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## INDIAN BRANDS IN THE INDIANS' CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

*India is considered to be a market that cannot be ignored by any FMCG company that desires to be successful in the global market. It has become inevitable for any international company to understand the needs and preferences of the Indian consumers. Though, the world is promoting the concept of globalization, the multi-national corporations come forward to customise their offering in order to suit the preferences of Indian consumers. It is obvious that the role of Indian consumers is imperative in determination of the future of many MNCs. Perhaps, it is the fact that the companies from the developed nations depend upon the consumers of this developing country – India, to maximize their wealth. However, it is worth mentioning here is that there are few Indian Brands perform on par with the foreign brands. Therefore, it is the interest of the researchers to understand how the Indian consumers look at Indian Brands. This study was aimed at finding out the significance of the Indian brands in the Indians' context. It was found that there is significant awareness of the Indian brands in the market with aided recall. The preference of Indian brands is also comparatively significant when compared with foreign brands. It is suggested that the Indian companies should further emphasise on superior quality, product innovation, durability and a variety of products to the customers in order to gain a better market share. Go India, go...*

### KEYWORDS

Brand, Brand identity, perceived qualities, positioning,

### INTRODUCTION

There is a general agreement that source of successful companies is the presence of big brands in their portfolio. Every company wants to create and own the ageless brands and does spend a lot of money towards this objective. Yet, many top executives are not very comfortable with following a structured approach to branding.

Building a brand driven culture is a lifelong commitment to a mindset and a way of life that takes time, planning and perseverance that produces intangible outputs which include greater customer satisfaction, reduced price sensitivity, fewer customer defections, greater share of customers' wallets, more referrals, and a higher percentage of repeat business. Customers value their relationship with their branded possessions and with marketing agents and institutions that own and manage the brand. The brand identity needs to focus on points of differentiation that offer sustainable competitive advantage to the firm.

Brand image is everything. Brand image may be the best, single marketable investment a firm can make. Creating or revitalizing a positive brand image is a basic component of every business and lays a foundation on which firms can build their future.

Brand identity is based on a thorough understanding of the firm's customers, competitors, and business environment. The brand identity needs to reflect the business strategy and the firm's willingness to invest in the programs needed for the brand to live up to its promise to customers. Strong brands enjoy customer loyalty, the potential to charge premium prices, and considerable brand power to support new product and service launches. Companies need to have thorough understanding of customer belief, behavior, product or service attributes, and competitors.

Gone are the days when a company could be assured of its success in its strong hold position. Today with the economy opening up, it becomes more accessible to multinationals with their proven track record can displace any domestic brand. Hence, it is becoming increasingly important for the Indian brands to establish their superiority in their own country.

### BRAND – MEANING

A brand is a distinguishing name and / or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical (Aaker, 1991). Brands provide the basis upon which consumers can identify and bond with a product or service or a group of products or services (Weilbacher, 1995).

From the customers' point of view, a brand can be defined as the total accumulation of all his / her experiences, and is built at all points of contact with the customer (Kapferer, 2004). A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely (Chernatony and McDonald, 1998).

According to Park et.al. (1986), many brands offer a mixture of symbolic, functional, and experiential benefits. Functional needs are defined as those that motivate the search for products that solve consumption related problems (e.g. solve a current problem, resolve conflict, and restructure a frustrating situation). A brand with a functional concept is defined as desires for products that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego identification. A brand with a symbolic concept is one, designed to associate the individual with a desired group, role, or self-image. Experiential needs are defined as desires for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety, and / or cognitive stimulation. A brand with an experiential concept is designed to fulfill these internally generated needs for stimulation and / or variety.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

*This study has the following objectives:*

- To find out the awareness level of Indian Customers on Indian brands
- To study the impact of Indian brands in the buying decision making of Indian customers
- To know whether Indian brand image has influenced on customers' buying behavior in certain product categories
- To identify the factors that decide the selection of Indian brands in certain product categories

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design used in this study is exploratory research design that has the goal of formulating problems more precisely, gathering explanation, gaining insight, eliminating impractical ideas, and forming hypotheses. The major emphasis of this research design is on gaining ideas and insight; it is essentially helpful in breaking broad, vague problem statements into smaller, more precise sub problem statements.

This study has two stages. *First stage* involves the construction of the questionnaire incorporating all the questions required to collect data pertinent to the objectives of the study. A pilot study was conducted with twenty five samples, chosen from *Chennai city* which is the area of the study. The *Second stage* involves the actual survey of collecting primary data through structured undisguised questionnaire revised after the pilot study for accuracy. The collected data was then tabulated and interpreted.

### SAMPLING

For the purpose of this study, samples were collected from different parts of Chennai city, the Capital of Tamilnadu State in India. The sample size is 200. It consisted of men and women from different educational and occupational background of various geographical areas in Chennai. This study has been made, using convenient sampling. Obviously, this method is used when the researcher is interested in getting an inexpensive approximation of the truth.

### STATISTICAL TOOLS, USED

The data collected from the respondents of the study have been analysed by applying various statistical tools, viz., percentages, pie chart and bar diagram, and Chi square test.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the researcher could not find much literature on the area of Indians' perception on Indian Brands, he has presented what has been available on the given topic and also presented the literature, related to the concept 'Brand'. In a study, done by Jin and Bal (1989) on "Brand Origin in an emerging market: perceptions of Indian consumers", resulted that most consumers can recognize the brand origin correctly but the power of recognition decreases when the brand has a long history of 'Localization'.

Another source has stated that unlike Chinese & Russians, Indians prefer local luxury brands (Temp.2007). It has stated that global luxury goods makers may be betting big on India, but Indians would rather go for a home grown brand than a foreign one when it comes to splurging on luxury.

According to a new survey, conducted by US-based Time magazine, it is the men-focused products, that too in the apparel segment, that come on the top among luxury brands in India, with Indian women still prefer the traditional saree. Four out of five most familiar brands in the minds of young Indians are, Park Avenue, Allen Solly, Reid and Taylor and Wills Lifestyle, the domestic labels and that too belonging to the menswear category. Swiss Watch Rolex is the only foreign brand that has made to the top five luxury brands in India, the Time magazine said. The same study, by Time magazine has found that in India, 58 percent prefer high quality, 55 percent go for high reputation of the brand and 50 percent stress on high fashion.

Another study, done in Bangalore by SiliconIndia on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011 on the topic, 'Indians are most brand conscious in the world' has resulted that India's growth and development is fastest and the upscale consumers have finally made Indians to rank in top 5 when it comes to brand consciousness. Buying branded gives them a sense of pleasure and status. Price consciousness has become a secondary thing. People prefer to buy the best and long lasting quality goods. The study by Neilsen on 'The global luxury brand study' revealed that nearly 35% of Indians prefer buying luxury brands which is the third highest. The brands have taken a lot of effort to establish and bring a goodwill which has created strong foundation to stay in Indian market. People are no more hesitant to buy the branded goods.

According to Keller (2003), consumer's brand knowledge can be defined in terms of the personal meaning about a brand stored in consumer memory, that is all descriptive and evaluative brand related information. Different sources and levels of knowledge such as awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitude, and experiences get linked to a brand and its understanding by the consumer.

The Brand, in a sense, acts as a credible guarantee for that product or service, allowing the consumer to identify and specify products which genuinely offer added value (Murphy, 1998).

Powerful brands provide long-term security and growth, higher sustainable profits, and increased asset value because they achieve competitive differentiation, premium prices, higher sales volumes, economies of scale and reduced costs, and greater security of demand (Temporal, 2000). The brand 'Promise' is the essence of the benefits (both functional and emotional) that customers can expect to receive from experiencing a brand's products / services, which reflects the heart, soul, and spirit of the brand (Knapp, 2000).

A brand essence that is based on emotional and self-expressive benefits provides a higher-order basis for relationship which can be less vulnerable to product-related changes or easily applied to new contexts (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Brands evolve over time. The first level pertains to express the identity of the producer (i.e. label). The second level is known as functional superiority (perceived by customer as differentiation). While the third level is referred to as emotional touch, fourth level pertains to the power of self-expression. At the top of the pyramid, the highest level (i.e. fifth level) is known as cult (Shahabdeen 2010).

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The researcher intended to collect primary data from 200 samples using questionnaire. However, only 170 respondents that include 60 males and 110 females responded and provided the data. It means that 65% of the sample size stands for females and the rest 35% stands for males. The collected data has been analysed and interpreted in this section.

It is observed that 18% of the respondents are below 20years, 38% of the respondents belong to the age group of 20-30 years, 21% aged between 30-40 years, 14% with the age group of 40-50 years and the remaining 9% are above 50 years.

With regard to the occupation of the respondents, 23% were homemakers, 18% of them are students, 12% of them were business people, another 35% are employees and the balance 12% are professionals.

As far as the monthly income of the respondents is concerned, 41% are dependents with no income at their own, 9% have income below RS.10,000, 24% have the income between Rs. 10,000-20,000, another 14% of them have the income between Rs. 20,000-30,000 and the remaining 12% of them make the income which is above Rs. 30,000.

In relation to the awareness level of the respondents on Indian Brands, 61% of them are aware of the Indian brands, whereas the remaining 39% are not aware of the Indian Brands.

**TABLE - 1: THE TOP FIVE INDIAN BRANDS, IDENTIFIED BY THE RESPONDENTS**

Top 5 Indian Brands, identified	No.of respondents	Total	% of the respondents
TATA	98	170	58
RELIANCE	80	170	47
AMUL	70	170	41
HUL	60	170	35
BRITANNIA	50	170	29

From the table-1, it can be observed that 58% of the respondents have identified Tata, 47% have identified Reliance, 41% have known Amul, 35% of the have known HUL Products and 29% of them have identified Britannia as their top known Indian brand.



TABLE – 2: THE PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD BRAND

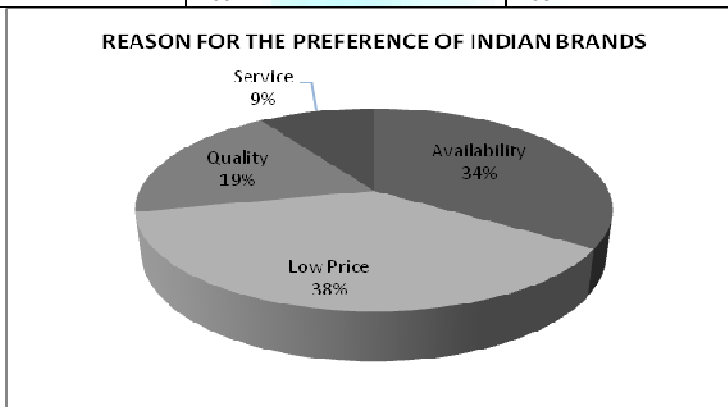
Perceived Important Characteristics of Indian Brands	No. of respondents	Total	% of the respondents
Reasonable Price	110	170	65
Quality	120	170	71
Durability	80	170	47
Availability	70	170	41

From table-2, it could be understood that 65% of the respondents perceive reasonable price as an important attribute, 71% perceive quality is top of the important characteristics, they look for in a brand, 47% of the respondents suggested that durability is the most important characteristic of a brand and the remaining 41% of the respondents value the availability of a brand as an important characteristic.

When an attempt was made to know how many of the respondents prefer to buy Indian Brands, it was found that 59% of them prefer Indian Brands and the remaining 41% of them do not prefer Indian Brands.

TABLE – 3: THE REASON FOR THE PREFERENCE OF INDIAN BRANDS

Reasons for the preference of Indian Brands	No. of respondents	% of the respondents
Availability	30	36
Low Price	40	40
Quality	20	20
Service	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



From table-3, it can be observed that from among the 100 respondents out of 170 (59%) who prefer Indian Brands, 30% prefer Indian Brands for their availability, 40% prefer them for their low price, 20% favour the Indian Brands for their quality and the remaining 10% prefer Indian Brands for the associated service with them

The 41% of the respondents who do not prefer Indian Brands came out with their reasons. 43% of them do not prefer Indian brands because of their quality deficiencies, 20% due non-availability, 23% find Indian brands with very limited choices and varieties and the remaining 14% said that since the Indian brands are less / no popular, they do not prefer them.

With regard to the usage of Indian Brands, it was found that 71% of the respondents use Amul Butter, 100% of them use Britannia, 47% use Gold Winner, 35% use Parachute and 45% of them use Titan products.

The main findings that are specifically related to the five popular and most favourable Indian Brands are presented as below:

**AMUL BUTTER**

- It was identified that 63% of the respondents are using Amul Butter for more than 5 years.
- Television advertisements play the major role in attracting the people to buy Amul Butter.
- Taste and the name are the two main reasons that motivate the buyers to prefer to the brand 'Amul'.

**BRITANNIA**

- It was identified that 100% of the respondents are using Britannia for more than 5 years.
- The main reason for purchasing Britannia is for the availability and reasonable price.
- Television commercials play the major role in attracting the people to buy Britannia.
- The quality and price of Britannia are perceived to be more attractive than that of other brands.

**GOLD WINNER**

- It was identified that 62% of the respondents are using Gold Winner for more than 5 years.
- The role of television is vital in the promotion of Gold Winner with the slogan:- G- for Gold and H- for Health.
- The focus of Gold winner as a product that helps the consumers to keep up their health in good condition and its' availability are the major reasons for the preference of Gold Winner by the Consumers in India.
- The perceived quality and the promotional campaign are more impressive than that of other brands in the product category.

**PARACHUTE**

- It was identified that 60% of the respondents are using Parachute for more than 5 years.
- The main reason for purchasing Parachute is for the reasonable price and quality of the brand.
- The quality and price of the brand are more impressive than other brands.

**TITAN**

- It is found that 66% of the respondents are using Titan for a period more than 5 years.
- Magazine and Television promotions have played major role in the popularity of Titan.
- The quality and durability of the brand are more impressive and great motivation to the consumers.

**OTHER FINDINGS AS PER THE RESULTS OF CHI-SQUARE TEST**

- It is also found that there is no relationship between age and awareness of the Indian brands.
- There is no relationship between income and preferences of Indian brands.
- There is no relationship between occupation and awareness of the Indian Brands at 5% level of significance.
- There is a relationship between occupation and awareness of Indian brands @1% level of significance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- A major portion of Indian customers are not able to differentiate Indian Brands from foreign brands, thus the Indian Companies should take care to establish their place of origin of the product.
- The customers are not able to identify Indian brands when they are directly asked to list out Indian brands but they were able to identify them only with some aided recall tools. The customer's mindset should be converted into unaided recall.
- The preference of Indian brands is nearly 60% and this should be further increased with the promotion of 'Brand India'.
- The Indian brands should emphasise more on quality and service of their goods and services.
- The Indian brands are not that much long lasting and thus, they should emphasise on the durability of the products.
- There is less choice among Indian brands. So, many Indian players should come into the market.
- The reputation of Indian brands is comparatively less when compared with foreign brands and this challenge should be overcome.

**CONCLUSION**

Branding needs a shift of tactics and thinking on the part of marketing executives. With ever increasing customer awareness levels, marketers can no longer afford to be complacent about their brands & branding strategies.

Successful brand needs a structured approach with due attention to what seem to be very minor details. It becomes difficult for Indian brands to create a market for themselves because of the quality, and proven credibility of the foreign brands.

This study was aimed at finding out the significance of the Indian brands in the Indian context. It was found that there is significant awareness of the Indian brands in the market with aided recall. The preference of Indian brands is also comparatively significant when compared with foreign brands. The Indian companies should further emphasise on superior quality, product innovation, durability and a variety of products to the customers in order to gain a better market share.

Understanding the differences in the perception of customers is the key to unlocking the market potential. Marketers are advised to understand the credibility, positive association and additional valuation that a customer attaches with successful brands. The perception of the quality that is associated with the foreign brands is difficult to unlock but it is easier to create opportunities for Indian brands by creating a positive brand image / positioning in the minds of the customers.

Finally, the task does not stop with the onetime creation of a successful brand. The companies have to measure its' customer-connect and consistently revitalize the Indian brands to keep them relevant to the ever changing tastes and preferences of the Indian consumers.

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