

Brand Loyalty and Brand Preferences of Women in the Choice of Foot wear in Coimbatore City, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Many factors influence the consumer's decision to buy a product. It is a known fact that the present market is a consumer driven market and product based marketing has become the norm and need based marketing seems to be slowly vanishing. Today the consumer has been given many options to decide. What are more important are the effective market communication skills to reach the target consumers. This study tries to identify the various features like brand name, product quality, price, style, promotion, service quality and store environment that attract prospective women buyers towards the various foot wear brands.

For this purpose, convenience sampling method will be followed and questionnaires will be distributed to 100 women respondents belonging to Coimbatore. It is one of the top 10 fastest growing cities of India. It has a population of about 42.72 Lakhs (Census in 2011). Coimbatore is the district capital. There are more than 25,000 small, medium, large scale industries and textile mills. The people are friendly, open and cosmopolitan and they talk Tamil, English, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi. There are many entrepreneurs here who with their hard and determined work had brought laurels to the city. It is well connected by Road, Rail and Air. Coimbatore being a business city with manufacturing and trading activity, it is a well connected to the Chennai, Cochin, Cuddalore and Tuticorin Ports.

Various statistical tools like Pearson Correlation, Frequencies such as mean, standard deviation and percentage analysis, and Garret's ranking techniques will be used to obtain the factors that influence respondents' brand loyalty and brand awareness. It is expected that the Brand name will show strong correlation with brand loyalty. Suggestions will be given and the results will be discussed in terms of implications for store management and future research.

Key words: brand loyalty, brand preference, repurchase, marketing strategies.

Introduction:

Considering the increasing levels of awareness regarding fashion and trends among common people, it can be predicted that the Indian footwear industry will growth multifold in the next few years. Major companies such as Bata, Reliance Footprint and Liberty have been increasing their stores presence in a frenetic pace in the last couple of years in Coimbatore. It has been observed that men normally purchase a pair every 3 months while women go in for a purchase of new pair every two months since they have now started looking to change their shoes in tune with the changes in their clothes. Many of the big players in the field are looking for enhanced brand awareness and brand loyalty in their customers. In this context, this paper aims to deduce the factors influencing brand loyalty (brand name, product quality, price, style,

promotion, and service quality and store environment) on women footwear that customers perceive to be the most important while utilizing the services of footwear brand.

Review of Literature:

Profitable incremental sales should not be the only criterion for success for loyalty programmes. New findings from a database of more than 600,000 consumer interviews around the world indicate that if marketers are truly committed to building brand loyalty, they must use their programmes to build consumers' emotional attachment to the brand, not just be content with repeat buying. In doing so, they will maximise and better sustain the financial success of their programmes and may even help the brand become a category leader.

Brand loyalty is a consumer's inclination to buy a particular brand in a product category. It is important to understand consumer brand loyalty because it improves business growth and sales volume since the same brand is purchased repeatedly. Further, as consumer brand loyalty increases, consumers become less sensitive to price changes. That is, consumers will prefer to pay more for their favorite brands because they seek some unique value in the brand that alternatives do not provide (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). A considerable number of studies have been directed to find the antecedents of brand loyalty; identified antecedents include brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002), perceived value (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000), brand effect (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002), perceived hedonic and utilitarian benefits (Chitturi et al., 2008), product attributes (Lewis & Soureli, 2006), and satisfaction (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Gronholdt, Martensen, & Kristensen, 2000; Gustafsson & Johnson, 2002; Rust, Zahorik, & Keiningham, 1995). These constructs are inter-related and form a network of loyalty antecedents (Vieira & Damacena, 2007). However, little empirical research has been conducted to examine these variables (the network of brand loyalty antecedents) simultaneously. Further, the mere identification of variables that affect brand loyalty is not sufficient. Further explanation is needed as to how and through what routes/paths these variables will enhance brand loyalty. Therefore, it is important to identify paths that will lead to brand loyalty.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-economic condition of women in Coimbatore City.
2. To identify the sources of awareness of footwear brands in Coimbatore City.
3. To study the factors influencing brand loyalty (brand name, product quality, price, style, promotion, service quality and store environment) on women footwear.

The Indian Footwear Industry

India represents a most compelling international investment opportunity, as it is one of the most attractive countries for global investors. India's emerging economy is one of the fastest growing in the world and the second fastest in Asia (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2009). India was ranked as the 13th largest economy in the world in 2009 (CIA, 2010), and in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), it was ranked the fourth

largest in 2008 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2009). India is forecasted to become the third largest economy in the world, after China and the U.S., by the year 2050, surpassing all other developed economies (Ernst & Young, 2006). India's current GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is increasing at 6.5 percent annually (CIA, 2010) and it is anticipated to grow by 12 percent in the future (Halepete & Iyer, 2008). The size of the Indian market, its location, and a huge English-speaking population has made India attractive to foreign businesses (Banks & Natarajan, 1995). With a population of 1.13 billion, India ranks as the second most populated country (1.13 billion) in the world, led only by China, and is expected to surpass China by 2045 (Halepete & Iyer, 2008). In addition, the Indian government's new foreign direct investment (FDI) policies are encouraging foreign investors and raising the number of foreign businesses in India (Rao, 2006). A recent statement by the U.S. government observes, "with an open and growing economy, and a billion potential customers, the Department of Commerce believes that in order for American companies to be globally competitive, they need to be thinking about India" (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2009). Therefore, it is apparent that U.S. companies need to explore the Indian market.

The footwear retail vertical is amongst the most organised in the Indian retail industry. The overall market is valued at Rs 500 billion, with organised retail penetration (ORP) estimated at 15 per cent. The organised market is dominated by men's footwear, which accounts for around 60 per cent. Over the next 2 years, the organised market is poised to witness rapid growth on the back of expansions by existing players and emergence of new players. There is a high degree of fragmentation in the early stages of the footwear value chain. In the case of leather footwear, the raw material suppliers and tanneries exist primarily in the small and medium enterprise (SME) segment and only a few large players are present. Retailers are mainly backward integrated till the manufacturing stage. The footwear retail industry's inventory turnover ratio ranges between 2.5-3 times. Rapidly changing consumer preferences and the need to stock multiple sizes and styles for both display and sale necessitate an efficient inventory management system. As the back-end infrastructure in India at present is not very robust, inventory management becomes a critical success factor for a retailer. In addition, product mix and the value vs. lifestyle offering are key determinants of store returns.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between brand name and brand loyalty on women footwear.

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between product quality and brand loyalty on women footwear.

H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between price and brand loyalty on women footwear.

H4: There is a significant and positive relationship between style and brand loyalty on women footwear.

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between promotion and brand loyalty on women footwear.

H6: There is a significant and positive relationship between service quality and brand loyalty on women footwear.

H7: There is a significant and positive relationship between store environment and brand loyalty on women footwear.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for the study is descriptive. Women of various age groups have been interviewed for the research survey using a structured questionnaire.

Period of the Study

The study was conducted in the period of June 2013 to July 2013.

Sampling Design and Sampling Size

Sampling technique used for the study was convenience sampling method and total sample size was 100. The research instruments used was open and close ended questionnaires. Personal interview was conducted among the target women using the questionnaire.

Tools Used for the Study

To conduct the study, primary data and secondary data are used by the researcher to analyze and identify the brand awareness and brand loyalty on women footwear. Pearson Correlation, Frequencies such as mean, standard deviation and percentage analysis were used to obtain the factors that influenced respondents' brand loyalty and brand awareness.

Percentage Analysis Method: Simple percentage analysis method refers to special kind of ratio. With the help of absolute figures, it will be difficult to interpret any meaning from the collected data, but when percentages are found out, and then it becomes easy to find the relative difference between two or more attributes.

The **5 point Likert Scale** was used in the questionnaire.

1-strongly disagree, **2**-disagree, **3**-neutral, **4**-agree and **5**-strongly agree. The result is derived from the highest mean score of factors of brand loyalty based on the respondents' answers.

Garret's ranking techniques was used to rank the factors influencing footwear preferred by women. According to this technique, the order assigned to different factors by the respondents were converted into ranks by using the formula-

$$\text{Percent Position} = 100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)$$

N_j

Where R_{ij} = Rank given for the i th variable by the j th respondents.

N_j = Number of variable ranked by the j th respondents

Result and Discussion

Profile of the women respondents:

Personal Profile	Respondents in percentage
Age	
18-25	27
26-30	52
31-35	13
Above 35	8
Occupation	
Student	43
Government Sector	12
Private Sector	17
Self Employed	18
Housewives	10
Educational Qualification	
School Level	10
Graduate	55
Post Graduate	35
Income	
Less than Rs. 20,000	52
20,000-30,000	24
31,000-40,000	20
Above 40,000	04

Source: Primary data.

From the 100 women respondents in this study, 52% were in the age group of 26-30 years and majority of women were students 43% whose educational qualification were graduate 55%. Majority of women income level were less than Rs. 10,000.

Table: 2 Brands of footwear

Brand	Respondents in percentage
Bata	41
Metro	28
Dr.Scholls Global Step	23
INC 5	3
Puma	2
Others	3

Source: Primary data.

From the table 2, it is found that Bata was the popular brand of footwear preferred by the women which accounted for (41%) followed by Metro (28%), Dr.Scholls Global Step (23%) respectively. Among different brands, women in the city preferred Bata.

Table: 3 Awareness about the Brand

Sources	Mean	Rank
Advertisement	75.25	I
Friends or Relatives	38.35	IV
Past Experience	64.65	II
While Shopping	42.55	III
Online	34.25	V

Source: Primary data

It can be observed from the table above that the respondents came to know of the brands through advertisement followed by past experience and by just looking around while shopping around. It is interesting to note that most of the women are least interested in shopping online their footwear. Some of them become aware of the brand based on the suggestions offered by their friends and relatives which is ranked as fourth in the table.

Table 4: Influencing Factors in Brand Loyalty

Factors	Mean	Rank
Brand Name 1. The brand is reputable. 2. Brand reflects my own personality. 3. A brand name is selected according to price. 4. Brand name and image attract me to purchase. Average Mean	3.79 3.83 3.87 3.75 3.81	II
Product Quality 1. The materials used for the brands are comfortable. 2. The size of footwear fits me. 3. The brand has sufficient colors. 4. The brand has good functional quality. Average Mean	4.03 3.72 3.74 3.87 3.84	I
Price 1. The brand provides reasonable price and good discount. 2. Increase of price not changes my decision of purchase. 3. The brand provides good value for money. Average Mean	3.73 3.10 3.62 3.48	VI
Style 1. The brand provides wide verity of styles. 2. Styles of brand are trendy and fashionable. 3. Styles of brand are suitable for me. 4. Styles of the brand have unique features. Average Mean	3.75 3.49 3.47 3.87 3.65	III
Promotion 1. Window displays and advertisement are attracting me to purchase. 2. Advertisement of brands is attractive. Average Mean	3.56 3.61 3.59	V
Service Quality 1. Salespersons of the store are friendly and courteous. 2. Salespersons of the stores have neat and clean appearance. 3. Salespersons of the store are well trained. 4. Salespersons are ever ready to help you. Average Mean	3.35 3.43 3.19 3.33 3.33	VII
Store Environment 1. The brand has good prime location. 2. The brand has sufficient outlets in the City. 3. The interior display is attractive. 4. The color and decoration of store are attractive. Average Mean	3.75 3.87 3.47 3.46 3.64	IV

Source: Primary data

From the above table it clear that most of the respondents preferred product quality followed by style. The nbrand name, store environment and promotion are the other factors that affect the brand loyalty of the consumers.

HYPOTHESIS TEST

Table: 5

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Significance*
Brand Name	0.564	0.000
Product Quality	0.304	0.002
Price	0.457	0.000
Style	0.139	0.160
Promotion	0.402	0.000
Service Quality	0.332	0.001
Store Environment	0.386	0.000
*Significant at 0.01 Level		

1. It is learnt that consumers favored brand image when they perceive positive benefits or function from the product. They would then recommend the brand, have positive reaction on the price premium and are willing to accept brand extensions to other product categories within the same brand. As shown in Table 4, brand name was found to have significant positive relationship with brand loyalty, hence H1 is accepted.

2. The correlation between brand loyalty and product quality is positive and is moderate ($r=0.304$). This finding indicates that product quality is also significant in the consumer decision making process. Since product quality was shown to have a positive relationship with brand loyalty, H2 is accepted.

3. as far as price and brand loyalty is concerned both have a positive relationship, hence H3 is accepted. Price is an important consideration for an average women consumer; however, consumers with high brand loyalty were less-price sensitive. It is understood that as long as the women respondents were satisfied with a particular brand, they would repurchase the product with the same brand name even if it was highly priced.

4. It is surprising to note that among the seven variables identified, style was not considered an important factor for women of Coimbatore City to be loyal to particular footwear brand. Women have preferred comfort more as compared to style in footwear hence H4 is rejected.

5. Promotion activities includes the use of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling and publicity were considered as one of the most important factors in determining a women' brand loyalty. It was observed that female respondents actually

spent more time reading product labels before buying products. The results showed that promotion and brand loyalty were positively related, hence H5 is accepted.

6. Service quality was an important factor in influencing and encouraging women to patronize a store. The results indicated that the salesperson-consumer relationship will generally result in long-term orientation of women toward a store. At the same time, trust in the salesperson appeared to relate to the overall perception of the store's service quality which resulted in the women total satisfaction with the store. The finding also showed that service quality and brand loyalty had a positive relationship, hence H6 is accepted.

7. From this study, it is observed that women paid much attention to store attributes such as merchandise display, variety of selection, parking space, easily accessible by car and the reputation of the store in purchasing products. Store environment was positively related to brand loyalty, hence H7 is accepted.

Suggestions:

1. It is clear from the above study that Service Quality is the most important aspect that influences the brand loyalty. Therefore, it is important that the store management should arrange special courses to improve effective communication and service of the sales personnel.

2. Product quality was shown to be the strongest dimension of Influencing of Brand Loyalty. Therefore, store management should maintain the attributes of product quality by conducting frequent audit and replenishment of fresh stocks at their stores.

3. Store management should promote the attractive ranges of ladies footwear with high discounts like Bata, so that women will be attract towards other brands also.

4. It is learnt that women are more concerned about the comfort factor than that of style. Hence the store management should concentrate on stocking their shelves with comfort wear and give less importance to style to attract and retain women.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the brand awareness and how the women are influenced by factors of brand loyalty towards footwear brands. The research showed that it was not easy to obtain and maintain consumer brand loyalty for a company's product because there were many forces drawing consumers away such as competition, consumers' thirst for variety, etc. From the analysis of this study, it was shown that there are six factors of brand loyalty that were appropriate in the environment of Coimbatore City which are, the brand name, product quality, price, promotion, service quality and store environment. The findings revealed that product quality plays a significant role in influencing consumers to be loyal customers. Additionally, the overall findings of this study also show that amongst others Coimbatore customers prefer brand name, product quality, price, promotion, store environment and service quality as relevant factors attributable to brand loyalty. All these factors showed positive relationships with brand loyalty except style which had no relationship. Undeniably, the footwear industry is one area which offers vast potential in the women market.

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