

Consumer Preference Towards Own Brands with Special Reference to Own Brands of Cargills & Keells Supermarkets

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Abstract: The supermarkets in Sri Lanka operate in an oligopolistic market in which the players have head to head competition. In order to win such competition, several supermarkets introduced their own brands, which are available at relatively cheaper rates than those of branded products. With this background, the study was carried out to examine the consumer preference towards such own brands introduced by Cargills & Keells Supermarkets in Sri Lanka. When developing the conceptual framework, brand equity model was used and the study explored how the brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived quality impact on the consumer preference towards own brands. The data was gathered through questionnaires distributed around 250 consumers in the western province. As per the correlation and multiple regression analysis, it was found that, brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived quality have a significant influence on consumer preference towards own brands. Hence, in order to place them ahead in competition, supermarkets should invest on their own brands while developing their product portfolio further.

Keywords: Brand equity, Consumer preference, Own brands

Introduction

It is very essential for brand managers and the own brand manufactures to have a

clear and a wide understanding of the customers' expectations, likes, dislike, motivations and inclinations that drive a customer to purchase a new product (Yang & Tsou, 2017).). In the modern world marketing plays a very competitive role. Simply it is like a battle field fighting for a new company to attract new customers. If any country has strong retail sector that can be identified as the most important factor that affect to economy of the country. In the modern world retail sector has become a necessity for a society (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2017). In Sri Lanka, supermarket concept was developed with the departmental store namely of Cargills and millers. Firstly, the supermarkets started in 1980s and expanded from 2000 onwards. At the present supermarket is at the growing stage in the business life cycle (Ratnayake, 2014). Mostly around 600 supermarket outlets are around the country with influencing Cargill's food city and keells super as the main supermarket chain. After considering the major supermarkets where sub supermarkets could be seen as well. Sentra, Kings super, Arpico, sun up, park and shop, crystal and prince super and there can be seen a lot of single owner self-service and also retail supermarkets are running throughout the country (Gunewardene & Alihussain, 2018). In recent years retailing market has risen rapidly with comparison to above mentioned supermarkets. Major supermarket chain has improved as a result of mushrooming food and grocery items. With the passage of five year time it was observed private supermarkets have grown/ escalated throughout the country and the it spreaded to the urban areas. This has been mainly due to the desire of the

retail customers and the changing of the lifestyle. And also it creates a new social circle of wealthy people in outstation areas. When considering the western province Supermarkets have already been established where as private supermarket owners are risky. (Essays, 2018). At the present Situation, Sri Lankan Supermarket industry can be identified as an oligopolistic market. And also, there is competition which named as “head to head” competition. Therefore, most of the supermarket use several strategies to win the market share such as low-cost method and product differentiate. Further they have introduced their own brands (Keells K-Choice, Cargills My-Choice) for their consumers by giving names by those products.

Problem Statement

At the present supermarkets already introduced their own brands to the market under new brand name. Building a brand among consumers can be identified as a complicated task and it takes considerable time. At the present Sri Lankan supermarket culture has been rapidly growing over the past year (Anon, 2019). And also there can be identified huge competition among the existing supermarkets. Therefore building an own brand in this culture is not an easy task. And also it is a difficult task to creating a brand memorable and in superior in qualities (Lee & Back, 2010). When we consider about the recent culture of the supermarkets, they were already able to introduce their own brands to the market under new brand name.

When considering the Sri Lankan super market culture, Cargills and Keells which can be considered as most popular supermarkets among the Sri Lankans have introduced their own brands in a successful manner. They have introduced wide range of products through the My-Choice (by Cargills) and K- Choice (by Keells).

Therefore, considering these background researchers tend to investigate into what is the current consumer preference towards own brands developed by the supermarkets and investigate what are the

factors that affect to the consumer preference towards own brands of Sri Lankan supermarkets.

Research Objectives

In this study researchers identified both primary and secondary objectives. On primary objective this study can be identified as to identify current state and attitude to the Supermarket own brands by consumers. Secondary Objectives of this study was to examine how brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived quality impact on consumer preference towards own brands and to identify the main factor that affects to the consumer preference towards own brands of Sri Lankan supermarkets.

Literature Review

A. Introduction

Literature review is an important fundamental point in researchers view point. Writing an effective review creates a solid foundation for advancing facilitate development, knowledge of theory and also uncover areas where research is required (Webster & Watson, 2002).

B. Empirical Literature

1) Branding

Branding can be identified as a marketing technique in which a company generates a name, design or symbol that is simply recognizable as belonging to the company/organization. Branding is significant because not only it gives a memorable impression or an intention on consumers, but also it allows consumers to know what to expect from the company (Yohn, 2014). From hereafter this study will consider about Aaker’s brand equity (Aaker, 1996) model by using some independent variables such as Brand image, Brand awareness, Brand trust, Brand loyalty, Brand association and Perceived quality of supermarket own brand. Dependent variable is consumer preference this chapter shows how it will be towards supermarket own brands.

2) Impact of brand image to the consumer preference

A common strategy is used to strengthen a brand image is creating brand trust between consumer and the company. Brand trust provides a greater lens through which to examine and assess consumer's behavioral responses about the own brand. Similarly, consumer's brand affect plays an important role between company and consumer relationship. Brand image can be identified as the secondary perception generated of the brand association. Indicates consumer perception about the total personality of the brand it may influenced satisfaction, perceived value, willingness to pay, support intentions and recommendation of the brand (Beverland, 2009). Further, Marketers create tangible aspect of the brand through advertisements or other source of information and most importantly imposing unique selling intention of the product. When it comes to supermarket own brands strong brand image can lead to high brand equity. Imposing the product's unique selling proposal most importantly. Strong brand image can result in high brand equity when it comes to supermarket own brands.

3) Impact of brand trust on the consumer preference.

Normally brand is liable to the customers to accomplish their expectations. Brand trust is a significant term in branding that helps customers being loyal to the brand. Without the trustworthy on brand customer can't enter in loyalty set. To manufacture a trust, it's significant for the Consumer to take and evaluate the data from the item. Organizations can create passionate trust on the off chance that they can demonstrate that the brand is just for the customers and meet their expected expectations (Moorman & all, 1993).

4) Impact of brand awareness to the consumer preference.

Brand awareness is the degree of consumer acknowledgment of an item by the name. Making brand awareness is an important to advance another item or restoring a more established brand. In a perfect world,

awareness of the brand may incorporate a few characteristics that recognize the item from that challenge (Mahmutovic, 2018). Products and services which are maintaining a high level of brand awareness are likely to produce more sales of that market. Consumers confronted with preferences are more likely to buy a good branded name product than a brand which is not familiar. Brand recall, promotions, affordability, brand recognition and familiarity and likings of certain brand can be evaluated by these variables well awareness of the own brand promotions and campaigns easy recognition of the brand familiarity of the supermarket own brands and competitively affordable than the other brands (Miller, 2015).

5) Impact of brand loyalty to the consumer preference

Brand loyalty can be shown as the tendency of consumers to continuously purchase one brand's products over another. Consumer personal conduct standards uncover that consumers will keep on purchasing items from an organization that has embraced a depend relationship. Loyalty is very important to businesses as it leads to continues purchases by consumers, higher revenues, and customer quotations (Aaker, 1996).

When focusing on supermarkets own branding those product colours, ways of displaying products, features, ease of recognizing those products, smell of the product and the condition of the product can be identified as aesthetic consumer response to the brand loyalty. Brand loyalty consciously or unconsciously influences how people feel about the product. Here supermarket marketers should identify the niche market to provide wider customer satisfaction bringing constant innovations to ensure that customers will repeatedly purchase the products (Malik, et al., 2013).

6) Impact of brand association to the consumer preference

Brand association can be identified as an interaction which buyer forms in his/her mind with the brand. Brand association does not imply benefits, but these are more

intangible in nature. The customers form association are mainly created on the expected perception they have about the product or service (Finkle, 2019). Brand association can be identified in positive or negative. Most of the brands wants to subordinate itself with something positive. Supermarket own brands also like same as that although they grew under the super market brand this brand wants to be unique. Positive brand associations are succeeded when the product's brand shows durable, reliable and desirable. The consumers must be assured that the brand possess the features and attributes satisfying their needs. This will drive to customers having a positive intention about the product. And also, Positive brand association helps an organization to gain goodwill and block the entrance of the competitors to the market (Aaker, 1996).

7) Impact of perceived quality to the consumer preference

Brand quality customers discernment about the item and administrations quality. It is the impression of the customer made by the organizations through the publicizing exposures, and the other web based life expect to buy the item (Kazmi, n.d.). Normally there is an attitude by the customer about product quality and its features provided to them such a performance and reliability of the product. The promises that are made by the branded product to meet the expectations of the customers (Zeithaml, 1988). Mainly there are two phases of the quality objective and perceived quality. According to (Cook & Thompson, 2000) objective quality has no validity and valuations of the quality. Present day retailers can source items at low costs because of their bigger measure of sales while a large portion of the quick moving consumer merchandise they sell are dependent upon most extreme retail costs which get down the value contrast with customary retailers. We believe customers will bit by bit organize comfort and quality over cost in the midst of rising pay levels, which likewise looks good for present day basic grocery retail and supermarket own brands reputation, saving that can gain from buying those products the feeling of secureness will help

them to growth of the own brands (Julien & Damian, 2018).

8) Consumer Preference for the own brands.

Consumer preference is outlined because the subjective tastes of individual shoppers, measured by their satisfaction with those things when they have purchased them. This satisfaction is usually called as utility. Consumer worth is determined by however consumer utility can be compared between totally different things. It is an attribute of customer satisfaction about own brand and it is loyalty (Weedmark, 2018). Social factors, satisfaction and reputation of supermarket own brand make customers preference better towards the other brands of same products. Own brand products are only available in in their own super market consumers will attract to those preferred items make customers satisfaction (Lee, et al., 2016).

C. Conceptual Framework

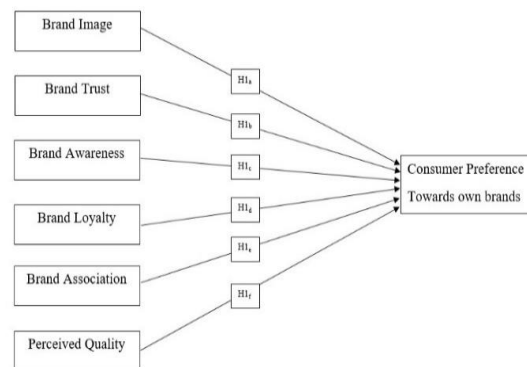


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
 Source: Authors

As shown in figure 1 the conceptual framework has six independent variables and one dependent variable. Those variables are mainly based on brand equity model and two separate concepts (brand image and brand trust). This conceptual framework is used to indicate the relationship exist within the variables in the study.

According to the above conceptual framework research will be discussed under six hypotheses.

H1_a: Brand Image has a positive impact on the consumer preference towards supermarket own brands.

H1_b: Brand Trust has a positive impact on the consumer preference towards supermarket own brands.

H1_c: Brand Awareness has a positive impact on the consumer preference towards supermarket own brands.

H1_d: Brand Loyalty has a positive impact on the consumer preference towards supermarket own brands.

H1_e: Brand Association has a positive impact on the consumer preference towards supermarket own brands.

H1_f: Perceived Quality has a positive impact on the consumer preference towards supermarket own brands.

Data Collection

In this study researchers have used quantitative method and the study is a cross-sectional analysis. And also research is based on deductive approach which is concerned with building up hypotheses which is relevant to an existing theory and measure the hypotheses. In this study researchers used brand equity model and two separate concepts to illustrate the topic. The sampling frame used in this study was distributed to consumers who use the supermarket own brands representing the western province, Sri Lanka. The sample of the study was distributed among 250 consumers who prefer the supermarket own brands. And also researchers used Convenient and judgmental sampling techniques have been used under non-probabilistic sampling because there can't be identified all the supermarket users in the western province (Saunders, et al., 2012). The survey will be conducted by using questionnaire as data collection method. The questionnaire is generally based on three major theories used in the study. There are nine sections which examine each conception model in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

A. Reliability

Reliability indicates that data used for further analysis is measured effectively and

efficiently. Based on the data researches have collected, reliability was tested on every concept to make sure that all the measures are continuously reflecting the construct that is measuring (Hair, et al., 2009). According to (Taber, 2017) Cronbach's Alpha is the statistical tool used to identify the reliability of a study. Generally, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is within 0.6-0.7 that indicates an accepted level of reliability. If the value is 0.8 or greater it is a very good level. However, values greater than 0.95 are not in a good standard (Hulin, et al., 2001). According to this study all the dependent and independent variables exist the accepted level of 0.6. It indicates that data analysis was measured effectively and efficiently.

B. Normality

If the Skewness and kurtosis values are less than three times their standard error values, Hair et al. (2009) assumes that the variables are normally distributed. For Skewness, the agreed value should be within -1 to + 1 and for Kurtosis, meaning that the variables are normally distributed should be within -3 to + 3 (Hair, et al., 2009). In this research all the skewness and kurtosis values are in the accepted level. Therefore it can be concluded that all the variables are normally distributed.

C. Linearity

In this study linearity was tested between Consumer Preference and six variables including Brand Image, Brand Trust, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association, and Perceived Quality respectively. In here Consumer Preference is the dependent variable while other six variables are independent variables. In this study linearity was tested between the below mentioned variables.

In this study R² value for brand image and consumer preference is shown as 0.155 which implied that 15.5% of variation in brand image according to the findings. And also all the other variables namely brand trust, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality with consumer preference shows 0.336 (33.6%), 0.185 (18.5%), 0.348 (34.8%), 0.410 (41%) and 0.395 (39.5%) variations

respectively. Furthermore, when taking in to account significance values all relationships show an accepted significance level.

D. Validity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test can be used to determine the validity and, in the meantime, KMO should lie between 0-1. According to the (Kim & Mueller, 1978) if the KMO value is closer to 1 means, data which collected is acceptable. The value 0.90 in KMO test display excellent while 0.8, 0.7, 0.6 and 0.5 are define as meritorious, middling, mediocre and miserable respectively.

According to this study, results of KMO test is meritorious and it can be considered as data set which used for this study is scientifically valid.

E. Multicollinearity Test

According to (Hawking & Pendleton, 1983), an incident where there is an absolute or nearly exact linear relationship among two or more input variables is known as multicollinearity. According to the findings the tolerance value should be greater than 0.1. If the tolerance value becomes “1”, it indicates no multicollinearity and if the tolerance level is “0” it indicates perfect multicollinearity. With reference to (Hair & all, 1995) stated that, “10” as the maximum level of VIF value but according to (Ringle & all, 2015), it is stated that “5” as the maximum level of VIF. When considering the above table (4.5) all the tolerance value is greater than 0.1 and also all the VIF values of all the variables are less than 10 which indicate that there is no multicollinearity. According to the findings of this study all the Tolerance values and VIF values are greater than 0.1 and all the VIF values are less than 10. Therefore it can be mentioned that there is no multicollinearity.

F. Correlation

Correlation is used as a statistical technique by the researchers to measure how accurate two data sets are related and associated. Pearson’s correlation

coefficient is generally used to as a measurement to determine the correlation. If there is a coefficient (r) range between -1 to +1 it is considered as a proper correlated relation.

Table 1: Correlation Test

Hypothesis	Pearson’s Correlation	Significance	Decision
H1	0.394	0.000	Accepted
H2	0.580	0.000	Accepted
H3	0.430	0.000	Accepted
H4	0.590	0.000	Accepted
H5	0.641	0.000	Accepted
H6	0.629	0.000	Accepted

Source: Authors.

According to the above hypotheses the coefficient for correlation of Pearson is greater than 0.2. So, it can be assumed that there are strong positive relationships between all the hypotheses. Significance value also can be identified as an indicator that can be used to measure the hypothesis. If the significance value is less than 0.05 (P<0.05) the hypothesis are highly acceptable. And also if the hypotheses are below 0.01 it can be considered as a reliable significance. Therefore above mentioned table, shows that there is an accurate relationship between the hypotheses which were established.

G. Regression

Regression can be identified as a mathematical method that used to analyze relationships among the variables. According to the (Baron & Kenny, 1986), regression analysis should be performed under three stages. Here linear relationship between independent variables and consumer preference (dependent variable) has been analyzed. Here Brand Image, Brand Trust, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Perceived Quality consider as the independent variables which represent the Consumer

Preference towards own brands. The following tables were generated to analyze the linear regression by using SPSS.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.732 ^a	.536	.523

Source: Authors

Predictors :(Constant), Perceived Quality, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association.

According to the Model Summary table R value indicates a positive linear relationship with the dependent variable because it is a positive value which is 0.732. R square stated that the proportion of explained variance between 0-1, it can be shown as a percentage. If it is a higher value, association is well proved. With reference to the above table R value is 0.732 and it shows that there is a positive moderate linear relationship. When considering the Adjusted R2 it has a value of 0.523, which indicates that 52% of the variance of consumer preference can be determined by the changes of Brand Image, Brand Trust, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association, and Perceived Quality. And also, value of the standard error is also minimum which concludes that the deviation of mean in western province supermarket is less deviated.

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	24.452	6	4.075	38.773	.000 ^b
Residual	21.127	201	0.105		
Total	45.579	207			

Source: Authors.

- a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Preference
- b. Predictors :(Constant), Perceived Quality, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association

According to the above table it can be concluded that the overall regression model is significant where $F=38.773$ and $p<0.05$ under 95% of confidence level. Therefore, by looking at the overall significance level given in the ANOVA table which is .000 it can be concluded that this study is statistically significant.

Table 4: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	.679	.264		2.571	.011
BI	.188	.070	.160	2.684	.008
BT	.194	.080	.171	2.422	.016
BA	-.289	.093	-.249	-3.118	.002
BL	.133	.072	.149	1.848	.066
BAS	.379	.086	.387	4.413	.000
PQ	.222	0.70	.231	3.194	.002

Source: Authors

According to the beta values in the above table the equation can be derived which it indicates, a change of one unit in Brand image results a change of 0.160 units in consumer preference keeping other variables constant. Also, a change of one unit in Brand trust result a change of 0.171 units in consumer preference while other variables are constant. A change of one unit in Brand Loyalty result a change of 0.149 units in consumer preference while other variables are constant. A change of one unit in Brand Association results a change of 0.387 units in consumer preference while other variables are constant and finally a change in one unit in perceived quality results a change of 0.231 units in consumer preference while other variables are constant. But when considering the beta value of Brand Awareness, it has shown as $\beta = -2.249$. A change of one unit in brand awareness results a decrease of -2.249

units in consumer preference while all the other variables are constant.

The equation can be derived as follows.

Consumer preference

$$= \beta_0 + \beta_1 + \beta_2 + \beta_3 + \beta_4 + \beta_5 + \beta_6$$

2.571 (Constant Value) + 0.160 (Brand Image) + 0.171 (Brand Trust) - 0.249 (Brand Awareness) + 0.149 (Brand Loyalty) + 0.387 (Brand Association) + 0.231 (Perceived Quality)

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka own brands by supermarkets can be identified as a new trend. There are large number of supermarkets in Sri Lanka and only few supermarkets have introduced their own brands. In this research we could identify own brands by supermarkets improving the efficiency of consumer decision making by offering equivalent quality products at affordable prices. Therefore, consumers who use supermarket own brands are increasing respectively. And also it is much important to identify the attitude and the state of the customers in order to maintain a sustainable supermarket own brand that is because the willingness to purchase a product by a customer arise from his/her attitude. Also the state of the customer widely influence to the supermarket own brands if the supermarket own brands are produced targeting the customer with a good or medium state or stability it will arise a success in the supermarket own brands and wise versa if the supermarkets targets the lower state customers it will result in the deployment in the supermarket own brands. According to Akers brand equity theory model the attitude and the state of the customers must be at a high or a moderate level in order to increase the brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived quality. According to the findings of the researches the state and the attitude of the customers were at acceptable level in brand image, brand trust, brand association, perceived quality. The level of attitude and state of the customers should be improved in brand awareness. That can be mainly done

through advertisements, promotion campaigns, etc.

This whole study based on Aaker's brand equity model so the chosen factors are from that model Brand image, Brand trust, Brand awareness, Brand loyalty, Brand association and Perceived quality as independent factors that affect to the consumer preference towards own brands of Sri Lankan supermarkets. Study conduct to measure the overall impact of the elements of brand equity model as above mentioned from that analysed data proven brand image, brand trust, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived quality has a positive impact towards consumer preference of own brands in Sri Lankan supermarkets.

Overall brand equity significantly influenced on consumer brand preference and purchase intention and that is together with brand association. As above mention positive impact like brand extensions, contribution to the brand, advertisements and attitudes on consumer preference like satisfaction, reputation of the brand, perceptions, recommendations and innovations paying premiums and extend purchases from that. Based on Aaker's brand equity model this study results suggest that the brand association create the brand image and brand equity in brand management and by increasing advertisements of own brand product and influence buyers attitudes about own brands, doing continuous innovations doing promotions during purchasing like premium prize awarding can enhance more the brand association towards consumer preference. Finally, with the analysed data and the literature review the researchers have proven only brand association highly affect to the consumer preference towards own brands of Sri Lankan supermarkets.

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