

IMPACT OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND CORE COMPETENCY ON BRAND ATTRIBUTES WITH RESPECT TO MARKETING MIX

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of the Core Competency, Consumer Behaviour and Brand attributes on Marketing Mix. This paper empirically demonstrates a significant relationship between consumer-perceived corporate brand and consumer attitudinal and behavioural loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – The research is based on a sample of 427 consumers of FMCG Product Users. Cronbach alpha and Structural Equation Modeling was used to establish psychometric properties of the corporate brand constructs. Smart PLS used to check relationship and testing hypothesis.

Findings – This paper establishes two groups of corporate brand attributes: corporate and marketing-level. Corporate-level dimensions include corporate activities, corporate associations, organizational values, and corporate personality. Marketing-level dimensions comprise functional, emotional and symbolic brand benefits. The results reveal that corporate values, corporate brand personality and functional consumer benefits are the most critical and consistent predictors of both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty.

Practical implications – Through the comprehensive measurement of the corporate brand impact on both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, this paper offers insights for designing corporate branding strategies and generating consumer loyalty.

Originality/value – This paper provides empirical validation of the relationship between consumer corporate brand perceptions and consumer loyalty and demonstrates that the influence of each particular corporate brand attribute may be different.

Key Words: *Core Competency, Consumer Behaviour, Brand attributes, Marketing Mix*

INTRODUCTION

Brand value demonstrates the capabilities of a brand to conduct its business activities in a way that permits managers to achieve a company's business objectives (Srivastava et al., 1998). Brand competitiveness, instead, reflects upon the ability of the brand to drive the market better than competitors in a marketplace (Muniz and Guinn, 2001; Winzar et al. 2018; Tong and Wang, 2011). Competing in a marketplace through business customers requires brand managers to make efficient use of the brand in order to differentiate the value they offer to business customers from that of their competitors (Leone et al., 2006; Webster, 2000). Business customer firms seek rational benefits from brand value and, in turn, they enable a brand to become competitive in the consumer market (Webster, 1992). Delivery of value in a format desired by business customers allows them to utilise the same for achieving their business objectives too (Amit and Zott, 2001; Cannon and Perreault, 1999).

Authors like Lynch and deChernatony (2004) and Mudambi (2002) have discussed the role played by the social and functional attributes of the brand in creating differentiation. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) studied brand differentiation in relation to product, category and brand to understand purchase loyalty as market share and attitudinal loyalty as relative price. Using a dataset collected from three surveys of consumers and brand managers for 107 brands, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) reflect on the close link between brand differentiation and market share of the brand, by embedding these

two variables into features of the brand and product quality delivered to customers. Complexity of the delivery process of brand value requires brand managers to strategically understand the needs of business customers, and match them with the attributes of the brand to create and successfully deliver brand value. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) highlight the strategic role played by marketing in creating and delivering value that generates competitiveness, terming it market orientation. Similarly, research on strategic orientation of operations proposes the alignment of functional activities of the brand for delivering value through management of demand in consumer markets (Sheth and Sisodia, 1999).

Both marketing orientation and strategic orientation have been discussed in the literature as independent managerial actions related to the creation and delivery of value. However, the ability of these two orientations to drive brand competitiveness as an outcome of their combined effort in the context of business-to-business markets is not well researched. Romaniuk et al. (2007) reviewed the role of differentiation in a brand strategy and its influence on customer purchase behaviour, using data collected from two different countries. The arguments of Romaniuk et al. (2007) were recognised into marketing concepts, such as the perceptions of customers about brand differentiation that drive customer loyalty through purchase preferences and purchase decisions in a competitive market. Previous studies, such as Ahmad and Latif (2019), Winzar et al. (2018) and Romaniuk et al. (2007), have investigated these constructs but have not considered their combined effect on brand competitiveness. Based on current academic literature, the authors propose that the capability of brand value can determine brand differentiation and foster the marketing and strategic orientation of the brand, to achieve superior competitiveness. It is argued that the delivery of brand value to business customers, when built on strategic orientation of operations as a core functional aspect and marketing orientation as a core social aspect of the brand, has the capability to create brand competitiveness.

Previous studies have explained the benefits and implications of such unification through a variety of different frameworks, which are either based on a marketing (Brodie et al., 2008; Reid et al. 2005; Sharma et al. 2018; Winzar et al. 2018) or strategy point of view (Urde, 1999; Wong and Merrilees, 2007; Simoes and Dibb, 2001; Chang et al. 2018). Several recent studies, like Beverland (2016) or Odoom and Mensah (2019), have made attempts to consider the strategic aspect of brand orientation, but they have not reflected on the role played by brand differentiation and brand value on the simultaneous influence of marketing and strategic orientation on brand competitiveness, nor have they considered the role played by brand value in strengthening the fusion of marketing orientation and strategic orientation for enabling brand differentiation to drive brand competitiveness. Furthermore, most of the studies are from the consumer perspective rather than from the perspective of business customers. The objective of this paper is to address this gap in the available literature by reviewing the constructs under investigation, specifically from the perspective of business customers of the brand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creating differentiation for a brand in a business-to-business market requires brand managers to focus on creating a unique brand value for business customers (Hunt and Morgan, 1995; Srivastava et al., 1998; Winzar et al. 2018). Brand value communicates about the capability of the brand to contribute to the business of its customer firms, and brand's subsequent ability to compete with competitors (Mcgrath, 2005). Assessments of brand value by business customers highlights the aptitude of the brand to be competitive in a marketplace (Powell and Powell, 2004; Lavie et al., 2007). Existing knowledge suggests that brand value that suits business customer firms should be oriented towards building the capacity of the business customer firm (Webster, 2000). When brands combine the functional aspects of their firm's operations with its social facets, it can create the unique value desired by customers (Fahey et al., 2001). Combining the functional aspects of a firm's operational capabilities with its marketing skills can also create the unique value desired by business customers (Pettigrew, 1987).

The capability of a brand to generate demand through its marketing efforts reflects the strength of its social orientation and its ability to fulfill the demand generated through strategic management of its operational activities, thereby echoing the power of the differentiation of the brand (Payne et al., 2008). The basic argument of this paper is that a brand manager should approach the enhancement of brand competitiveness by means of two different orientations of its activities, i.e., marketing and strategy. We draw upon these two orientations of a brand's activities for creating differentiation in a way that

proposes their fusion determined by brand value for brand competitiveness. The conceptual framework (Figure I) outlines the relationships between (i) Core Competency, (ii) consumer behaviour, (iii) Brand Attributes, and (iv) Marketing Mix. We also identify components that define these constructs from the context of business customer firms, by reviewing the internal and external dimensions of brand value. The internal dimension explains the synthesis of two orientations and the external dimension reflects the constructs under investigation as determinants of brand competitiveness.

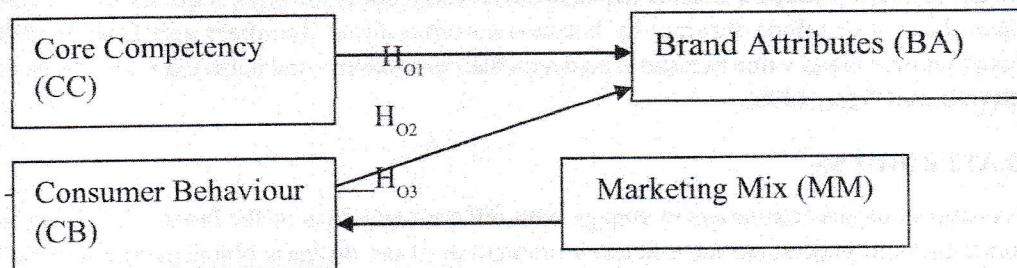


Figure 1: Research Framework

HYPOTHESIS STATEMENTS

H_{01} : there is no significant difference between core competency and brand attributes

H_{02} : there is no significant difference between consumer behaviour and brand attributes

H_{03} : there is no significant difference between marketing mix and consumer behaviour

BRAND ATTRIBUTES

The brand value offered by a manufacturer provides emotional value to consumers, rational value to its business customers and reflects its operational efficiency as an important element of the value it provides to both consumers and business customers (Parment, 2008). A brand that can provide these three different types of value to its customers can generate demand for its products in a competitive market (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Fulfillment of demand generated through brand value requires brand managers to shift their focus back on to the activities of their firm (Srivastava et al., 1999). We also considered the contemporary definition of brand value provided by studies such as Kucharska et al (2018) as the strategic outcome of marketing initiatives of a firm useful to measure the effectiveness of efficiency of other organizational strategies. This definition enabled authors to argue that such a business requirement encourages brand managers to consider orienting different activities of their firm towards the smooth delivery of the promise made by their brand to different sets of customers through brand value. Literature on brand competitiveness suggests that fulfillment of demand makes a brand competitive in a marketplace (Parment, 2008). Baumann et al. (2016) found evidence for a link between motivational drivers and individual competitiveness. There are few other useful embryonic contributions from anecdotes that draw from viewpoint of brand equity and define brand competitiveness driven by innovation as a component of brand image (Jie, 2002, Liu et al. 2007).

EMOTIONAL BRAND ATTRIBUTES

The emotional satisfaction provided by the brand reflects the value that it provides to consumers and facilitates the capturing of a large share of the market by the brand in the form of customer equity. Business customers consider such an ability to be brand value because it allows them to achieve a higher level of growth. Consistency in the emotional value provided by a brand allows its business customers to emotionally associate with the brand (Day and Wensley, 1988; Gupta et al., 2008).

RATIONAL BRAND ATTRIBUTES

Business customer firms look for the most cost-efficient methods to achieve their organizational objectives (Altman, 2005). Manufacturers provide incentives in various formats when business customers purchase products in bulk quantities for selling on. Business customers buy in bulk anticipating that the demand for a brand's products will facilitate fast movement of its products into their customer segment (Strach and Everett, 2006). Demand reduces the effort required from business customers to sell and decreases the cost of selling incurred by business customer firms (Lambert and Cooper, 2000). Business customers assess this as rational brand value because it increases their profitability and helps them to achieve their business objectives (Gunasekaran and Ngai, 2005).

OPERATIONAL BRAND ATTRIBUTES

Associating with a brand encourages business customers to engage with different activities of the brand. Engaging with a brand helps business customer firms to understand the efficiency orientation of the business practices followed by the manufacturer brand (Schau et al., 2009). Efficient business practices thus learnt, inspire managers of the business customer firms to adopt relevant processes in their own firms, with an aim to improve the way their firm functions (Payne et al., 2008). The learning and adoption that occurs due to association with the brand lead to improvements in the operational efficiency of the business customer firm, which is judged as operational brand value by business customers (Gummesson, 2004).

These three different types of value, when offered together, are assessed as brand differentiation that generates demand in the business-to-business and consumer markets (Webster, 2000; Gummesson, 2004). Consistent provision of such differentiation requires brand managers to focus on the internal and external environment of the brand (Zineldin and Brendlow, 2001). We anticipate that the internal focus drives brand managers to position all the business activities of the brand as marketing-oriented activities, and pin down the locus of operational activities of the brand towards a strategic orientation. We also assume that the external focus stimulates a comparative intelligence in the minds of the business customers, and encourages them to differentiate between competing brands.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling and procedure

The study uses a descriptive cross-sectional survey to assess the influence of marketing mix on consumer behaviour and core competency and consumer behaviour on brand attributes of Goa. This set of respondents is supposed to provide an accurate view of the content. For this study, the entire target population includes all consumers from Goa. Using the sample size requirements of (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970), a minimum of 450 consumers were selected from the entire study population out of which 427 responses were selected for analysis.

Measures

There are 16 items in this research questionnaire forming five structures. All items are scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being the strongest opinion of disagreement and 5 being the strongest opinion. This class has been used in previous studies by (Kamselem et al., 2020), (Nuhu, Salisu, Abubakar, and Abdullahi, 2018), and (Abdullahi, Raman, Solarin, and Adeiza, 2021). The validity and reliability of the research instrument were evaluated in a pilot study. For value, the tool has been evaluated by two academic and two industry experts. Item relevance, consistency, clarity, and topic are all established with this content value. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire contains the demographic profiles of the study respondents, while the second part contains the research measure variables.

Analytical strategy

Study participants received a total of 450 questionnaires, of which 427 (95.75%) were submitted completely. The result is no missing data or outliers after data cleaning and screening tests. Therefore, a total of 427 valid questionnaires were used in the

analysis. In addition, this study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0, which assessed respondents' profiles and performed preliminary analysis. While Smart-PLS version 4.0 allows the testing of research hypotheses and factor analysis. Principal component analysis (PCA) and partial minimum approach (PLS) were used to verify the quality of the measuring instruments and test the respective research hypotheses. The PLS method works well with small sample sizes, as was the case in our study. Furthermore, the technique proposed by (Zaman et al., 2019) was used to test the moderating effects of variables on digitization. SPSS 23.0 and Smart PLS software were used for data analysis.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistics

Participants completed a survey questionnaire that included items related to Core Competency (CC), Consumer Behaviour (CB), Brand Attributes (BA) and Marketing Mix (MM) Participants also provided demographic information such as gender, age, education, and income. A total of 427 responses were taken for the analysis.

Common Variance Analysis

Usually, common variance occurs when data is collected from a single source. This bias is indeed an inherent phenomenon in research involving individuals, and several techniques have been suggested in the literature to reduce risk or control its effects. Similar to Wang et al. (2020), we performed the "one-factor Harman test" aka the Harman test. Specifically, we perform a factor analysis on all sentences (16 items) and test the solution without rotation to see if a single factor can explain more than half of the total variance explained or not. The results show that only 42.021% of the variance explained by the first factor (SPSS 23.0) is below the cut-off threshold of < 50%. Furthermore, the Smart PLS indoor VIF view shows that all values are below 3.3 (Table 1). Therefore, we can infer that this study was not affected by common variance bias.

Table 1: Inner model

	BA	CB	CC	MM
BA				5.129
CB	1.000**			
CC				5.129
MM				
Note: BA= Brand Attributes, CB= consumer behaviour, CC= Core Competency, and MM= Marketing Mix				
**= satisfying threshold limit that is < 3.3				

[Source: Smart PLS View]

Exploratory Analysis Results

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.963	16

Exploratory factor analysis showed that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was greater than 0.5 which is 0.916 (Table 3) and Bartlett's Test of sphericity was significant with a p-value of 0.000. This ensures the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Thus, PCA was performed using SPSS 23.0 software, by considering the total variance explained and the Kaiser criterion, which allows researchers to retain only factors with eigenvalues greater than unity. This allowed the researcher to retain a one-dimensional structure for all the variables after deleting statements that are not sufficiently correlated with their corresponding factors and that have low commonalities Table 2 shows Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is greater than 0.7 which is 0.963 for 16 items.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.916
Bartlett's	Test	of Approx. Chi-Square	3644.573
Sphericity		Df	190
		Sig.	.000

MEASUREMENT MODEL

To assess the measurement model, this current research used the approach established by (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2014), which assessed convergent validity (CV) and discriminate validity (DV). CV refers to the applicability of the findings acquired when the test is constructed, using the measure and the relevant theories. This principle can be accomplished by looking at the factor loading of the items via the CV of the measurement model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). This research makes use of factor loading with substantial values of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). Figure 2 and Table 4 show the findings, it is shown that five items CA, FP, MM, OP and SA values are above the threshold limit. The Factor loading on each item is above the threshold limit which is > 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). CV is the magnitude in which a set of items can evaluate a specific construct which can still be evaluated by CR and the Ave. the proposed threshold value for AVE is set at 0.5 and above (Hair et al., 2014; G€otz, Liehr-Gobblers, & Krafft, 2010). Finding outcomes in Table 4 indicates that the latent variable (LV) values of AVE in all cases were above the benchmark of 0.5 (G€otz et al., 2010; Chin, 2010). Tables 5 and 6 below demonstrated by achieving discriminate validity (DV). Using Fornell and Larcker criterion, all values (bold) in their parent construct are greater than their relationship with other constructs. (Henseler et al., 2015) criticized (Fornell and Larcker's, 1981) and cross-loading approach for being too liberal in establishing validity and instead recommended using HTMT based on the multi-trait multi-method matrix to assess DV. Table 5 shows the study's HTMT.

Table 4: Construct reliability, validity, and Factor Loading

		AF	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BA	BA1	0.831	0.848	0.848	0.898	0.687
	BA2	0.851				
	BA3	0.800				
	BA4	0.834				
CB	CB1	0.871	0.888	0.890	0.923	0.750
	CB2	0.875				

	CB3	0.796				
	CB4	0.917				
CC	CC1	0.860	0.879	0.886	0.917	0.735
	CC2	0.896				
	CC3	0.782				
	CC4	0.888				
MM	MM1	0.772	0.827	0.832	0.885	0.658
	MM2	0.834				
	MM3	0.824				
	MM4	0.816				
Note: BA= Brand Attributes, CB= consumer behaviour, CC= Core Competency, and MM= Marketing Mix						

[Source: Smart PLS View]

Table 5: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	BA	CB	CC	MM
BA	0.829**			
CB	0.880	0.866**		
CC	0.897	0.853	0.858**	
MM	0.865	0.863	0.870	0.811**
Note: BA= Brand Attributes, CB= consumer behaviour, CC= Core Competency, and MM= Marketing Mix **= The square root of the AVE is represented by the diagonal values , whereas the off-diagonals are correlations				

[Source: Smart PLS View]

Table 6: Cross Loading

		AF	FA	FO	LC
AF	AF1	0.831	0.754	0.763	0.631
	AF2	0.851	0.700	0.818	0.712
	AF3	0.800	0.712	0.700	0.775
	AF4	0.834	0.751	0.698	0.744
FA	FA1	0.778	0.871	0.752	0.755
	FA2	0.804	0.875	0.784	0.809
	FA3	0.719	0.796	0.706	0.670
	FA4	0.740	0.917	0.707	0.747
FO	FO1	0.768	0.747	0.860	0.751
	FO2	0.798	0.769	0.896	0.811
	FO3	0.688	0.647	0.782	0.656
	FO4	0.819	0.758	0.888	0.758
LC	LC1	0.610	0.635	0.625	0.772
	LC2	0.686	0.666	0.736	0.834
	LC3	0.791	0.778	0.734	0.824
	LC4	0.708	0.712	0.722	0.816
Note: BA=Brand Attributes, CB= consumer behaviour, CC= Core Competency, and MM= Marketing Mix					

[Source: Smart PLS View]

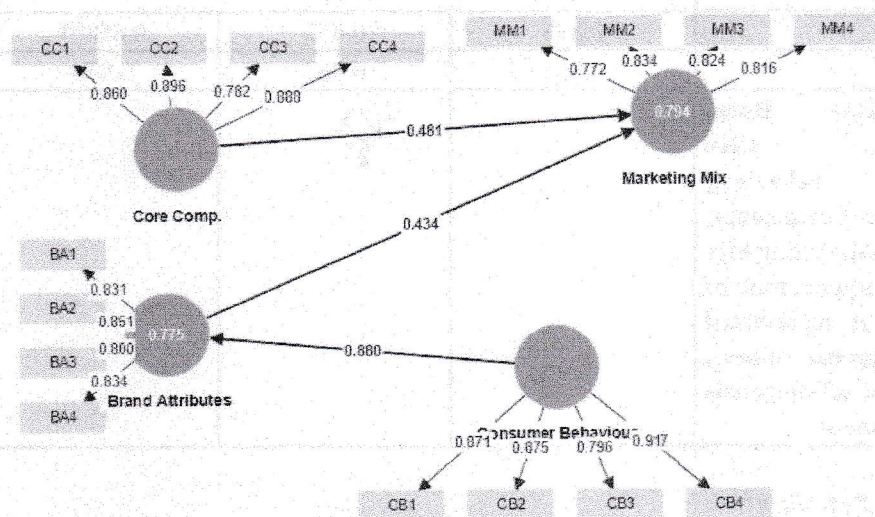


Figure 2: PLS-SEM on Financial inclusion and MSME

[Source: Smart PLS View]

Table 7: Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
BA -> MM	0.433	0.434	0.058	7.449	0.000**	Accepted
CB -> BA	0.880	0.880	0.016	56.557	0.000**	Accepted
CC -> MM	0.482	0.481	0.061	7.958	0.000**	Accepted
Note: BA= Brand Attributes, CB= consumer behaviour, CC= Core Competency, and MM= Marketing Mix						
**= Satisfying threshold limit (p-value < 0.05)						

[Source: Smart PLS View]

CONCLUSION

Business customers generally consider the effort they have to put into the management of activities related to a brand as an added investment over and above the financial purchases of the branded products they make. Such efforts made by business customers in their relationship with the brand, make it important for the brand to generate and communicate its brand value and generate brand competitiveness.

In this respect, the findings have important implications for academics and practitioners. Firstly, unlike brand value, brand differentiation is a direct driver of brand competitiveness. Hence, it is recommended that brand managers ensure that investment is directed towards communicating the benefits of the brand and its uniqueness to business customers, and to create brand pull in the marketplace.

Secondly, strategic (operations) orientation can enhance the delivery of brand competitiveness, suggesting that the firm should develop such capabilities. However, if brand managers and operations managers wish to ensure that the brand value that it possesses is translated into brand competitiveness, it is the development of the firm's processes for managing customers and competitors and the protocols and capabilities for managing external relationships and disagreements or disputes that are, in fact, necessary. Accordingly, brand managers should be constantly evaluating the effectiveness of marketing orientation-related processes and activities and looking for ways to improve them.

Thirdly, brand/operations managers need to be aware of a potential trade-off between their investment in developing marketing and strategic (operations) capabilities respectively. The findings imply that marketing capabilities that can translate brand value into brand competitiveness can be compromised by strategic operations activities. It may be that despite the recent advances in operations process development and thinking, operations activities may nevertheless continue to be inherently more inward facing, to the detriment of the inherently more outward-facing marketing orientation activities. Arguably, seeking to establish the reasons for this finding is an important avenue for future research, as it challenges the now common conventional wisdom that closer integration between the marketing function and the strategic operations function is inherently always a good thing.

In summary, the findings of the study provide evidence of significant relationships between marketing orientation and brand competitiveness using research studies such as Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Jaworski et al (1993), Winzar et al. (2018) as well as Ahmad and Latif (2019). The authors of this research propose that brand managers aiming to operate in

competitive markets can use the framework being offered. It provides them with guidelines on how to ensure that their brand value can be used to make their business customers feel confident about the capabilities of the brand and, hence, improve brand competitiveness. It is reasonable to argue that the findings imply that the successful management of marketing of the brand can encourage business customers to be associated with the brand for a longer period. It may also, for example, provide the brand with the confidence to offer the brand to new customers located in home or more remote new markets. Simultaneously, this study enables brand managers to align their strategic decisions about creation and delivery of brand value for consumers to the functional activities of the brand.

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