
25 to 35 yrs	17	22.67	23	30.67	35	46.67	75	100.00
35 to 45 yrs	16	21.33	42	56.00	17	22.67	75	100.00
Above 45 yrs	24	70.59	6	17.65	4	11.76	34	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.2 : ANOVA Table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1297.485	3	432.495	8.533	.000
Within Groups	9934.515	196	50.686		
Total	11232.000	199			

GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between gender of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.3 and table 1.4 depict the relationship between the gender and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the male respondents (38.16%) have medium level of perception and majority of the female respondents (43.75%) have high perception towards the branded products. Table 1.4 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .006, there is a significant relationship between gender of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1.3
Cross Tabulation of Gender and Respondents Perception of Branded Products

Gender	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	51	33.55	58	38.16	43	28.29	152	100.00
Female	7	14.58	20	41.67	21	43.75	48	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.4 : Independent Samples Test

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-2.7365	198	0.006

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between educational qualification of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.5 and Table 1.6 depict the relationship between the educational qualification and customers' perception on the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the respondents who are educated upto school level (42.42%) and who belong to other categories such as diploma, ITI (100.0%) have high perception; majority of the undergraduates (34.18% each) have high as well as medium level of perception and majority of them who are postgraduates (41.07%) and professionals (62.50%) have medium level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.6 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .016, there is significant relationship between the educational qualification of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1.5
Cross Tabulation of Educational Qualification and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Educational qualification	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
School level	6	18.18	13	39.39	14	42.42	33	100.00
Undergraduate	25	31.65	27	34.18	27	34.18	79	100.00
Postgraduate	22	39.29	23	41.07	11	19.64	56	100.00
Professional	5	20.83	15	62.50	4	16.67	24	100.00
Others	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	100.00	8	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.6 : ANOVA Table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	674.160	4	168.540	3.113	.016
Within Groups	10557.840	195	54.143		
Total	11232.000	199			

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between occupational status of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.7 and table 1.8 depict that the relationship between the occupational status and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the business people (61.82%) and professionals (60.0%) have medium level of perception, majority of the government employees (39.29%) and students (66.67%) have high level of perception and majority of the private employees (52.50%) have low level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.8 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .002, there is a significant relationship between the occupational status of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1.7

Cross Tabulation of Educational Qualification and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Occupation	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Business	13	23.64	34	61.82	8	14.55	55	100.00
Professional	6	24.00	15	60.00	4	16.00	25	100.00
Government employee	17	30.36	17	30.36	22	39.29	56	100.00
Private employee	21	52.50	5	12.50	14	35.00	40	100.00
Student	1	4.17	7	29.17	16	66.67	24	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.8 : ANOVA Table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	934.417	4	233.604	4.424	.002
Within Groups	10297.583	195	52.808		
Total	11232.000	199			

MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between marital status of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.9 and table 1.10 depict the relationship between the marital status and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the unmarried (51.22%) and married respondents (35.85%) have medium level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.10 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .640, there is no significant relationship between the marital status of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.9

Cross Tabulation of Marital Status and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Marital status	Low (<95)		Medium (95 – 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single	11	26.83	21	51.22	9	21.95	41	100.00
Married	47	29.56	57	35.85	55	34.59	159	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.10

Independent Samples Test

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-0.4677	198	0.640

MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between monthly income of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.11 and table 1.12 depict the relationship between the monthly income and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the respondents who are earning less than Rs.5000 p.m (56.25%), majority of those respondents who are earning between Rs.10000 to Rs.15000 p.m (35.21%) and majority of those who earn more than Rs.20000 p.m have high perception, majority of them who earn between Rs.5000 to Rs.10000 p.m (49.44%) have medium level of perception and majority of them who earn between Rs.15000 to Rs.20000 p.m (56.25%) have low level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.12 states that at 5%

level of significance with the value of .004, there is significant relationship between the monthly income of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1.11
Cross Tabulation of Monthly Income and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Monthly income	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than Rs.5000	4	25.00	3	18.75	9	56.25	16	100.00
Rs.5000 to Rs.10000	23	25.84	44	49.44	22	24.72	89	100.00
Rs.10000 to Rs.15000	22	30.99	24	33.80	25	35.21	71	100.00
Rs.15000 to Rs.20000	9	56.25	7	43.75	0	0.00	16	100.00
Above Rs.20000	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	100.00	8	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.12 : ANOVA Table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	841.833	4	210.458	3.950	.004
Within Groups	10390.167	195	53.283		
Total	11232.000	199			

NATURE OF FAMILY OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between nature of family of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.13 and table 1.14 depict the relationship between the nature of family and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the respondents who reside in nuclear (38.16%) as well as joint families (41.67%) have medium level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.14 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .369, there is no significant relationship between the nature of family of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.13
Cross Tabulation of Nature of Family and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Nature of family	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Nuclear	40	26.32	58	38.16	54	35.53	152	100.00
Joint	18	37.50	20	41.67	10	20.83	48	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.14 : Independent Samples Test

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
0.898713	198	0.369

RESIDING AREA OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between the residing area of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.15 and table 1.16 depict the relationship between the residing area and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the respondents who reside in urban cities (40.96%) have medium level of perception and majority of those respondents who reside in rural villages (35.29% each) have low as well as high level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.16 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .992, there is no significant relationship between the residing area of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.15
Cross Tabulation of Residing Area and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Residing area	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Urban	46	27.71	68	40.96	52	31.33	166	100.00
Rural	12	35.29	10	29.41	12	35.29	34	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.16 : Independent Samples Test

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
0.009997	198	0.992

FAMILY SIZE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between the family size of the respondents and their perception towards branded products."

Table 1.17 and table 1.18 depict the relationship between the family size and customers' perception of the branded products at 5% level of significance. Majority of the respondents who have less than 3 members in their family (49.45%) have medium level of perception, majority of them whose family size is between 3 to 6 members (35.29% each) have low as well as high level of perception and majority of the respondents whose family size is more than 6 members (57.14%) have low level of perception towards the branded products. Table 1.18 states that at 5% level of significance with the value of .302, there is no significant relationship between the family size of the respondents and their perception towards branded products and hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.17 : Cross Tabulation of Family Size and Respondent's Perception of Branded Products

Family size	Low (<95)		Medium (95 - 103)		High (>103)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 3	18	19.78	45	49.45	28	30.77	91	100.00
3 to 6	36	35.29	30	29.41	36	35.29	102	100.00
Above 6	4	57.14	3	42.86	0	0.00	7	100.00
Total	58	29.00	78	39.00	64	32.00	200	100.00

Table 1.18 : ANOVA Table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	135.734	2	67.867	1.205	.302
Within Groups	11096.266	197	56.326		
Total	11232.000	199			

OBJECTIVE II: To know whether the demographic variables of the respondents have an influence on brand preference of television sets.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF THE RESPONDENTS AND BRAND PREFERENCE OF TELEVISION SETS

Table 1.19 depicts the number of respondents who prefer and possess different brands of television sets. It is clear that majority of the respondents (21.5% each) prefer and possess BPL and Philips brand.

Table 1.19 : Respondent's Preference of Television Brands

	Frequency	Percent
BPL	43	21.5
Philips	43	21.5
Samsung	15	7.5
Sansui	9	4.5
Sony	38	19.0
Panasonic	7	3.5
LG	38	19.0
Others	7	3.5
Total	200	100.0

Chi-square test has been applied to find out if there is any significant difference between the demographic variables of the respondents and the television brands opted by them at 5% level of significance.

Hypothesis: "There is no significant difference between the demographic variables of the respondents and the television brands preferred by them."

Table 1.20 explains that based on the chi-square test, the demographic variables such as Age, Gender, Educational qualification, Occupational status, Marital status, Monthly income, Residing area and size of the family have significant relationship with the respondent's preference of television brands at 5% level of significance and hence the hypothesis is rejected. Whereas, in case of nature of family of the respondent with the significant value of .103, there is no significant relationship with the respondent's preference of television brands and hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.20 : Relationship Between Demographic Factors and Customers' Preference of Television Brands

Demographic Factors	Chi-square Value	df	Sig value	Sig or Not Sig
Age	40.970	21	0.006	Sig
Gender	46.286	7	0.000	Sig
Educational Qualification	70.329	28	0.000	Sig
Occupational Status	68.224	28	0.000	Sig
Marital status	26.788	7	0.000	Sig
Monthly income	69.573	28	0.000	Sig
Nature of family	11.940	7	0.103	Not Sig
Residing area	16.090	7	0.024	Sig
Size of family	43.974	14	0.000	Sig

OBJECTIVE III: To know the role of the family members in information search about the brand they possess.
The Friedman test, frequently called as two-way analysis on ranks was carried out at 1% level of significance, to determine whether there are any significant differences between the rankings.

Hypothesis: "The rankings of the respondents regarding the role of family members in information search about the brand they possess does not differ"

In Table 1.21, it is clear that the lowest mean rank of 1.99 was given to Spouse, which shows that the role of spouse was given high importance in information seek of television brand, second importance was given to parents with 2.98 as mean rank, third importance was given to self with the mean rank of 3.04, fourth importance was given to others such as colleagues, friends etc with the mean rank of 3.28 and last importance was given to children with the highest mean rank of 3.71. Table 1.22 states that with the significance value of .000, it is clear that ranking of the respondents regarding the role of family members in information search about the television brand they possess differs at 1% level of significance. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1.21 : Ranks

	Mean Rank
Self	3.04
Spouse	1.99
Children	3.71
Parents	2.98
Others	3.28

Table 1.22 : Test Statistics

N	200
Chi-Square	154.431
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a Friedman Test

Table 1.23 : Ranks

Features	Mean Rank
Technical features	2.06
Price	4.62
Perceived quality	4.18
Manufacturers reputation	5.48
Guarantee offered	3.78
After sales service	4.78
Brand image	3.10

Table 1.24 : Test Statistics

N	200
Chi-Square	381.083
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a Friedman Tes

OBJECTIVE IV: To know the important variables that influence the respondents in purchasing their own brand of television set.

Hypothesis: "The rankings of the respondents regarding the features which are considered to be the influencing factor in purchasing television brand does not differ"

In table 1.23, it is clear that lowest mean rank of 2.06 was given to technical features, which shows that it was considered to be the most important feature to purchase the television brand, second importance was given to brand image with 3.10 as mean rank, third importance was given to guarantee offered with the mean rank of 3.78, fourth importance was given to perceived quality with the mean rank of 4.18, fifth importance was given to after sales service with the mean rank of 4.78 and last importance was given to manufacturers' reputation with the highest mean rank of 5.48. Table 1.24 states that with the significance value of .000, it is clear that ranking of the respondents regarding features which is considered to be an influencing factor in purchasing television brand differs at 1% level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSION

To move consumers from trial to preference, brands need to deliver on their value proposition, as well as dislodge someone else from the consumer's existing preference set. Preference is a scale, and brands move up, down and even off that scale with and without a vigilant brand management strategy. Pricing, promotional deals and product availability, all have tremendous impact on the position of the brand in the consumer's preference set. The brands' potential can only be fulfilled by continually reinforcing its perceived quality, up market identity and relevance to the consumer. The study concludes that the demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification,

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puppets, rod puppets are quite popular with the rural folks. They flock to see their performances; as a result, marketers get an opportunity to showcase their products in these places with almost little cost.

CONCLUSION

It is often seen that people in one village go after one brand only because the brand image appeals to them most and fits well into their cultural milieu. Once they are convinced, they became brand sticky. So, a new entrant into their secluded surrounding has to be tactful, culture-sensitive, economical, and useful. The focus should be more on brand building and less on tactical or short term promotional campaigns. In this respect, campaigns through non-conventional means can play a crucial role. Therefore, the importance of designing the right communication strategy for rural target market is of utmost desideratum.

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(contd. from page 55)

occupational status and monthly income have an impact on the customer's perception towards branded products. Incase of customers' preference towards television brand, all the demographic variables except nature of family have significant relationship in brand preference of the television set. In a family, the role of the spouse was considered to be the most important in seeking information about television brands and while selecting branded television set, technical features in the television set were considered to be the most important influencing factor.
With a great story and a large enough investment, awareness can be attained rather quickly. Though it takes time, however, constant reevaluation of brands helps to build brand preference. Aristotle professed, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit." Attaining and sustaining preference is an important step on the road to gain brand loyalty. This will help to generate more revenue, gain greater market share and beat off the competition.

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