T.C.

ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

BRANDING: HOW INFLUENCES

CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR?

THESIS

RAGHDA LUTFI

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

Thesis Advisor: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Tuğba ALTINTAŞ

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1)Tez Danışmanı: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Tuğba ALTINTAŞ

2) Jüri Üyesi : Prof. Dr. Eyüp ÇETİN

3) Jüri Üyesi : Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ercan ÖGE

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FOREWORD

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June, 2016   **Raghda LUTFI**

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ABSTRACT

The topic selected for the thesis was "Branding- How it Influences Customer Behavior". The main aim of the thesis was to assess and examine the influences of branding on customers so that marketers can develop convincing brand messages to target the right customer using the right message. Branding is developing into one of the most successful tactics of marketing teams in recent times; so much that it has almost become a prioritized area of study for future marketers. This was the main rationale behind conducting the research to understand how branding influences the customer psyche and purchase inclinations so that marketers exert more efforts towards branding as a constant activity for increased brand equity and enhanced company image. The literature review of the thesis discussed different factors influencing customer behaviors, the characteristics of brands that work in a customer-centric marketing environment, various components of brands in an effective marketing environment and how different attributes of brand and its image affects consumer attitudes and intentions for purchase. A comprehensive linkage between branding effectiveness and positive purchase outcomes was found through literary evaluation of past researches. Through a quantitative research methodology, a survey questionnaire technique was undertaken to find out how customers are influenced by brands in Turkish shopping scenario. The sample size of the research comprised of 200 customers chosen randomly from Marmara Forum and Forum Istanbul which are two busiest shopping places across Turkey. The data analysis procedures contained an SPSS-based analysis in which regression, correlation, ANOVA and frequency distribution were obtained through running the collected data on the software. Based on the findings from the survey, it was ascertained that branding process is a very important milestone in creating the need of purchase based on its correct and careful projection of the features of the product/service. Positive outcomes on customer buying behaviors were found as a result of effective branding strategies. In the light of the research investigation, it was concluded that branding affects and influences the customers' mindsets and their ways of buying a product or service. Branding affects the personal judgement of the customer and helps him make sustained purchasing decisions. Hence, it was recommended that marketers should pay attention towards branding activities, and must make efforts to convey powerful brand messages based on actual product features.

Keywords: *Branding, Consumer behavior*

MARKALAŞMA, MÜŞTERININ DAVRANIŞI NASIL ETKILER

ÖZET

Bu tez için seçilen konu "Markalaşma, müşterinin davranışı nasıl etkiler"di. Bu tezin ana amacı pazarlamacıların, marka mesajlarının geliştirip aynı mesajları kullanan doğru müşteriye ulaştırılması için markalaşmanın Müşteri üzerindeki etkilerini değerlendirmek ve test etmektir. Markalaşma, Son zamanlarda pazarlamanın en başarılı takımının taktikleri olarak gelişmektedir; ki gelecek pazarlamacının öncelikli çalışma alanlarından olmuştur. Pazarlamacıların markalaşma sabit bir etkinlik olarak onun için çabalayıp Marka değeri artırması, şirketin imajını geliştirmesi ve Markalaşmanın müşterinin Psikolojisini ve satın alma Eğmine nasıl bir Etki gösterdiğini Anlaşılması bu araştırmanın yapılmasının gerekçesi olmuştur. Tezin literatür incelmesi, müşterinin davranışlarını etkileyen farklı faktörleri, müşteri odaklı pazarlama ortamında çalışan markaların özelliklerini, etkili pazarlamanın ortamında farklı markaların çeşitli parçalarını ve bir markanın farklı nitelikleri ve imajı Müşterinin tavrına ve satın alma niyetine nasıl bir etkiye sahip olduğunu incelemiştir. Geçmiş araştırmarların değerlendirilmesiyle, markalaşmanın etkinliği ve olumlu satın alma sonuçları arasında kapsmalı bir bağlantı tespit edildi. Bir nicel araştırma metodolijisi ile, Türk alışveriş senaryosunda, müşterilerin markaların tarafında nasıl etkilendiğini öğrenmek için anket tekniğni kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemin büyüklüğü 200 müşteriden oluşan, Türkiye'nin en işlek alışveriş merkezlerden iki tanesi olan Marmara Forum ve Forum İstanbul'da rasgele Seçilmiştir. Veri analiz prosedürleri regresyon, korelasyon, ANOVA ve frekansı dağılmı yazılıma girmek suretiyle elde edilen bir SPSS-tabanlı analiz içeriyordu. anket bulgularına dayanarak markalaşma sürecinin satın alma ihtiyacını yaratmada çok önemli bir faktör olduğunu ve ürün/hizmetin özelliklerinin doğru ve dikkatli projeksiyonuna dayalı olduğunu tespit edildi Müşteri satın alma davranışları üzerinde olumlu sonuçlar, etkili markalaşmanın stratejilerinin bir sonucu olarak bulunmuştur. Araştırmanın soruşturması ışığında markalaşmanın müşterilerinin zihniyetlerini ve bir ürün veya bir hizmet satın alma yollarını etkilediğinin sonucuna varılmıştır. Markalaşma müşterilerinin kişisel yargısını etkiler ve ona sürekli satın alma kararlarında yardımcı olur, Bu nedenle pazarlamacıların markalaşma faaliyetlerine dikkatli olmalıdır ve gerçek ürün özelliklerine dayalı etkili marka mesajlarını iletmek için çaba göstermelerinin gerektiğini tavsiye edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Markalaşma, Tüketici davranışları*

1. INTRODUCTION CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumers around the world comprise of individuals exhibiting different characteristics and behaviors while making a purchase. There are many influencing factors that shape the persona of a consumer, his or her decisions while making the purchase and the choice of the brands. Using different stimuli, an individual makes the final decision of buying something while using his personal judgment, instinct, and other external influences (Morschett, 2001). Marketers find it challenging to learn about these behaviors because different individuals have different tastes and preferences. In an age of increased competition and globalization, marketers need to assess customer demands and choice from every angle so that they develop strategies that can outperform their competitors. A very important task in this regard is segmenting the right market, targeting the right customer and undertaking appropriate positioning tactics to create a sound product image in the minds of the customer (Mullen & Johnson, 2013). By identifying the characteristics and factors that influence their customers, marketers find it easier to develop a convincing message (Unique Selling Point) so as to better meet the needs of their customers and increase revenues for the organization.

1.1 Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

There are various factors that influence consumer behavior- cultural, economic, social, personal and psychological. Although these factors are not directly controlled by the marketing teams, an understanding of these factors and their underlying influences help marketers develop strategies to better facilitate the customers, and in meeting their ever-changing needs and preferences (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2014). It is at this stage that marketers tend to outperform others, in developing this insight and using it to the fullest. Development of marketing mix strategies heavily depends on these insights whereby marketers learn from the success of others, and devise techniques to better incorporate customer feedback and interests in their offerings.

1.1.1 Societal factors

Social factors refer to the outside impact caused by the people that live around us, on our purchasing decisions. This is one of the most significant factors that cause a heavy impact on consumer behavioral tendencies. Social factors include family, reference groups, social status and roles (Lumpkin, 1985).

Reference groups cause a significant impact on consumers' decisions to purchase or not to purchase something. For tangible items such as cars, clothes and shoes, the degree of impact from reference groups can be drastically high. Opinion leaders (or the influencers) are also a part of reference groups whose special expertise or knowledge about a product or service makes their opinions worthwhile (Lumpkin, 1985). Apart from the opinion leader, few other roles within a reference group are given as follows:

- *Initiator:* It is the person who gives the idea of purchasing something or encourages a subsequent buying behavior (Hsu, Chuang & Hsu, 2014).
- *Decision-maker:* It is the person who will make the final decision to make a purchase; usually it is the consumer himself, but in other cases it can also be another individual. For example, in a cricket team, a coach may be a decision maker as to what type of uniform the players should bring along in the next coaching session (Hsu, Chuang & Hsu, 2014).
- *Buyer:* It is the person who will pay a visit to the market to buy the product. It is usually the customer himself but can be another person making the payment or going to receive the item on his behalf.

Family is another facet of society which obviously creates a substantial effect on choices to buy a brand. Family holds a special place in a person's heart, and their opinion and feedback about products usually holds significant meaning and worth, while making an impact on decision-making, as well (Hsu, Chuang & Hsu, 2014). Many examples can be cited as a result of which marketers try to target specific segments of a family if related products are to be promoted; for example, in an advertisement related to household/cooking appliances, a good advertising campaign should telecast women of the family as wives and mothers, who are the actual users of these appliances. Changes in the lifecycle of customers influence his or her buying decision, which is why lifecycle stages

must be taken into sharp focus while developing marketing strategies to cater to these segments (Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2014). While passing through different stages of his life, a customer is greatly influenced by his near and dear ones (members of his family), which is primarily and often the foremost source of feedback he obtains while deciding to make a purchase (Mullen & Johnson, 2013).

Role and status in the society is also an important societal factor that causes an impact on consumer decisions regarding buying. There can be different roles that an individual plays while being a part of the society; he works for an organization, he is a member to different clubs, he belongs to different public groups, his religious ideology and political stance gains him membership to different religious and political associations etc. These statuses of an individual changes how he thinks, and what he buys (Christensen, Siemsen & Balasubramanian, 2015). As an example, if an individual woman works as a social activist in a non-profit organization, she plays two roles altogether- one as a worker for a social cause and second, as a mother to her children at home. Therefore, what this woman buys in her routine life depends heavily on the role she plays and the status in the family that she carries with herself.

1.1.2 Cultural factors

Every society has its own culture which forms a code of conduct of its citizens, while shaping a person's needs and wants. Every culture varies from region to region and country to country which is why marketers should especially study and evaluate region specifics and demography while developing strategies for a particular geographic area (Christensen, Siemsen & Balasubramanian, 2015). However, culture is not an easy factor that must be assessed; it is pertinent to study the issues at hand, so that the concerned personnel can come up with the most appropriate strategies for a particular cultural boundary. Consumers belonging to a specific culture think according to some "norms" which can be defined as broad boundaries that are set by the culture to describe approvable ways of acting and thinking by its members. A violation or deviation from these norms results in social disapproval or deportation. While some norms qualify an individual to specific rewards that are explicit in nature, others may be practiced without rewards, as well. This is why societal education and entertainment systems assist their youth in

socialization process so as to shape an appropriate consumer behavior (Christensen, Siemsen & Balasubramanian, 2015).

Consumers within a society normally do not know how cultural norms and customs influence them. They simply adhere to certain practices, and act in specific ways simply because it feels right to them. This gives an explanation why certain actions of an individual are deemed fit in one culture while being thoroughly offensive in another. Another issue at hand is that culture penetrates from one generation to another through family members and religion. Moreover, culture is mostly adaptive (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). With the evolution of a culture, it may be possible that certain products are associated to specific values of society or in other case; certain products are simply discontinued to be used simply because they no longer gratify those values of the society. This trend gives rise to cultural borrowings which is simply a result of adopting others' cultures because this adaptation can help resolve their own society's issues. As an example, South African people can adopt the fashion trends as practiced in Europe. Culture is indeed, a very holistic concept that impacts upon the ways in which customers work. There are various interactions around a person's culture (Hopkins, 2007). While making purchases at a retail store for example, a consumer does not know to what extent his culture can impact on his decisions. In this regard, it is essential to note that a culture forms common behaviors and teaches values to an individual which are utilized in the consumer decision-making process. There are certain cultural factors inherent to each society, which shapes the habits of its people, their preferences, and behaviors along with their attitudes. A good example of adaptation to cultural specificities is McDonald's (Hopkins, 2007). The fast-food giant has learnt about various cultural traditions across the world, and has accordingly catered to their needs of fast food. Personalized meal plans based on the cultural preference of each culture, for example in France, India and Japan, have been a source of the organization's popularity that devotedly caters to each market with meals and burgers according to its own tastes.

Every culture has its own subculture which comprises of nationalities, racial groups, religions and geographic areas. People belonging to a specific subculture share common perceptions and their ideologies are similar to each other (Hopkins, 2007). Common

experiences and outlook of life leads to shared perceptions and beliefs which is why evaluating a subculture can translate into developing an understanding about its entire population. Marketers can identify and analyze the characteristic of each subculture to devise strategies based on dividing each segment into small portions. An example can be the evolution and rise in the usage of ethnic cosmetics in recent times for non-Caucasian populations.

Social classes are homogeneous groups within a society which are ranked against a form of societal hierarchy. A social class, no matter if it is big or small, is indicative of similar behaviors and attitudes amongst its people who share similar beliefs, as well. Every society has some form of social class which poses substantial significance to its people and is a matter of great importance to its marketer (Howell & Rogers, 1983). To 'tailor-make' strategies that can cater to different social class is challenging for marketers since one poorly-constructed strategy can ruin the entire market segment. Hence, social classes should be studied in great depth, so that marketing activities could be tailored according to specific social class (Howell & Rogers, 1983). Some characteristics of social class help marketers in evaluating the behaviors of its consumers; for example, a person belonging to lower social class is more price-conscious because of a restricted income scale. On the other hand, as noted by Hopkins (2007), shoppers belonging to higher social class are more inclined to other features such as the quality of the product, its durability, innovative aspects and others.

Cultural trends are highly penetrative in the markets whereby consumers adhere to these simply due to their popularity or as a result of social pressure (Howell & Rogers, 1983). Various smart phones today have become a must-have for the youngsters who find these a status symbol. Moreover, Facebook and Twitter are social media platforms which have predominantly become a cultural trend to the extent that consumers share their product experiences on these platforms and follow the companies to learn about their happenings, offerings and their concern for the society (and their Corporate Social Responsibility). It is this bandwagon effect and cultural trend that compels many consumers to buy things they may not actually need (Howell & Rogers, 1983).

1.1.3 Economic and income-based factors

Consumer's economic situation holds utmost significance in impacting upon his buying behavior. In cases where consumers have high savings and have a higher pay scale, they are more inclined at buying expensive products and services (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2009). On the other hand, when consumers do not have much to expend, they tend to buy products that are cost-effective or economical. Similarly, in countries where income levels are comparatively lower, products and services follow discounting as a marketing strategy to attract more consumers by showing the 'economical' side of product utility (Lumpkin, 1985). Based on income level, number of essential expenditures (food, schooling, transport, recreation) along with the savings, consumers exhibit different inclinations towards buying luxury products or specialty goods.

1.1.4 Personal characteristics

Some of the personal factors that essentially influence consumer behavior include age, occupation, lifestyle, personality and self-concept. Age or life cycle stage is an important concept with respect to studying consumer behaviors. With the passage of time, a consumer changes his buying behaviors, and may not use a product anymore (Howell & Rogers, 1983). For example, a youngster's needs and wants may differ from a married couple's. There are a lot of life cycle stages that should be brought into consideration while marketers promote their goods. Consumers may switch from energy drinks (consumed usually during adolescence or teenage) to dairy-based products as they turn 50 years or above. Occupations influence how consumers make decisions regarding their purchase. For example, people belonging to white-collar jobs and occupations such as engineering, lawyers and doctors buy formal clothes, businessmen buy suiting for business meetings so as low-paid wearers who may buy rugged or rough clothes for their daily task duties (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2009).

Lifestyle is composed of interests, opinions, behaviors, values and opinions of a consumer. Lifestyles influence how people make purchasing choice, and also tend to cause an effect on their overall consumption pattern (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). For example, a health-conscious individual who is a member to a fitness club will buy clothes and joggers more often that can help him or her maintain a healthy regime. On the other hand, someone who

is not health-conscious or a 'foodie' is more focused towards buying fatty foods or unhealthy products such as cigarettes and cold drinks without any consideration.

Personality is a set of characteristics and traits that results in constant behaviors. It is the interaction of psychological and physiological factors that forms an individual's self. Traits such as adaptability, openness to others, shyness, aggressiveness, confidentiality and others result from an individual's self (Howell & Rogers, 1983). Self-concept on the other hand, is an image a person has of himself and the image or outlook he needs to convey to others about his own self. In marketing context, self-concept refers to important insight for the marketers who must know what image an individual carries of himself (Christensen, Siemsen & Balasubramanian, 2015).

1.1.5 Psychological factors

Psychological factors such as motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes are important elements that shape a consumer's decision to buy something. Motivation is an essential element that directs an individual to seek satisfaction. Every individual has some needs such as biological, social, physiological and other needs. When these needs are most pressing, they direct an individual towards buying a brand or availing a service. For example, an individual's need for pure water compels him to purchase a water purifier or a dispenser that can provide uncontaminated water round-the-clock (Christensen, Siemsen & Balasubramanian, 2015). Motivation is mostly difficult to measure through it works in the subconscious of a person's mind. Building a purchase motivation is the ultimate goal of marketers who need to "create" needs amongst customers so that they buy more of a product. For example, juices in hot weather is not a need in front of cold water; yet, marketers should create and promote the healthy benefits of juices in such a manner that it appears to become a need of the customers.

1.2 Consumer Decision-Making Process and its Types

Engel, Blackwell and Kollat, in the year 1968, developed a decision-making process by studying how customers go through a sequential series of steps before they eventually purchase something (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). Following are the five (05) steps of consumer decision-making process:

1. *Need Recognition / Problem Identification:* The first step in consumer decision-making process is that of recognizing the need to buy something or identify a problem that needs to be satisfied. When there is a gap between customer's actual situation and the desired situation, he usually goes to the market to satisfy that need or resolve that problem. Need recognition can be caused in three distinct ways:

   - Internal Stimuli- It creates a desire that is not suppressible such as hunger or thirst as opposed to external stimuli. An example can be the smell of a freshly-baked sponge cake while passing by a bakery; it will compel the person to go for it and make a purchase by entering the bakery. The sight of a beautiful dress in a boutique that stimulates an individual to purchase it, as also an example of internal stimuli.

   - Function Need/ Social Need/ Need for Change- Functional need arises as a result of specific product attributes or features that is an answer to a functional problem (Morschett, 2001). The functional benefit of a washing machine that provides a replacement of having to wash clothes by hand is a motivation that persuades a person to purchase the appliance to satisfy his functional need. Social need, on the other hand, is the need for social integration and belongingness. This need arises as a result of acquiring social approval and applause. For example, buying a luxury car to portray a successful image in life. Need for change arises from a motivation that things surrounding a person must "change" or alter. For example, buying new furniture for your apartment simply because old ones do not look trendy anymore (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001).

   - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs- According to Maslow, there is a certain hierarchy of needs that an individual must satisfy based on physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem and self-actualization needs.

2. *Information Search:* The next step in the consumer decision-making process is that of a thorough search for all possible information once the need to purchase something has been recognized. Depending upon the complexity of the product or service to be bought, customer's level of involvement and amount of information

for the purchase can vary (Morschett, 2001). In cases where a routine product or a simplified solution is needed, the customer will not search for more information and will not involve very much. For example, buying a refrigerator is more complex than buying a packet of French fries; hence, in buying a refrigerator the customer will gather more and more information, and will involve himself in the course. Information search can be of two types: Internal and External. Internal Information is psychologically the customer's own opinion about the brand or the knowledge he already possess in his memory. In case of routine food items and grocery including Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), customer mainly relies on internal information which is sufficient enough to make a final choice (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2009). In other cases, where nature of product is complex or very an occasional buying is about to take place, he gather external information that is based on the opinions/feedbacks and knowledge provided by familial relations or friends. Customer's family, peers or friends usually provide this information based on seller's speeches, promotional campaigns or after seeing some advertisement (Rook, 1985).

3. *Evaluation of Alternatives:* During this phase, the consumer evaluates the alternatives based on their objective and subjective characteristics, and then would reach a final choice he thinks is best for him. This evaluation varies from consumer to consumer as when a customer evaluates the set of choices before him, there can be a number of internal or external factors that influences him in choosing 'the best one' (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). The number of options under consideration during this phase depends upon the complexity of the product; the more the product is essential to buy, the more involved the consumer will be and the more he will consider each option as being important, and vice versa.

4. *Purchase Decision:* This is the stage where the actual purchase takes place; now that the consumer has evaluated all alternatives, and was able to choose the one he deems most appropriate. Purchase decision will entirely depend upon his choice during the last phase while he evaluated the features or attributes of the products, its functionality and the perceived value/worth. However, it must be noted that the purchase decision may also be influenced by experiences while making the actual

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purchase for example, the ambience of the store, its accessibility, a conflict with the store manager, the terms and conditions tied to a product scheme, returning or exchanging policies, an inability to locate related options on an online website and so on.

5. *Post-Purchase Behavior:* An evaluation of customer's own satisfaction level, after the product is bought and used, leads him towards a post-purchase behavior where adequacy of needs is assessed. If the product meets or exceeds the expectations of the customer, he will feel satisfied; likewise, if the product is disappointing, the customer will be left desiring for more, and will hence, be dissatisfied. A satisfied customer turns into a loyal prospect for the company; which is why companies are majorly concerned about leaving a positive post-purchase impression on the minds of the customer. A loyal customer will eventually make repeated purchases of the same item, and will not involve in the process this much the next time. Marketers are especially interested in creating a positive shopping experience of the customer solely based on his satisfaction from the product or service (Rook, 1985). In this case, consumers are often required to provide their feedbacks on social media platforms such as Face book, or even respond to calls from the management asking if they liked what they purchased.

While understanding the consumer buying behavior, it is pertinent to see that there is no purchase if there is no need. In case there is no need for a subsequent purchase, brands are concerned with creating one! This is attributed to the fact that without a stimuli or desire to engage in purchasing, a person may not turn into a brand's user or consumer. Triggering the buying behavior is hence, a crucial task for the brands (Schmitt, 2012). Television commercials is a source of need 'created' by brands which must focus on making a consumer out of a general viewer. Whether psychological, social, change-related or functional, it is the task for a brand to recall or activate the need to buy something through a forceful advertisement or promotional campaign.

Everyday products such as the FMCGs have low level of differentiation, and therefore, customer does not consider a lot of alternatives (choices) before buying one. Customers, for example, while purchasing toothpaste might just recall few good names, and choose

one out of those, only. This concept is called Top-of-Mind Awareness (TOBA) (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). Therefore, in case of FMCGs, branding plays a crucial role in compelling a customer towards a purchase. Here, brand awareness and knowledge plays an important role in influencing the consumer to purchase a brand.

During the stage of "product evaluation", customer looks for tangible and concrete information for product attributes and features so that their decision regarding a feasible option is easy-to-make. This is especially necessary for products involving a low level of involvement. This is the brand's interest to provide concrete information, and comprehensive product attributes so that the added value, as compared to competing firms, must be known to the customer (Solomon, Dahl, White, Zaichkowsky & Polegato, 2014). This will create a positive impression on the customer, and eventually would lead him towards making the rightest decision. Optimizing the shopping experience for consumers is a challenging task for marketers since they know about a couple of solutions that are targets to the company for the phase of need 'creation' to the final 'post-purchase' behavior.

1.3 Shopping Behaviors and Activities

In recent times, consumers are increasingly inclined towards having the best of both worlds: in-store shopping services from brick-and-mortar retailers to shopping online through various websites. Shopping is a multipurpose activity in which buyers meet sellers at pre-defined or concrete platforms (be it on an online website or at a store) to buy goods or services for satisfying their needs (Solomon et.al, 2014). The study of consumer behavior leads to various insights regarding consumer shopping experiences, their behaviors and attitudes towards the place/channel of shopping, their feedback about ambience and store services, and their overall experience regarding the staff, space and other shoppers (Solomon et.al, 2014). Shopping orientations mean that consumers convey or exhibit different interests, opinions, attitudes and behaviors regarding the shopping process, which must be assessed so that a "positive" and "profitable" relationship is created by every brand. Different shopping behaviors lead to different important questions to be considered; one of the foremost challenges for a brand is to ensure presence and

popularity on both platforms (physical and online) while developing a smooth environment for transactions. A recent trend in shopping behaviors and activities is that consumers now want the in-store experience to be similar to online shopping, where they can avail more transparency in terms of pricing of the products along with having visible offers and freedom to interact with other consumers for consultation before the purchase (Solomon et.al, 2014).

1.3.1 In-store or brick-and-mortar shopping behaviors

Shopping behaviors bring consumers to stores so as to satisfy their needs. The time and money spent in shopping are measureable factors that help marketers understand the entire shopping behavior and can learn from them. Brick-and-mortar or in-stores have more responsibility than price matching; they need to create a lasting experience from the time a consumer enters the store till the time he departs with the product or even, without it (Rook, 1985). Stores have the responsibility to attract more consumers and empower them to shop as they want; this requires treating each individual shopper as unique. Through categorizing each consumer under different shopping behaviors, marketers can better study their interests and preference while advising the store management on ways of improving the experience (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). Hence, a successful retail concept entails defining the relationship between a customer and a retailer while enabling improvements in the experiences for a win-win situation. It is important to consider the factors responsible for making a retail store "attractive" as compared to others, so that marketers can assess the difference, and gain insights before a partnering relationship could be established. In-store experience allows connecting personally with the consumer, which in itself, is an invaluable circumstance provided the staff does it well (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). Consumers prefer touching the products and feeling or noticing its attributes while making a mental comparison based on what they heard or read about it. Studies also show that consumers like to see mirrors around them in a store where they can readily see how they look when they put the product on (especially in fashion industry retails while buying apparels, foot wears, special uniforms, spectacles, jewelry, and other accessories (Schmitt, 2012). Consumers like talking to employees in an attempt to learn about the product or the brand while engagement with other shoppers seems a happy

experience, as well. Moreover, the discovery of more bargains on reaching the store pleases a consumer, and most often results in a purchase, to his utmost happiness and satisfaction. Discovery of bargains and discounted offers also have the capability to turn window shoppers into buyers, being an impulsive attraction that is very noticeable (Rook, 1985). Employees as salesman, cashier or store managers need to be trained enough in terms of receiving the customer/client, treating them as they want to be treated and providing holistic information as required. Working on these fronts, brand can create lasting sales experiences while enriching the overall shopping process of the consumer, as well.

1.3.2 Mobile and internet shopping

With the advent of technology and the Internet, the world has truly come on to our fingertips. Internet usage has become inevitable for all of us; now we can communicate with people living in any part of the world and can send emails in no time. The effects of the Internet are also visible on business activities where buyers can easily connect with sellers irrespective of the location of the shop. Internet shopping is a latest trend where many consumers are shifting from in-store or offline shopping forums to e-commerce, while sitting in the comforts of their homes or workplaces. It is convenient to find items on the Internet, much easy than it was in an in-store having different sections for each category of products. Consumers can frequently engage in online shopping, making it a hassle-free option provided an uninterrupted Internet protocol is available. There is more information about the selected product on online mediums while consumers have a wider choice to compare product attributes and prices.

While consumers are increasingly seeking speed and convenience, online shopping platforms are found to be significantly more satisfactory for these users. However, there are still some issues that can impede online shopping making consumers feel threatened or unsafe. Owing to major differences in marketing communication and shopping strategies applicable at various online and offline forums, marketers need to gauge this difference and develop tactics accordingly. With respect to online marketing communication, consumers are attracted to see promotions and banner ads that stimulate their interests towards certain products. Before making a decision to purchase something,

they will need to acquire additional information about products and services. Online catalogs and search engines are online information repositories that can provide this additional information, giving the freedom to consumers to select the final product as per their needs. New forms of electronic retailing (e-tailing) strongly encourage the customer to search for information, product reviews and connect with other users for product-related discussions.

Web-shopping or mobile shopping behaviors, as compared to traditional buying behaviors, have been less formal and provide an opportunity for extensive interaction. Convenience, information accessibility, availability of products and services, and cost and time efficiency are four factors that motivate consumers to buy online. Online shopping channels are opened round-the-clock as compared to a brick-and-mortar shopping store which has limited operational time. Even long after the business hours, consumers can interact with sellers, ask about their products and latest offerings (e.g. discount offers and return policies) and obtain necessary sales support and services. Since consumers do not want to be manipulated and controlled in a marketplace, they avoid interacting with salesmen so that they do not feel any pressure. Consumers in an online medium can access information readily, which is why even for an offline shopping, consumers search through available search engines to learn about products and their attributes. During the phase of information search, they seek information from the Internet. The variety of products and services online are extensively more than what is available in a brick-and-mortar shopping environment (Schmitt, 2012). Even traditional retailers prefer selling certain products online in an attempt to provide more variety for size, color and other features while enjoying the benefits of cost-effectiveness in their retailing expenditures.

Websites such as ebay.com provides solutions to consumers by offering auction or best offer option, making it cost-effective for the end-user. Sparing the consumer the hassle for having to find out parking spots and wait in endless queues, online and mobile shopping saves time and efforts that are unnecessarily spent otherwise (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001).

1.4 Types of Consumer Buying Behavior

Consumer purchase decisions vary from buying routine items such as tea and sugar to purchasing larger items such as a house or office space. Once they recognize a need that

has to be fulfilled, consumers begin searching for products that may fit in those needs (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2009). They evaluate all given options from product pricing to a brand's reputation in the market, they finally choose one item that best suits or matches their preference. Product purchase decision can be discussed through studying four types of consumer buying behaviors.

1.4.1 Impulse purchases

Purchasing a product on the spot without any forethought is referred to as impulse purchasing behaviors. As an example, you might find a roll of tape at a check-out in a store and recall you wanted to have one (Sheth, 2011). This is known as impulsive buying behavior when something catches the consumer's eye and he ends up purchasing it. Impulse buying behavior is closely related to the concept of level of involvement which describes the amount and quality of attention with which a consumer buys something; although impulse buying does not always result from low-involvements, in most case, it does. The products that are impulsive bought usually carry the least risk while they are fairly economical in most cases (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2009). Chewing gum, a lip moisturizer or a packet of chips can be cited as examples where the consumer can impulsive buy these things without a second thought or consideration.

1.4.2 Routine purchases

Products that are bought on a routine basis be it once a day, weekly or monthly, are referred to as a routine purchase. Purchasing confectionary, bread, milk and cheese from a nearby convenience store or supermarket are examples of routine purchases which are not specifically preplanned. In routine purchases, a customer normally does not consult with others and does not read review about a product before actually purchasing it (Rook, 1985).

1.4.3 Extensive decision making

High-priced products or major purchases ranging from electronics to automobiles and housing require extensive decision-making and planning (Sheth, 2011). Consumers pay special attention towards these purchases, and spend a great deal of time and effort reading reviews and consulting their friends and family about the purchasing options (Sheth,

2011). They even review the online ratings for the product and interact with other buyers who already possess the item. Since this requires a lot of monetary investment, these decisions lasts longer than usual.

1.4.4 Limited decision making

Limited decision-making is undertaken where the products are comparatively not high-priced; for example, before appearing for an official presentation, a professional may seek advice from a trusted colleague to learn about a new clothing brand (Rook, 1985). However, with the time available at hand, such decisions do not last longer and the involvement level is also not high.

1.5 Conclusive Remarks

The study of consumer behavior and related concepts entails important insights for brands and marketers, alike. Market researchers need to assess each and every aspect of consumer buying behaviors so that appropriate strategies can be developed to attract them and create a profitable relationship with them. Beginning from need identification to the final stage of exhibiting a post-purchase behavior, consumers are fairly unpredictable. It is recommended that every individual should be treated as a unique customer whose needs, interests, values and preferences change with time. In the next session, the researcher aims to examine and evaluate the role and challenges of brands in influencing consumer behaviors positively and profitably.

2. BRANDING

2.1 Definitions of Brands in Marketing Contexts

Different definitions of brands have been given by visionary leaders and marketers across the world to describe the features, purpose and usefulness of brands. Let us now see some of the definitions given in order to define brands in different marketing contexts:

According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is defined as "A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name."

Marketing Guru Phillip Kotler, the author of the famous book Marketing Management defined brand in these words: "A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitor". This is perhaps the most widely-quoted and cited definition of brands which holistically defines the concept along with illustrating its usefulness for organizations in today's business world (Kapferer, 2004).

Jay Baer, the co-author of the book The Now Revolution defined brand as the alignment between what you want the customers to think about the company/product and what they actually think about it, and vice versa.

Seth Godin, the author of Linchpin defined brand as stories, relationships, expectations and memories which, taken collectively, accounts for a customer's decision to choose one product over another. If the customer does not pay a premium or spread the word about

the product then no brand value exists for that customer (as stated in Varadarajan, DeFanti & Busch, 2006).

Al Ries, defined brand as an idea or concept that you own in the minds of prospects who may become consumers to your products, in his book Positioning: the Battle for Your Mind.

Another definition of brands can be the one given by Jeffrey Harmon in his book Orabrush. According to Harmon, attention is a scarce resource that takes effort to gain. Branding is a process where marketers make an effort to win this attention.

In his bestseller namely *Real-Time Marketing and PR*, David Meerman Scott defined brands in a rather cynical and humorous manner saying that branding is an ineffective activity that marketers undertake to look occupied and busy (Varadarajan, DeFanti & Busch, 2006).

Ashley Friedlein, in his insightful book *Econsultancy*, a brand is the sum total of how an individual perceives a specific product, service or an organization. Branding is the process of shaping that perception and forming a positive mindset about an offering.

There are various definitions of branding in marketing context that are used interchangeably, but what is essential to know is that each definition is consistent in building and developing brands as competitive tools. Brands are the source of power and influence in an era where a plethora of information has almost confused the buyer in a social media eco-system. What is important for the marketers is to develop and maintain a relationship with the customers through positive associations with the brand using strong and forceful positioning strategy. The establishment of brands is of multiple benefits to the end-user provided that is based on and revolves around valid product attributes that must convey a strong commitment of the organization towards their customers (Varadarajan, DeFanti & Busch, 2006).

The three basic functions of a brand- navigation, reassurance and engagement say a lot about the entire branding process (Kapferer, 2004). Navigation is the skimming through of information under each consumer category where the consumer finds the best fit for himself in order to meet his needs and wants. Reassurance is the function where brands

convey information to the consumers regarding the essentiality of the product and establishes upon their qualitative features. The third basic function is in itself, the final destination that a marketer looks for. Using distinctiveness in its imagery, brands cultivate a loyal relationship and help their consumers to identify with the brand. Without carefully understanding these three basic functions of a brand, the effectiveness of a certain definition and its feasibility cannot be developed (Holt, 2004). The section Functions of brands in a customer-centric environment further illustrates the strategic functions of a brand in a business world where customer is certainly the king.

2.2 Components of Brand Value

The Business Owner's Toolkit defines brand value as the relationship between a brand's qualities to its price. In a general context, brand value denotes the influence of the brand name on other attributes of the marketing mix such as the influence of the brand name on the product itself. Branding is an essential process in the product strategy simply because the brand value changes as the product matures, grows or dies down. Brand equity, as denoted by what one gets in return for the money paid for the brand, is an important source of achieving competitive advantage in a global world (Varadarajan, DeFanti & Busch, 2006). When brand equity is relatively high, marketing costs greatly reduce as the brand awareness and loyalty is already established therefore, providing the customers with trade leverage when they deal with the retailers. Since a brand has higher perceived quality, it allows the organization to charge high prices for their products compared to that of their competitors. Moreover, since brand equity is difficult to imitate, and cannot be reverse-engineered; it is definitely a source of competitive advantage for a company in the longer-run. Intangible components of brand value such as brand equity are an important source of generating clear-cut revenues over time. The strongest brands in the world were created using the thought that while routine business activities may only focus on revenue generation, creating a brand equity is instead, based on stimulating customer's identification with the product that can build and sustain loyalty in the longer-run (Moore & Reid, 2008).

Stronger brand equity is established through a successful communication of the brand performance to the targeted population. In this communication, there are some essential ingredients or factors that must be conveyed in order to establish a positive customer experience, or at least, commit towards establishing a positive brand value in the end. Keller identified areas that must be communicated: primary and supplementary features including durability of the product, product reliability, efficiency and empathy, price, product design and service effectiveness. It is essential that these features are clearly laid out and elaborated in conveying a brand name or brand theme that creates mass-appeal. Another essential component of brand value is brand imagery in which the organization makes an attempt to meet the social and psychological needs of consumers (Holt, 2004). In creating a strong image and perception of the brand, advertisement, word-of-mouth and customer experiences play a pivotal role. Different brand performance and imagery associations, taken together form important brand judgments and feelings. There can be more than one judgment made about a certain product, and together, these judgments form customer's opinion or final decision regarding the product. Out of these, four judgments should really be attended to, in the words of Keller (stated in Kapferer, 1992)- brand credibility (the trustworthiness of the brand and the perceived likeness for it), brand superiority (the degree to which customer thinks that a specific brand is better than the rest), brand consideration (the relevance of the brand to the extent that consumers find it useful) and the perceived quality of the brand. Four components of brand value are described hereunder:

1. *Reputation value:* Brands help in shaping perceived quality of products. Brands indicate the durability, originality, reliability and other features of a product that signals the customer to have due confidence in the product and buy it. Brands are containers of reputation that serves as a signaling mechanism which can result in both positive and negative product experiences.

2. *Relationship value:* Brands help in shaping and cultivating relationships between the buyer and the seller. Brands communicate that the product will continue to provide the utilitarian goal to the consumer so that the consumer can use that product for a longer time period. In such a way, through conveying product

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features and usefulness, brands help create sustained connotations and associations with the product while customer loyalty enhances.

3. *Experiential value:* Brands help shaping experiences of the consumer by highlighting the key benefits of a product over a defined time period. Brands save the customer the search costs and the continuous need of having to search through different information to make the final choice.

4. *Symbolic value:* Brands express identities and values. Aspirational social identities are conveyed through brands; for example, a smart phone had been associated on various instances with status symbol and a lifestyle in its own. Thus, consumers use brands to create and maintain social distinctions and to form social claims in an overly-glamorized world (Kapferer, 1992).

2.3 Evolution of Branding

As compared to the decades of the 1970s where products were primarily developed using a manufacturing point-of-view, the focus has lately been shifted to consumers using insights from them before making the product or adding extended features to existing ones (Farquhar, 1995). Since then, marketing assumed a more encompassing role where consumer preferences, interests and demands are prioritized for product development and other ideas. There has been a drastic addition to branding parameters since the time the importance and significance of brands have been realized by the marketers. The entire idea behind branding can be summarized in the following quote:

"Products are made in the factory; brands are created in the mind" - Walter Landor

Over time, the role of brands and the entire branding process has undergone constant review and re-evaluation. Kotler provided one of the most typical definitions of a brand that is used even today: "A brand is a name that is associated with one or more products in the product line that is used to distinguish the character of the item". In this sense, any product that carries a name or a distinctive logo with it, a brand is said to have been created. However, today's branding and brands have been much more than only 'identifiers' or 'distinguishers' to make a difference to an offered product or service (Farquhar, 1995). Once seen as an off-hand activity in the marketing strategy development

has now been one of the most essential concerns for marketers- the building of brands and maintaining its standard/claim.

Branding has evolved into an important issue in the product strategy- one that requires appropriate consideration for an effective development and retention. Branding is considered as the foremost step in the marketing strategy development whereby organizations must develop ways and means to enable customers identify with their products and maintain a lasting association with it (Farquhar, 1995). It is the organization's communication strategy that works in exposing the brand to the market and conveying the supportive attributes hence, building a brand image. The traditional branding model was only limited to the creation of an image related to the brand in the minds of the consumers. It therefore, emerged as a strategic element that can drive results in the short run (Holt, 2004). It was mentioned that a brand would serve as an identifier for the product that will unveil or expose its hidden qualities; ones that are indirect, or does not result from a direct contact with the customer. In shifting from product-specific to customer-specific brands, organizations have been more focused towards a transitional concept of segment-specific branding which enables an entire product segment to identify with the product based on their similarity of habits and product usage concepts. For example, Nike targets consumers that are physically-active and energetic. In this sense, the power of specific consumer segment can be understood.

A brand can distinguish a product based on its tangible or intangible benefits. Based on its rational and irrational benefits, while on one hand, the product performs its basic function; the brand contributes to its differentiation. These dimensions identify the product, and give it a specific image to relate to (Kapferer, 1992). A powerful branding allows the customer multiple contact points by attracting him towards both the tangible or intangible benefits of the product. A brand can be used to communicate the tangible benefits of the product such as price, innovation, quality etc. which are observable from the marketing mix of the product or its performance. On the other hand, intangible benefits are those that cannot be quantified or measured in a way that consumers will be able to relate to the product without its physical presence. In this way, a rapport or association may be developed between the brand and the customer even long before it could be used.

A very substantive benefit of a brand is that it will save the customer the search cost and time in looking for a suitable product while he is confronted with identical or similar products. This way, searching costs would greatly be reduced, and the customer can easily choose the final set of product to satisfy his/her need. The time taken to process the information and reach a final decision would hence, be less than a traditional buying process takes. Through the label, package or the brand name, customer will be able to form association with the brand and relate to it. Successful brands stand out for a product, and support the credibility of the brand (Kapferer, 1992). Being a signal for the quality, reliability and strength of a product, strong brands reduce the purchasing risks and other risks such as the product's functionality, its social, physical and psychological risks and so on.

2.3.1 Corporate branding

The importance of corporate brands cannot be denied in the business environment of the twenty-first century. Given the market concentration and financial burdens surrounding the business market nowadays, organizations need to represent a clear message to their prospective and existing customers. The objective of corporate branding is same as that of product branding- to create differentiation and preference. However, it is more complex for marketers to manage communication for corporate branding rather than product branding because stakeholders' interactions are diverse and require more efforts to sustain in a dynamic world. Organizations are intangible to its audience unlike products except for its employees. Likewise, organizational image is created from an individual's perception about it using the brand as a representative through which the image is created. The complexity of relationships and continuity further creates issues for organizational branding as opposed to product branding. The extent to which an organization is responsible towards its environment is also very high unlike product branding. Organizational branding creates favorability for the products and presents a social seal of approval and acclaim for the entity (Holt, 2004).

2.3.2 Customer-centric branding

Traditional product brand organizations have transformed into segment-specific brands where customer preferences are prioritized before any strategy is developed. Brand

experience in a customer-centric business environment comes from customer's interaction with the brand. Successful brand experience means that the customer is exposed to the product attributes in a successful manner, therefore, the customer experiences a positive association with the brand altogether. A customer's total brand experience determines whether or not the customer only uses the product or also creates positive word-of-mouth about it to as many people as possible. Thus, the brand experience also moves the customer up the stage of being a mere user of the product to the level of being utterly loyal towards it (Kapferer, 1992).

2.4 Branding in the Digital Age: its Pros and Cons

Many people believe that with rapid advancements in technology in the coming era, the importance of branding will start to diminish. However, this remains a falsified myth since as technology marched onwards; a clutter has engulfed the consumers from each direction. In this age of information overload, marketers find it more significant to build brands that can invoke loyalty and inspire them. Offline commercial benefits have greatly been reduced since the advent of e-commerce activities that have transformed the ways in which customers shop and give feedback regarding their brand experiences. The role of branding in the digital age is multifaceted, and requires much attention and effort before it could be used for market capitalization in a dynamic marketplace. In an attempt to attract the right customer for its product, an organization needs to be constantly attentive towards three critical stages of the customer acquisition process; awareness, learning and persuasion. Given the digital age, it is very easy for customer to obtain all necessary and not-so-necessary- information about a company while sometimes, the individual falls prey to inauthentic or unconfirmed "buzz" related to products (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). In an age where word-of-mouth has been easier to spread than ever before, marketers need to be mindful about ways to bring the customer to the "right" set of news or information related to the company so that his first impressions are not harmed. Similarly, branding in the digital age using social media has been on an all-time high; companies have been exposed to multiple contact points which is why reaching out to the customer is no Herculean task anymore. Creating a strong online presence and distinguishing the product line from its competitors has naturally come as a challenge for marketers who are now

playing dual roles- the role of product promoters and the role of creating a sustained organizational branding in today's marketplace.

In today's digital age, brands have evolved to be critical and strategic tools for attaining competitive advantage for the company; it can no longer perceived to be only an advertising tool. Emerging information and process technologies such as the Customer Relationship Management and the Internet have translated into a number of lucrative opportunities that paves the way for marketers to establish strong branding relationships with its potential and existing customers (Blamer, 1997). It is now up to the marketers whether they leave the brand struggling in an emerging, global era or strive to create a unique presence for it.

2.5 Brands and its Dimensions

2.5.1 Brand equity

Brand equity is a set of liability or asset which a customer has in his mind when he develops and store favorable or unique associations with the brand in his mind. It comprises of loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and association with the brand. Brand association is a perceived emotional expression in the customer's mind. This association is affected by brand awareness that influences how customers make decisions (Farquhar, 1995). There are three different perspectives of brand equity including the theoretical, practical and strategic perspectives through which different brand associations can be linked with equity. Brand equity can be measured using direct and indirect approaches. The indirect approach measures brand equity through evaluating the brand knowledge. There are various qualitative and quantitative methods to determine brand knowledge and in turn, measure brand equity. The direct approach, on the other hand, is related to the assessment of the effect of brand knowledge on the responses of customer (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The direct approach to measure brand equity can be based on both comparative or holistic assessments where comparative methods are either brand or marketing based, and where a conjoint analysis is applied. Holistic methods approach can further be classified as residual or valuation approach methods through which brand equity can be measured.

Brand awareness, perceived quality and loyalty possess a strong link with brand association. It is the customer's response towards brand association that is the most difficult to measure. Moreover, patents and other proprietary brand assets are also not easily measureable. While assessing the brand value, it is the brand loyalty that is most important to measure since loyalty results into more profitability for the organization. It is one of the most intriguing challenges for new entrants into an industry and forms the basis for a price premium. Loyal customers do not switch to their competitors, and engage in repeated purchase of the same brand for a prolonged time period (Farquhar, 1995). The more loyal a customer is towards a brand, the higher the brand equity there will be. Another dimension of brand value that can influence a customer to choose certain product or service is perceived brand quality. It is defined as the customer's overall perception regarding the superiority of a product in comparison to its alternative with respect to its purpose and usability. The unique needs of a customer, his experience and pricing situations are all factors that may impact upon his perception of the brand quality (Blamer, 1997). Perceived product quality is a subjective measure rather than being objective since it is based on a customer's own perception or belief regarding his choice of product attributes as compared to similar items in the market which can also affect his satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels. Perceived product quality is therefore, linked with brand equity; and the greater the perceived quality, the higher the brand equity (Holt, 2004).

2.5.2 Brand association

Brand association reflects the idea or opinion about a product and its applications in the memory of a customer. Associations with brands reflect professional or social positions and are used to exhibit lifestyles. These associations of different brands are basically the customer's perception regarding the quality of a brand and varying attitudes towards it. Although there are multi-dimensional perceptions of a customer about a certain brand, many of these perceptions appear to be similar. It is in this sense that marketers opine that brand's image positioning is a more challenging task for a marketer than the product's real characteristics or features (Kapferer, 1992). Brand association is also closely linked with brand equity. A strong brand association helps form greater brand equity and vice

versa. Like perceived quality of a product, brand association also brings about positive impact on customer satisfaction within his product experiences.

2.5.3 Brand identity

Brand identity is a set of functional and cognitive associations that a brand aims to maintain before its target market. Brand identities imply certain promises to its customers, and show how the brand hopes to stand before its target customers. Corporate brands as an example, aims to create a strong corporate image in the eyes of its stakeholders. Confronted with fierce market competition, it is the brand identity and perception in the minds of its customer that helps it stay distinguished as compared to other competing offerings. It is the company's responsibility to convey its identity in a compelling manner so that a positive customer understanding is developed and sustained (Kapferer, 2004).

2.5.4 Brand image

Brand image is a very significant concept from both the company's and the customer's perspectives. The approach of a successful organization is focused towards its marketing tactics and activities that tend to strengthen or enhance its brand image. Customer's approach towards the brand is eloquent from their perception regarding the brand's image and its equity. A brand's significance and worth in the market is influenced by how the customers perceive the brand and how they interpret the image that the brand aims to convey (Kapferer, 2004).

2.6 Functions of Brands in a Customer-Centric Environment

A customer-centric business, in today's world, is not an aspiration but an essentiality. A genuinely customer-centric business may not develop overnight, but with the right attitude and direction, any business or organization can get there. Customer centricity defines how an organization conveys its brand value and connects with the customer by delivering that value on a consistent basis. In their overall brand position, marketers have to be especially focused towards meeting the needs of the consumers and giving them what they "want". In such a manner, where customer's preferences and values are given priority in developing corporate and business-level strategies, customer-centricity becomes an

integral part of an organization (Moore & Reid, 2008). Firstly, we need to describe the strategic functions of a brand that can help the organization in connecting with the customers based on concrete brand qualities or aspects:

- A good brand creates distinctiveness and helps distinguish between products of same kind. This way companies can differentiate themselves from their competitors in the minds of customers.
- A brand should essentially convey a message that can stay in the hearts and minds of the consumers for a longer time.
- A brand indicates persistence and consistency of an organization's marketing efforts. It assures the customer that the organization is persistently looking for ways to satisfy him, and will leave no stone unturned in doing so.
- A brand projects credibility but showing to the customer that the brand is authentic and denotes specific quality which will not be compromised.
- A strong branding by an organization must deliver a clear-cut message rather than leaving the customer lurking in the dark. All the claims made under the brand name should be sound enough and valid to denote qualities and features that actually exist.
- Brands must provoke a sense of loyalty amongst the customers; customers associate with and connect to the brand for a longer time if they feel utterly satisfied (Holt, 2004).
- Brand helps an organization to avoid imitation of its own products by other players in the industry.
- A brand must establish an emotional connection with the customers by addressing their needs in a rather emotional way. This strategic function can be illustrated by the example that a calling card would definitely appeal to customers when its advertisement telecasts an army soldier trying to reach out to his ailing mother using the telecom service provider. This striking of the customer's emotional chord creates a sense of feeling and provokes sentiments (Kapferer, 1992).

In a world where customer preferences and choice changes with each passing hour, provided an abundance of information present around him in different forms, it is very

essential to create a brand that helps build customer connotations and associations. Branding has in fact, become inevitable in such times where a large number of products rely upon strong brand names for survival and revenue generation. The effective use of a brand name is therefore, the key to success in an ever-changing business arena (Farquhar, 1995).

It is important that brand values are calculated on the basis of individual customers, and that brand must be developed around segments. A rather recent trend in the 21st century is the shift from product-specific brands to customer-centric brands built around the identified needs of particular segments. Brand experience is therefore, perceived to be calculated through customer's experience of the product after he interacted with the brand. Successful brand experiences establish when customers are exposed to the attributes of the product as is shown through its brand, and the customer is surrounded by its positive attributes in the end. Creating a strong brand experience is all about connecting with the customers and building a sustained relationship with them, based on positive product features. It can operate on multiple levels such as through the addition of a new communication channel that facilitates in reaching out to the customer in an improved manner.

A customer's total brand experience denotes whether or not the customer only buys the product or instead, spreads a positive (or negative) word-of-mouth about it as well. A brand is perceived to be a promise between experience and expectation, and a balance between these two strikes a positivity in the overall process (Kapferer, 2004). A brand that is glamorous and denotes high-quality offerings using a forceful positioning tactic, lets the customer down badly if what he perceived to be true did not come that way after the product was used or consumed. Kapferer (1992) presented one of the most comprehensive definitions of brands being one of the most prominent Europeans to work in the field of marketing. In his words, brand is the name given to a product having the influence to convince people of product attributes and makes people trust it. Kapferer gave the main functions of a brand as are mentioned below:

- Identification (recognizable)
- Practicality (time-saver and money-saver)

- Surety (repeatedly provides same quality standard)
- Optimization (assurance of being the best-buy option)
- Continuity (creates relationship)
- Hedonistic (delight linked with the brand)
- Ethical (responsibility of the brand towards the society).

2.7 Role of Branding in Developing Marketing Strategy

In the last few years, there has been an evolution of branding theory and literature that is considered as an essential marketing investment. The role of branding in the marketing strategy of a company cannot be ignored since branding can be regarded as a tool that redirects the resources of an organization towards implementing the marketing strategy. Most business strategies adopted today does not embrace new hurdles present in the market and does not show willingness to praise innovativeness or creativity. In fact, these strategies are usually failed at determining the changes in the business world because they are not developed with sufficient market insights (Moore & Reid, 2008). A successful strategy encompasses considerations for all types of business needs and market forces that may change or revolunize over time. Marketing strategies, on the other hand, have a more operative or functional character in defining the company's products and brands while facilitating the organization to obtain its long-term goals and objectives. An important issue in the formulation of marketing strategies is to anticipate new trends in the market and foresee the hidden opportunities or unveil the threats existing within. Most marketing strategies are only limited to dealing with the current situations, and do not give due regard to the future business challenges. Markets are the sources of change and opportunities which the organization must capitalize. It is this shift from the old-school "core competencies" to the new "market-driven competencies" that organizations must pay attention to, in order to benefit from latest market trends and underlying opportunities (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). It is here that the role of brands play a determent role by enriching the brand identity in the minds of the customers, and in turn, allowing the company to charge more money for its products and services therefore, gaining a chance to reap more profits from it (Farquhar, 1995). In order to satisfy the customer and enhance his perceptions of products being offered, a company needs to strengthen its brand identity

so that a positive brand image or brand association is created. It is here that with the strengthening of the brands an organization tends to achieve the intended outcomes from its marketing strategy development. Branding, instead of being a short-term process, is a long-term perception and state of mind that requires how corporations manage their strategies and coordinate baetween their resources and objectives. Improved customer services, branding and innovation are beneficial marketing investments that can significantly contribute towards value creation in marketing strategy (Kapferer, 2004).

2.8 Conclusive Remarks

This chapter was based at discussing the literary context of brands and branding while elaborating upon several concepts that surround brand literature and practice. Beginning with the definition of brands in varying contexts of marketing to discussing its components, the researcher has been able to set the stage for a formal and detailed study targeted towards understanding brands, the branding process and its underlying perspectives. Throughout the discussion, various perspectives of the organization and the consumers have been brought into consideration to illustrate the significance of brands and the role they play in adding value to marketing strategies. It can be concluded from this study that a brand is a guiding light that brings various resources of an organization (human resources, operationalization of productions and marketing tactics) on one platform to help achieve the targets of customer satisfaction and loyalty while building and capitalizing upon a positive association in the minds of the targeted customers. There is a need to incorporate effective branding strategies in the marketing mix of an organization while treating brands as an essential ingredient for strategy development. Marketers must establish all essential components needed to deliver on business goals through the enhancement of brand cultures. While branding remains to be a central component in effective strategy development, marketers must pay attention to strategic issues that surround the product or service so that branding can help fulfill the objectives in a more successful manner.

3. BRANDING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR – A LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The efficacy of branding in influencing consumer decision-making cannot be doubted; it is considered as one of the most effective and tactical marketing strategies that is used to win over competition or at least, overcome it. In a quest for commodities that can fulfill his needs, a consumer searches for all possible alternatives and chooses the one that promises more quality and usefulness (Stephens & Townsend, 2007). It is at this stage that the role of branding comes in. This chapter is dedicated to investigate the impact of branding on consumer behaviors while assessing the contributory role of brands towards influencing their decision-making process. A realization of the concept that branding is an effective marketing tool that impacts upon product management decisions shows that its impact on consumers and their purchasing decisions cannot be over-emphasized. Given the variety that consumers have today, for all sorts of products, consider the chaos and confusion that would arise in their mind if marketers have no means to distinguish their offerings from that of the competitors (Aaker, 2011). In such cases, the consumers will have to spend a great deal of time, money and efforts to go through all available alternatives in order to find one that best suits their needs. The likely incident of choosing a wrong alternate from the available ones is present provided the fact that some middlemen use manipulative tactics to promote their products. It is this rigor and time-consumption that marketers do not want their consumers to come across. Okafor, in 1995, stated similar situation that shows the importance of branding in affecting consumer decision making; in his words, "apart from the herculean task that will be associated with trying to decide what manufacturers' product to buy from all the unbranded products, other product management decisions, based on market segmentation, promotion, product positioning, pricing etc., would have been practically impossible" (Okafor, 1995). In short, today's

marketplace is full of success stories where marketers are increasingly adopting branding as a stratagem to win buyers' hearts.

Various researchers contend that brands are veritable tools that influence the choices that consumers make (Okafor, 1995; Zhang, 2015; Marken, 2003). It is said to have an even-greater influence on the decision-making of consumers than the quality of products itself. This section looks at various literatures that discuss the effect of branding on consumer behavior, to look into ways and means through which brands, by understanding the consumer behaviors, can help develop strategies to win more prospects and generate greater profitability.

3.2 Influence of Brand Loyalty on Consumer Behavior

When consumers confront various choices in a retail marketplace, brand loyalty works as a competitive advantage for selling companies. Brand loyalty has a profound impact on consumer choices and decision-making; therefore, it is utterly significant for small and medium businesses to work on building brands that can help distinguish offerings on retail shelves. It is far less expensive and more beneficial to maintain existing customers or clientele than winning new ones. In an attempt to develop a trusted brand for the organization, marketers, as explained by Okafor (1995), Zhang (2015) and Marken (2003), intend to develop brand loyalty that can have an influence on customers. This way the customer will keep returning to the same business in an expectation of receiving same quality or attributes as was promised. Various academic researchers have investigated the relation between brand loyalty and consumer behavior (Okafor, 1995; Zhang, 2015; Marken, 2003). It was also contended that the advent of social media and other communication technologies tend to cast a negative effect on brand loyalty, and has weakened its influence. In this regard, there are few elements which must be discussed to establish understanding about such a relationship:

1. Preference for a Specific Brand: A research-based study took place in the year 2011 at the University of Seville which found out that the families and households who are price-sensitive in their purchase decisions, will continue to be so regardless of the product offered in the markets. This study also indicated that

consumers who are brand loyal will stick to one product/service regardless of the selling price. They will keep shopping by brands rather than being impacted by price changes. On the other hand, consumers such as family households will shop by price and show price-sensitivity in all other categories (Allender & Richards, 2012).

2. Reinforcement of Brand Loyalty: Brand loyalty is reinforced when consumers' brand awareness is increased using promotional campaigns and other advertising mediums. In this way, brand message needs to be repeatedly recalled in the minds of consumers so that their brand awareness is maintained. This helps them in being loyal to same brand for long. Regular advertisements play an important role in this regard. It is important to note here that consumers form images of brands by their names and associate with them. Competitors can imitate products that are mostly bought by loyal consumers thinking that the consumer could be cheated or misled. Creating strong brand awareness requires investing in advertisement and other campaigns while marketing activities must solely be related with conveying clear brand messages.

3. Searching for Best Brand: Studies show that consumers who use the Internet to search for brands will most likely buy the brand that shows highest rank on the search engine. Along with this, social media marketing tends to cast similar effect when consumers go through user-generated reviews regarding brands and their products, and take insights for decision-making (Allender & Richards, 2012). They seek guidance from the Internet and search engines to determine what brands to buy and what not to.

Brand loyalty entails certain aspects that can help consumers build a relationship with the company for long. The strength of brands develops upon the elements of trust, experience, spreading the word or building family connections. Trust is the foremost element of loyalty where customers expect to be able to have faith in the organization for providing value in return of the money paid. Once trust is established, consumers will continue to endorse the business for a longer time period, each time hoping to receive similar utility and benefits (Allender & Richards, 2012). The business, on the other hand, can enjoy the benefits of more consumers and greater profitability by following and living up to their

commitments and sustaining their product quality. When consumers feel their relation with the brand is never harmed or tarnished, and the product they receive have the same quality standard, they will patronize it (Aaker, 2011). For example, a delivery service that is prompt and swift, and guarantees the delivery of parcels on time and through a safe process will create a positive influence on the consumers and they will develop a constant liking for this product while repeatedly choosing it for the satisfaction of their needs and wants according to "Measuring brand equity across products and markets" (Aaker, 1996).

Brand loyalty is the fruit of a positive product experience of a consumer. Product experiences, when generating the same results; tend to result in utmost customer satisfaction that prolongs over each consecutive buy. In cases, for example, when a woman consumer experiences a positive attitude of a store clerk who put in extra efforts to find the most suitable garment for her, she is most likely to remember this gesture and support services, and will probably return to the same garments shop for future purchases (Aaker, 1996). Similarly, a negative purchase or product experience can push away consumers from a brand. Marketers work on creating positive experiences so that loyal consumers return to them for their purchases on a consistent basis.

Word-of-mouth spread is another element that influences the brand loyalty of multiple consumers at the same time. Aaker (1996) discussed in "*Measuring brand equity across products and markets*" that if a customer is satisfied with the product or the brand of a particular company, he will definitely spread the word to other through different mediums. According to Aaker, he is most likely to recommend others for similar purchase from this brand by telling them the positive attributes of the entire experience. This feedback tends to create a lasting impact on others who are interested to read or come across reviews by users in order to decide which brand to buy from. To develop loyalty further and to help the company attract more consumers, the article suggested that an effective marketing strategy will encourage customers to bring more users of the brand by offering them rewards on each customer referral. This incentive will persuade the customer to continue patronizing the brand in hope of rewards, and he is most likely be bringing more customers to the business to qualify for the incentive/gift.

Family connection or familial purchase habits cast a significant impact on consumers' brand loyalty. Once loyalty to a brand is developed through positive experiences and trust, it will pass on from one generation to another (Aaker, 2011). Many consumers buy from a shop or opt to purchase a brand simply because their parents bought it too. This way, often times, brand loyalty is maintained through the entire family where it passes on to generations, and based on continued positive experiences of each member, loyalty is sustained permanently (Aaker, 1996). Economic recession has created a decline on this type of loyalty where customers are now shopping from other brands in search of better deals or discounted offers.

3.3 Impact of Brand Image on Customer Attitude and Intentions for Purchase

The maintenance of a brand image is considered as a prerequisite for building brand equity and a positive brand association. In studying the effect of branding on consumer purchasing intentions and behaviors and attitudes, it is essential to look into the ways in which brand image must be strengthened and reinforced to create strong brand identity and association. Brand image is established through different symbolic, functional and experimental factors that affect how consumers make purchase decisions. Given an increasingly dynamic marketplace, it is an effective marketing strategy to convey brand messages and develop thorough insights into the brand so that consumers can be attracted and loyalty can be built. Keller, in 1993, initiated the concept of Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) which can be described as various reactions of consumers to branding campaigns that depends on their knowledge and awareness of the brand at varying degrees. In other words, brand awareness and image are the core basis and sources of equity. Keller posited that a positive brand image can be created through positive associations with the brand that comes from consumers' memories about the brand through varying promotional campaigns (Keller, 2008).

Keller did much work on the relationship between brand image and brand equity while studying the consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions in an in-depth manner. In his publication namely "*Brand Synthesis: The Multidimensionality of Consumer Knowledge*", brand equity can be obtained through consumer's faith or trust in a brand that speaks of

his confidence (Keller, 2008). If a consumer is sure or confident that the brand will continue to offer same utility, they will be willing to pay a higher price for it. However, this confidence will ensue from few considerations that branding companies must keep in mind:

- The brand must perform its functions as designed;
- Social image about the brand must be related with its ownership or purchase;
- Consumers' emotional attachment and sentiments with the brand;
- Balance between brand's functionality and its values; and
- Consumer's trust and faith in the brand (Keller, 2008).

Given a high proliferation of brands in the world today, consumers' purchasing decisions greatly depend on and are influenced by brand images rather than the product. If the brand matches with the self-concept or self-image of an individual, he will most likely give preference to the brand. Consumers may show different self-concepts in different situations therefore, it is essential for marketers to look for ways in which customer's self-concept match with the image the brand intends to convey (Aaker, 2011). Irrespective of the context, the consumer will most likely think well about the brand if the image is consistent with his own self-concept. Through the creation of this match, positive attributes and experience will result in lasting consumer approval of the organization that owns the brand (Aaker, 2011).

When a product performance or functionality exceeds customer's expectation from it, the customer is satisfied. Similarly, when expectations exceed the performance, satisfaction declines. One of the most important aspects of brand image is product performance where the product must actually live up to customer expectations and delivers needed utility to him. The influence of customer satisfaction on brand image can be assessed by marketing companies through a realization of the perpetual difference of its performance in the views of a non-user and a regular user. Brand image has a profound influence on customer satisfaction as studied by Change et.al (stated in Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). He identified the following components of store image in their 2012-publication "*How brand awareness relates to market outcome, brand equity, and the marketing mix*" that can create a positive impression and directly influence customer satisfaction levels:

- Convenience;
- Store's infrastructure; and
- Service at the Store
- Sales activities at the Store (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012).

Customer loyalty stems out of customer satisfaction on repeated experiences. When a consumer approves of a brand, continues to purchase from it on regular basis and thus, becomes a source of greater profits for the company, he turns to a loyal user for the company. In branding literature, brand image is perceived as an important attribute that can impact customer loyalty. As in the supermarket industry, the store image is an important attribute through which loyalty is developed or maintained. Even in the Internet industry, different literary contexts verify that a positive brand image is a source of fostering customer loyalty. Although various researchers have testified the relationship between brand image, brand equity and customer satisfaction, there are few others who present opposing viewpoints in "*Brand Synthesis: The Multidimensionality of Consumer Knowledge*" (Keller, 2003). Some research studies show that brand image has no direct influence on customer loyalty; however, it can impact upon customer satisfaction which can in turn, impact the loyalty levels. In the retail environment as well, consumer choice is significantly guided by branding which is why marketers must pay special attention to ways and means to create synergies based on their image associated with positive brand experiences and stronger brand awareness.

3.4 Influence of Branding on Consumer Psychology

In order to develop a holistic understanding of consumer choice, it is necessary to study in detail, different conscious and unconscious elements of consumer psychology that can affect their decision-making and choice. Through this understanding, marketers and branding companies can address areas that tend to cast an impact on this psychology so that the consumer is attracted, and maintained (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2006). Different branding practices can affect the consumer choice in multiple ways. Firstly, branding impacts on whether or not a consumer notices a product; that is to say, if the consumer is able to pay due attention towards the brand or not. Secondly, branding makes a difference

on how rapidly consumers recognize a given product from a variety of similar choices available on the retail shelves (Campo & Yague, 2007). This is also related to developing a competitive advantage where products of similar brands have a uniqueness which attracts consumers to certain brands while he seems to ignore all others. This recognition has a knock-on effect on the feelings of the consumers about the brand. Attention and recognition are important predictors of consumer decision-making which shows how branding contributes toward consumer choice and decision-making (Stephens & Townsend, 2007). These two factors need to be studied in detail so as to assess whether or not branding can make a difference in attracting the customers by connecting with their sensitive, psychological points in memory and cognition (Campo & Yague, 2007).

3.4.1 Attention

Branding companies often overlook the significance of 'attention' in guiding consumer choices. Arguably however, it is the paramount predictor of consumer approval and choice. If a product does not receive any attention it is most likely never be sold as the consumer will not choose it. It is estimated that not even half of the available alternatives in a retail store is chosen or paid attention to. Most products only receive a glance by the customer who pays the least attention to them as he moves on the privileged one. It is here that competitors need to consider how instead of receiving cursory glances for their products, they must compete to become the "privileged one". It is also significant to see how branding influences attention, and how marketers can make an effort towards attracting more attention towards their offering. Today's business incorporates innovative technologies such as eye tracking mechanisms which predict the items that receive consumer attention and for how long. This mechanism can greatly be utilized by companies to oversee the brands that receive the most attention. It is very accurate for measuring the choice and preference for brands that result from giving attention to them.

3.4.2 Recognition

Branding signals about the quality and superiority of a brand over another. It helps the customer to make a note of the product based on promises of quality, durability and greater functionality. Recognition is a memory cue that tends to work as an alert for consumers, who recall relevant information from their memory for the brand/product as soon as they

notice it (Okafor, 1995; Zhang, 2015; Marken, 2003). Attention without recognition has little meaning for marketing teams; it is recognition that ultimately persuades the customer to familiarize with the product and develop a liking for it once again. Past experiences about a brand, an association with it or a positive product or brand experience can help a consumer in recognition. The information stored in the memory of the customer helps him in recalling the product and its features (Alvarez & Casielles, 2005). This recognition and familiarization helps in guiding the decision of the customer for purchasing it or leaving it. Brands that swiftly acquire customer attention and recognition are more likely to be chosen more as compared to other less-noticeable products (Petromilli, Morrison & Million, 2002). The packaging of the product provides the customer with accurate and effective information about the product which activates his memory process. The speed of finding the products and recognizing them is crucial in guiding their actions towards purchase. Visual search procedures are utilized to test consumer recognition and brand memory as discussed in the article *"The Impact of Brand Image on Consumer Behavior: A Literature Review"* (Zhang, 2015). The article explains that in this experiment, consumers look for a certain product within the display and respond physically towards it with as much speed as possible. Through recording the speed and response time, it is considered as an effective measure of recognition. This is a test of the unconscious cognition that is beyond human control and helps in overcoming the pitfalls of traditional search for brands.

3.5 Effects of Product Attributes on Brand Loyalty

Product-related factors such as packaging, pricing and brand awareness causes a veritable effect on brand loyalty and consumer behavioral intentions. Managers of companies must pay attention towards developing marketing strategies for packaging of products and competitive pricing structures that can help them distinguish their offerings in the market. This is likely to influence the consumer behavioral intentions in a positive manner, whereby customer would show more interest towards this brand than to any other (Okafor, 1995). In a marketplace where an unlimited supply of brands has merely caused chaos and confusion for the consumers, organizations confront pressures to build brands that can sustain over time while being thoroughly successful in attracting and retaining customers.

Ever since marketers realized the importance of customer loyalty, they have studied the ways that can attract them, compel them to spread positive words about the products, persuade them towards repeated purchases, and motivate them to search for more information. This is where product-related attributes play an important role to reinforce the relationship that exists between the brand and the customer.

Consumer minds are occupied with prejudices when they respond towards packaging (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2006). Preferences of individuals and their learned reactions help companies make their way to dominance in a dynamic business arena. Some product shapes, sizes, colors and other features attract consumers in a positive manner while other attributes induce negative reactions. Consumers are found to be a little more willing to pay for products that offer convenience, dependability and the overall benefits of a superior packaging (Madhu-Mohan & Jayanthi, 2012). The influence of pricing has also found to be profound in contributing towards instantaneous recognition for the brand. Successful branding companies implement strategies that can address all these areas of packaging, pricing and creation of awareness in an attempt to increase sales for the company as observed in a study named *"How brand awareness relates to market outcome, brand equity, and the marketing mix"* by Huang & Sarigöllü (2012). In order to keep abreast with the transformations in marketing practices across the world, marketers are increasingly interested to study the empirical relationship between product attributes and brand loyalty. In order to support the claim that brand image renders, marketers need to address product attributes that can enhance the image of the brand and reinforce the identity associated with it. Let us know look into each aspect separately so as to assess how each factor should be taken into consideration for better benefits and profitability.

3.5.1 Effect of product packaging on brand loyalty

The present-day marketing scenario is overly emphasizing on the improvements in the quality of packaging that is necessary to influence customers towards brand loyalty. Kent and Omer (2003) provided a definition of packaging as a collection of activities related to the production, designing, filling of the container and the wrapper of the product in such a manner that the product is stored, protected, transported, identified and effectively marketed (stated in Keller, 2003). One of the most intriguing aspects of packaging, that

often goes over-looked, is its ability to attract disinterested customers or the unsuspicious ones. One of the main concerns of packaging is that it should not harm the containments of the product while handling the product well. Companies address packaging issues by seeing how the consumer relates to the product and which features he deems most useful in it. Packaging also contributes towards increasing the sale of the product where the consumer must, without much effort, be able to distinguish the product from competing offers (Keller, 2003). Packaging provides a non-verbal communication expression through which consumers identify what the brand intends to say. It is this packaging that works as an effective marketing medium alongside the color, texture, size and appearance of the product. In a fierce competitive environment of today, marketers are confronted with many messages on packaging and merchandising; however, to choose the best one out of them has really been a matter of concern. At the time when customer is about to purchase something, it becomes an essential part of the selling process. While a plethora of available alternatives in the market creates customer confusion, product externalities such as packaging plays an important role in convincing the customer towards a final choice (Marken, 2003).

There are some important considerations in packaging that must endorse visual impact, aesthetics and ethics of doing business. The claims or supportive material written to reinforce brand quality on the package must be in accordance with the values that the company actually supports. In a revised, self-service retail environment, packaging acts as a salesman; and so, whatever is written on the label along with other features of packaging must be creatively and accurately be designed. It should better be avoided to create superficial claims on packaging materials that do not align with the brand image. It should be kept in mind that packaging adds value to the product and is an important, externality that reinforces a prompt approval from customer as soon as he creates a connection with it (Zaltman, 2003). It is a tool that differentiates the product from other offers therefore, creating a lasting impact on consumer behavioral intentions. Much of Zaltman's research addressed the importance of packaging in creating a unique position in the consumer minds. This illustrates the importance of having a clearly-aligned packaging strategy that must support and stress upon the marketing message of the brand.

It is a fairly important way in which customer confidence can be gained before he actually purchases the product- through an effective packaging (Zaltman, 2003).

3.5.2 Effect of product pricing on brand loyalty

One of the most essential components of the 7 Ps of marketing mix, pricing, has a significant effect on brand loyalty. As discussed earlier, consumers belonging top family households show a price-sensitive behavior where they seem to be influenced by pricing. If a product is offered at a higher price, they will move on to search for alternatives and vice versa. Pricing is perceived to be the monetary value that a customer offers to pay in return for the product he purchases (Marken, 2003). How the consumer views the price of a product largely influences if he buys it or not. Hence, pricing also cause an essential impact on the customer mind and guides his purchase decision. Based on its relation with other marketing mix elements and a direct relationship with the corporate objectives, pricing is a very crucial element that has the potential of creating extensive consequences for both the organization and the company. Goods and services should be priced in a manner that they offer triple benefits: to satisfy the customers, to generate enough profitability for the company and to help overcome market forces and constraints such as that of competition and rivalry between firms (Petromilli, Morrison & Million, 2002).

Marketers use price as a strategic tool to confront with the market in direct or indirect ways: to attract or retain customers, and to overcome competition. It acts as a unique opportunity to retain the customers and attract new ones. In service industries for example, pricing is used as a tool to motivate the sales of a certain offering. However, this can only be possible if the pricing process is undertaken honestly and justifiably rather than in a disorganized manner (Petromilli, Morrison & Million, 2002). A combination of pricing strategies can help manipulate the purchasing decision of the customer. The main challenge here is that all pricing decisions must be consistent with the corporate image, sales and the investment objectives. Companies have two options here: either to set a low or a high price, or just become price followers by setting the same price as their competitors within same industry (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2006). The "high-and-low (hi-lo) price approach and the everyday-low-price (EDLP) approach are pricing strategies that most companies prefer to follow. Another popular tactic here is the psychological pricing

mechanism through which certain price representations are made for customers in a way that they think they are paying less for a product, while in actuality, it is just a psychological manipulation of the seller. To explain this pricing, let us assume that a company charges $10.00 for a commodity item; adopting a psychological pricing approach, companies will set the price of the commodity for $ 9.99 instead of $ 10.00. This will give an impression to the customer that a lesser price has been quoted by seller (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2006).

Pricing strategy such as reference pricing also induces yet another issue for marketers who confront a lot of concerns in the retail environment where the customer compares the listed product price with a discounted price. This is to say that, as consumers make product choices, they tend to evaluate if they are being charged too high or too low (Aaker, 2011). When a consumer perceives that a retailer is charging exorbitantly on a product, he or she perceives that the seller possess an air of luxury for all its offerings which may result in repeated purchases. Due to price-sensitivity in different market segments, some retailers introduced generic products that cater to the needs of this price-sensitive section of the market. This strategy is viewed from contrasting perspectives where, for some consumers a high price translates into giving up more resources for buying an item while, for others, it simply means that a high standard or prestige can be acquired through paying a higher price (Zhang, 2015). Marketers are often confronted with the challenge of either introducing a discounted price or a fixed price. A fixed price indicates to the customer that irrespective of the time when he buys the product, the price would remain non-negotiable. It also denotes that there would be no discounted offers for this particular product and no customer promotions would be applicable on it. On the other hand, a discounted pricing structure denotes that the price would be changeable whenever the seller finds a need or whenever there is a reason to encourage sales. It is important for marketers to choose appropriate pricing communication strategies that can highlight the product price and overall value before the customer, and can compel him to buy it (Aaker, 2011). Since pricing is a major product attribute that shapes customer behaviors, it is a common expectation to find a positive relationship between pricing and brand loyalty.

3.5.3 Effect of brand awareness on brand loyalty

Brand awareness creation is the key goal of organizations which targets the loyalty of customers on a permanent basis. Brand awareness is a substantial predictor regarding the knowledge about the brand and its presence in the minds of the customers, how quickly they can recognize the brand and retrieve related knowledge from their memory about that brand. Brand awareness denotes the probability that the customer will be easily recognizing the brand and the existence of a particular company and its products amongst a range of similar other products (Petromilli, Morrison & Million, 2002). Brand awareness can further be categorized into aided and top-of-the-mind awareness (or unaided) types. Aided awareness is said to have occurred when customer is given a set of brands out of which he recognizes a particular brand and its product whereas, top-of-the-mind awareness is an automatic retrieval from the memory of the customer as soon as he notices the brand anywhere. Top-of-the-mind awareness or unaided reflects that the customer associates with the product on a very prompt basis and can relate with the offerings of the company based on a sustained image of it in his mind. Brand awareness affects the consumer behavior and his decision making as well, since if the individual knows about a certain brand, he keeps it in his consideration set (Aaker, 2011). This shows that the customer easily associates with the product, and that the seller has been successful in identifying with the brand. Therefore, it has the tendency to increase the market performance of the brand. According to branding literature, the efficacy of brands in guiding consumer purchase decisions cannot be undermined for the very specific reason that brands are the representatives of organizational commitment towards serving what the customer needs (Aaker, 2011; Zhang, 2015). It is placed at the heart of marketing plans of organizations to envisage a strategy that relies on the synergies of brands provided the brand message is effectively communicated.

Brand awareness reflects the customer's perceived assessment of risk and their confidence in the purchase decision for a particular seller. When a customer is acquainted with a seller and his offerings, he is most likely to associate with the company and trusts with their product quality, durability, and convenience. The customer is aware of the fact that the organization fulfills his promise towards their clients, and would leave no stone unturned

in satisfying their needs and wants (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2006). This is why, for organizations, brand awareness must not remain an undervalued or undermined component. They must address all brand image concerns that can enrich the customer's knowledge and awareness about what they offer to sell.

3.6 Conclusive Remarks

From this chapter, the reader can easily review and understand the importance of branding and how it influences consumer behaviors. Creating awareness about the brand and enriching the brand image in the eyes of the customer is of paramount significance to marketers as they include these considerations at the core of developing marketing strategies. Branding in a digital age is no easy task; it comes as a challenge to organizations who must strive to overcome competitions and make themselves visible in a plethora of products available on retail shelves. In such a fiercely-competitive era, only those brands survive which live up to their expectations and fulfill their promises in an efficient manner. Innovative packaging and pricing strategies, along with tactics to enhance brand awareness for customer has been the need of the hour. Successful managers understand the importance of branding in an era where surely "seeing is believing". Customer relationship management programs can help companies convey the brand's message to their customers while benefitting from accessibility as means to reach a wider audience across the world. Growing and leveraging both the unaided and aided brand awareness will go a long way in increasing orientation and interest in the brand which will naturally result in added value and profitability for the company. This literary account presents a holistic explanation regarding the existence of a positive and predictive relationship between brand loyalty and consumer behavior.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Objective of Research

The main objective of this research was to investigate the influences of branding strategies on customer behaviors. This research was based on studying the factors how customers exhibit behavioral intentions while making a purchase to see how strong branding strategies could compel them towards positive outcomes. The research endeavor would contribute towards certain recommendations for future marketers how they can establish strategies to overcome negative customer behaviors, and how branding strategies can be molded to provoke positive customer purchasing intention. Based on the observations obtained as part of the primary data collection, a conclusion would amalgamate the findings from the literature review of previous chapters and would merge and align prior studies with the results and findings obtained here. The future implications of the research have also been presented at the end of the recommendations section which unveiled possible research avenues in future.

4.2 Limitations

A good research work tends to highlight and acknowledge the limiting factors that had restricted the success of the research, and had somewhat hindered the researcher in the quest of a successful research outcome. The first limiting factor in this case is that the research was largely time-bound; all the research activities needed to be completed within a certain time frame, which was why the researcher only had a restricted time limit to get done with each research activity.

Moreover, the research generalizability is another important factor that posed a limitation. The findings of the research cannot be generalized as it was mainly based on discussing

the occurred phenomenon in a Turkish context. In this case, while the study was based on a research to study how Turkish customers can better be attracted using branding strategies, the study results and outcomes are not applicable in case of other countries.

Thirdly, another research limitation of this study was related to the secondary data availability. There was not much research work that had been undertaken in a Turkish perspective; limited number of studies has somewhat constrained researcher's ability to include extensive account of studies on the subject.

4.3 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised of Turkish or non-Turkish customers who reside in Turkey. A sample is a derivative of the bigger population which is mainly deduced to represent the population since it is impossible to collect data from the entire population. One of the characteristic of a sample is that it has all the traits of the population, and respondents should be chosen in such a manner that they are highly representative of the population being studied in the context of the research based study. The sample for the research included the customers who shopped at two popular Turkish malls: Marmara Forum and Forum Istanbul. The sample size for this research was 200 customers who were recruited in the study using random sampling method. These customers were randomly chosen for an administration of the questionnaire while they were engaged in window-shopping or shopping at the two mentioned malls. The basic justification of using these respondents in the study as the study sample was basically because they are the most likely and most suited participants keeping in mind, the theme of the research which was about the effectiveness of effects of branding strategies on customer behaviors. The reason why 200 customers were chosen in this research was because it was a reasonable number to collect adequate amount of data keeping in mind the scope, depth and length of the study while also depending on the accessibility of the researcher in a limited time frame.

4.4 Material and Method

A questionnaire is chosen as the research instrument for Turkey customers since it allowed for a convenient data collection in less time than other methods available. The data

collected was analyzed using SPSS software which is an efficient tool in statistical analysis. The analysis will entail graphical representation of the demographic characteristics of respondents while a regression, correlation, ANOVA and frequency distribution basis of discussions of results before a conclusive end to the research is reached. Based on the analysis of the questionnaire (see appendix for questionnaire), there have been some recommendations elaborated at the end, while a definitive conclusion marks the end of the study.

4.5 Finding and Results of the Survey

This section of the research has been dedicated to reporting the findings of the research as was gathered from the chosen data collection instrument using questionnaires, and then providing an in-depth analysis of these results using findings from the primary as well as literary (secondary) research. Based on the results and findings and the analysis of the research, there has been a conclusive end given to the research study at the end of this chapter.

The first section of the questionnaire was based on finding the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The very first demographic characteristic dealt with the gender of the respondents. The findings of this survey indicated that more females than men participated in the survey as is also illustrated in the pie chart given below:
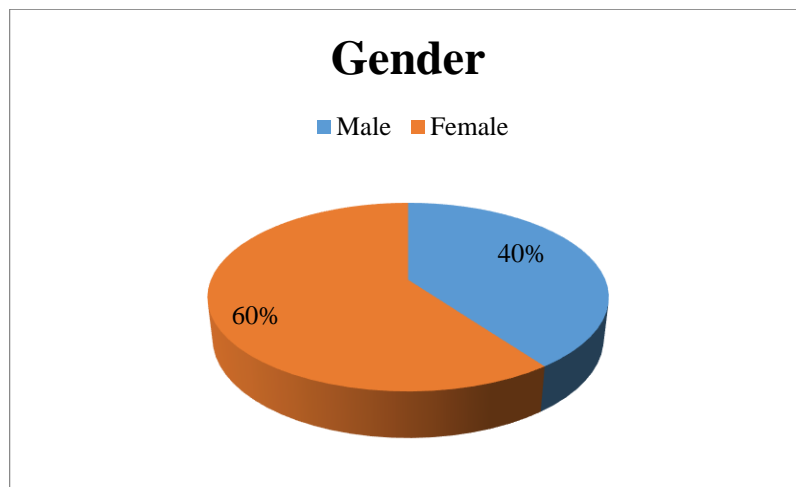
Figure 4.1: Gender

Age was the next demographic characteristic in the survey whose results indicated some surprising results as could not have been expected. Majority of the respondents participating in the research survey belonged to the age group of 36 to 45 years of age while an almost equal percentage of participation was observed amongst people older than 45 years. These results indicated that mostly adults participated in the study survey and the youth representation was somewhat limited.
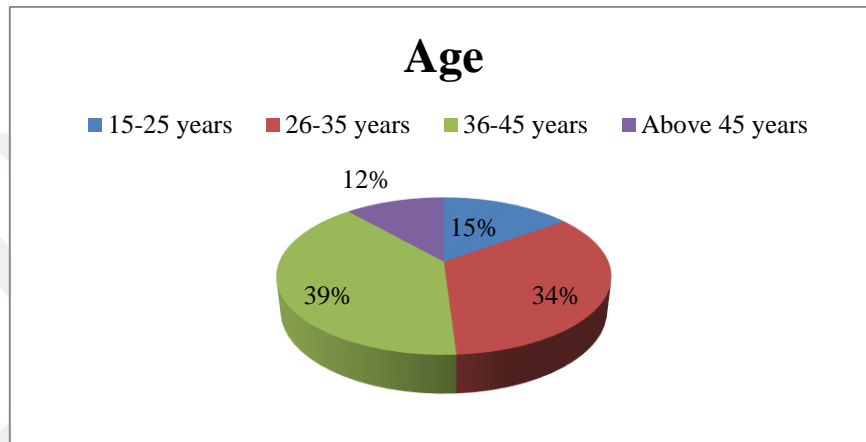
Figure 4.2: Age

Income has an important effect on the choices that customers make. The demographic inquiry into the income scales of the participants was thus, useful and important. According to the survey results, majority of the survey participants earned 2000 to 6000 Liras cumulatively while a bigger share of this bracket comprised of people earning from 4000 to 6000 altogether.
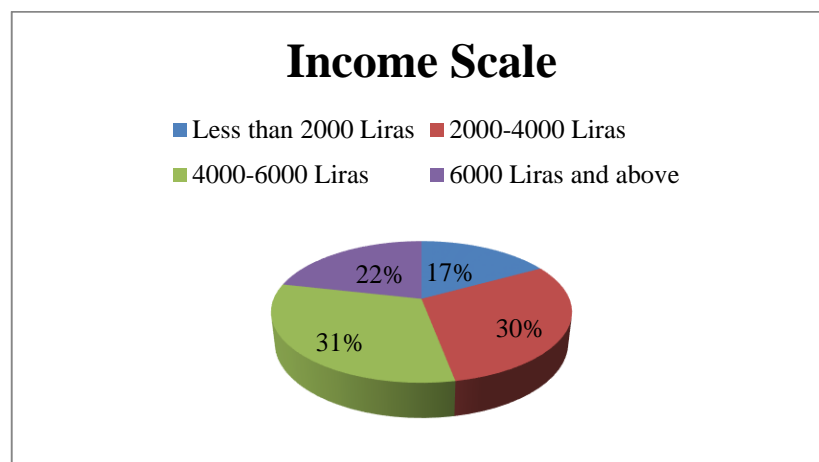
Figure 4.3: Income Scale

Marital status also has an important effect on the choices that customers make while purchasing. The demographic inquiry into the marital statuses of the participants was thus, significantly important. According to the survey results, majority of the survey participants were single as 110 people out of the total 200 respondents were not married to anybody.
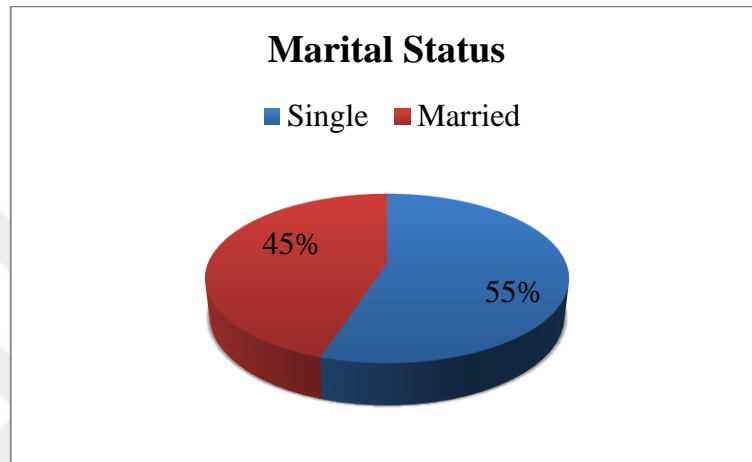
Figure 4.4: Marital Status

A very important demographic inquiry seems to be based on investigating how each respondent view himself in the light of his or her buying behaviors. Buying behaviors are mainly comprised of two types as shown in the graphical representation below; impulsive buying behavior or planned buying behavior while the other category to this answer gave the freedom to the respondent to indicate that he does not know where to classify himself. Surprisingly, according to the results obtained from this question, majority of the respondents engaged into planned buying behaviors which simply means to imply that according to them, these respondents go through the actual and the most formal buying decision making process as has also been discussed previously in this research. Some of the respondents were honest enough to answer that they did not know about their correct or most likely classification.
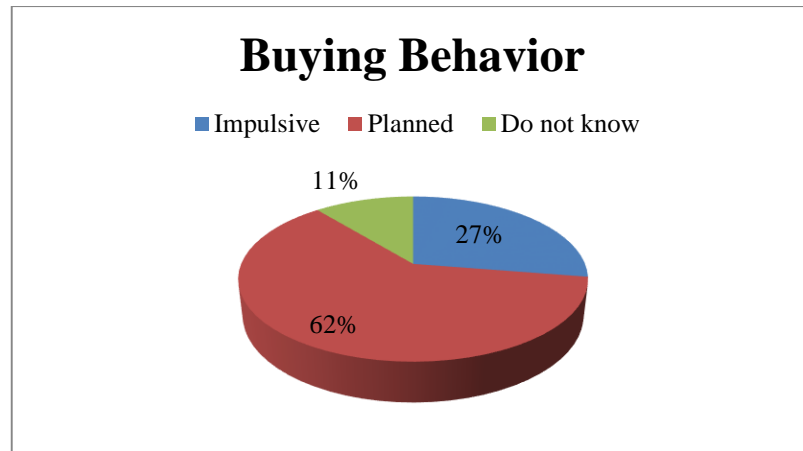
Figure 4.5: Buying Behavior

Educational achievement is also has an important effect on the choices that customers make while purchasing. The demographic inquiry into the marital statuses of the participants was thus, significantly important. Majority of the respondents in the study, as illustrated in the pie chart below were affiliated with the university-level education while others were acquiring a Master's degree or equivalent. Very few respondents out of the total sample size said they were pursuing their Doctoral (PhD.) level studies.
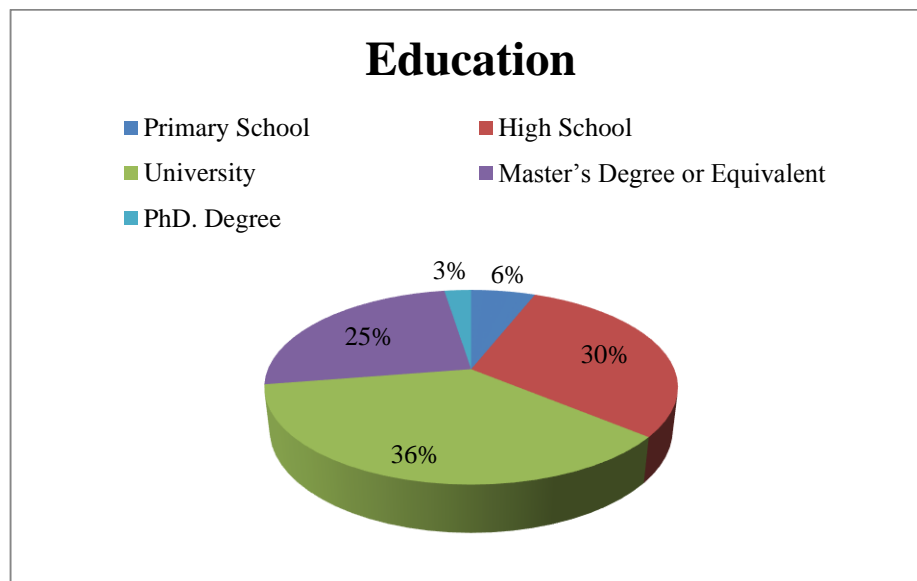
Figure 4.6: Education

When the researcher, through the survey questioning, inquired about the respondents' purchase habits for routine commodities, 34% of them indicated that they were loyal to particular brands which they have been purchasing since a long time. The other 26% of the total sample size indicated that they followed the bandwagon while making routine purchases of daily essential items and usually purchased what others bought, as well.
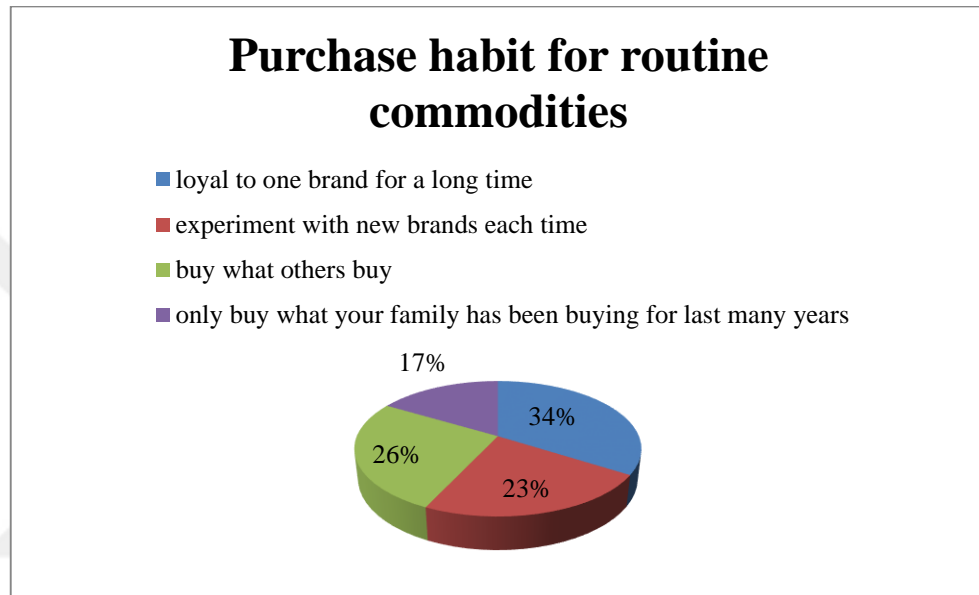
Figure 4.7: Purchase habit for routine commodities

The next section of the survey results is related with the interpretation and analyses of the bar charts representing respondents' responses to the questions given in the survey regarding the effectiveness of branding strategies on their buying behaviors. When it was inquired whether or not different branding strategies adopted by different organizations can influence the person's decisions for purchasing a product, the overall answer was a sure "yes". Majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the given

statement   as   shown   in   the   bar   chart   below:
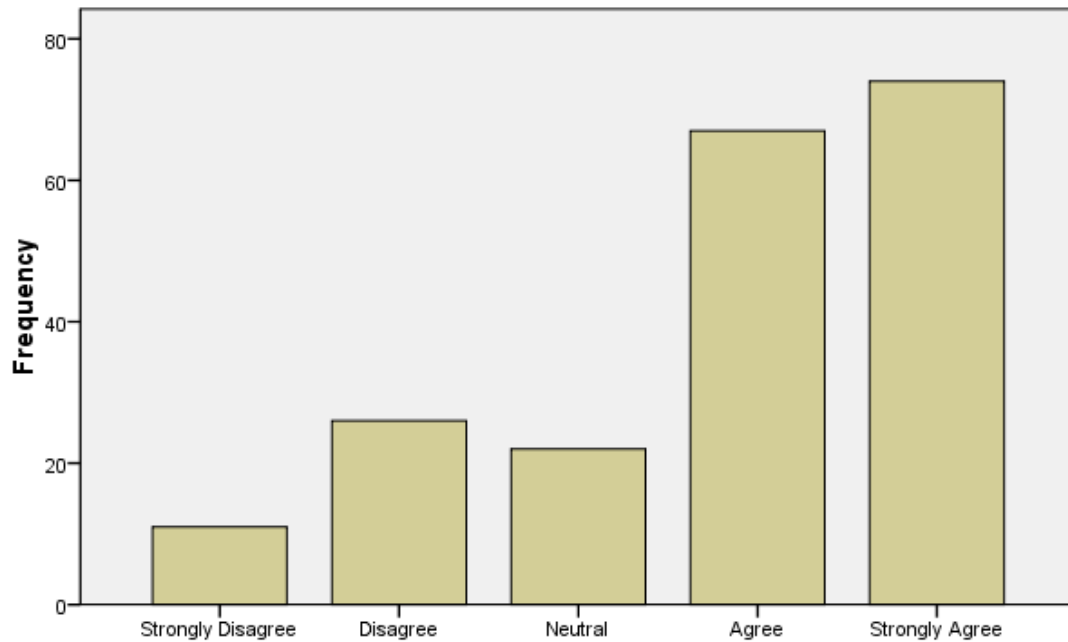
Figure 4.8: Different branding strategies of companies can influence on your decision for purchasing a product

The next question in the survey was related with the investigation of conversion of window shopping of the customers into actual purchase. The statistics obtained from the survey, as shown in the bar chart below, indicated that majority of the respondents felt they often end up doing only window shopping at the end while they go to malls for shopping. Different attributes such as prices of products or their branding promotions could have been cited as the main underlying causes behind their inclination to window-shop instead of actually purchasing something.
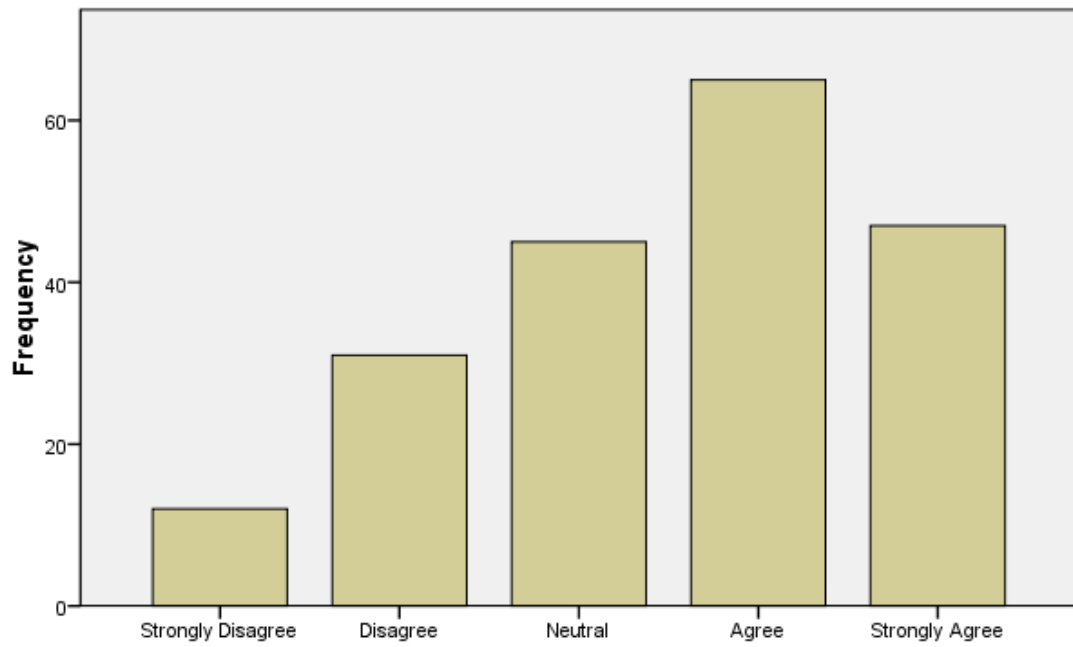
Figure 4.9: You often visit a mall for shopping purpose, but end up doing only window-shopping

A buyer's country of origin i.e. his original customs and traditions at his native homeland can cause significant impacts on the purchase decisions, as well. To this question, majority of the respondents provided a response in affirmation, contending that the homeland or country of origin does significantly affect how an individual makes purchasing decisions, or exhibit any related inclinations.
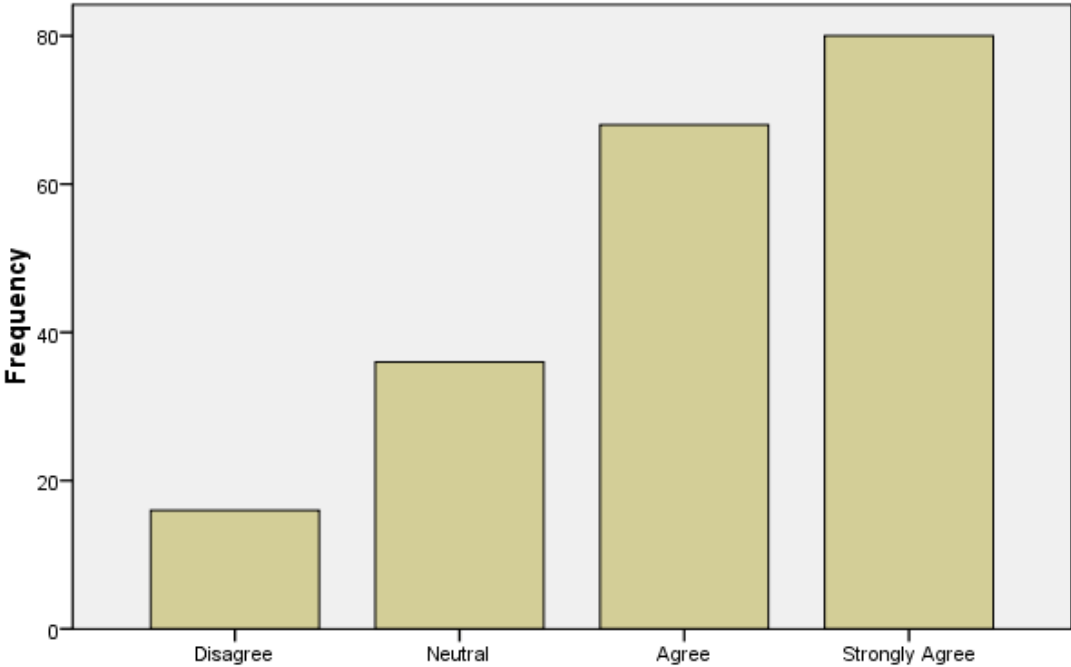
Figure 4.10: Your country of Origin affects your product purchase decision

This was one of the most significant questions of the entire survey that basically asked about a typical affective factor in rather an exemplary manner by asking the respondents how they would be willing to purchase a car from the place (showroom) where their father also bought one. The responses to this question were obtained in strict agreement and firm affirmation to the statement indicating that the ancestral or familial effects on customers' purchasing decisions are significantly essential. Another important implication of this response was that a certain level of loyalty could most certainly be observed amongst the respondents where they adhered to same brands or companies from where their families also purchased a certain product.
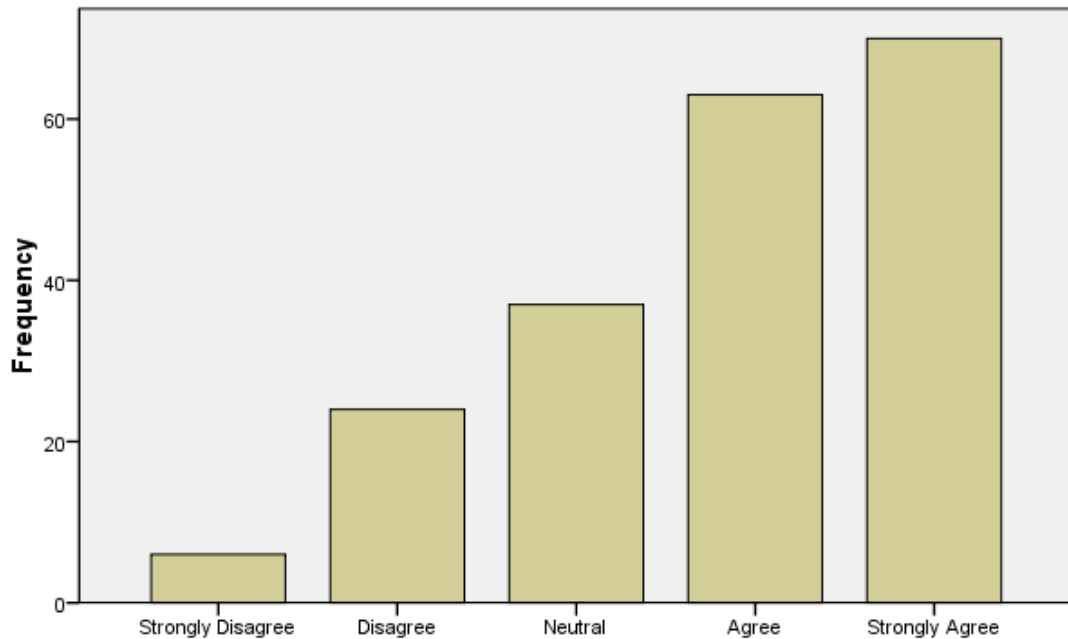
Figure 4.11: You are most likely to purchase a car from a brand where your father bought one from, too

The main theme of the next survey question was related with repeat purchasing where if a customer feels that the company is providing him or her with superior quality and product standards, he or she would most likely to visit it again. Based on factors such as product functionality and its quality, repeat purchases happen keeping in mind that customer associate positive product experiences with a healthy image of the company in their minds. In response to this question, majority of the participants agreed to the fact that they become loyal to selling companies in case of positive product experiences. There was a smaller percentage of the sample which did not disagree or strongly disagreed with this trend. Branding companies or marketers must therefore, derive a lesson from this and adopt these two affective factors so that repeat purchases occur.
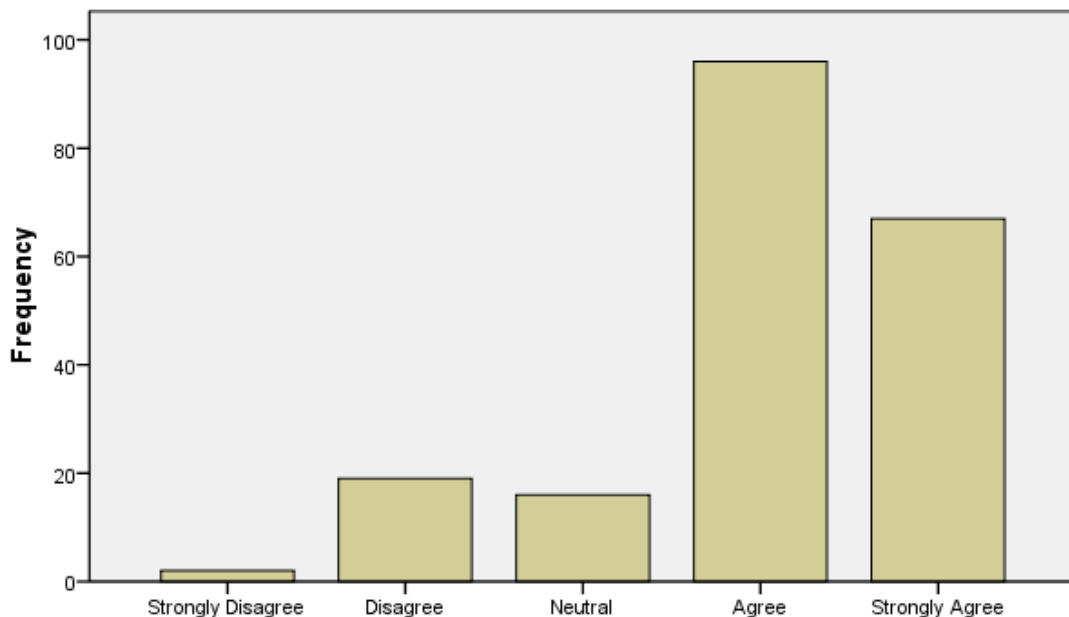
Figure 4.12: You are most likely to repeat purchasing from a company if you think that the selling company is fulfilling its commitment towards providing you with high quality and superior product functionality.

An ethical branding process ensues when the branding teams adopt socially acceptable and morally feasible measures to promoting their brands while considering and regarding the values of the society in high esteem (Zhang, 2015). This was a rather different question in the survey that was not directly related to the effectiveness of branding on purchase decisions only, but also was based on finding how customers view branding in the light of ethical obligations. In response to this question, majority of the respondents affirmed that they do consider the ethical side of marketing while they choose or refuse to choose a seller. In addition to this, adherence to one particular brand for a longer time also depended upon the branding company's devotion towards adopting ethical branding process.
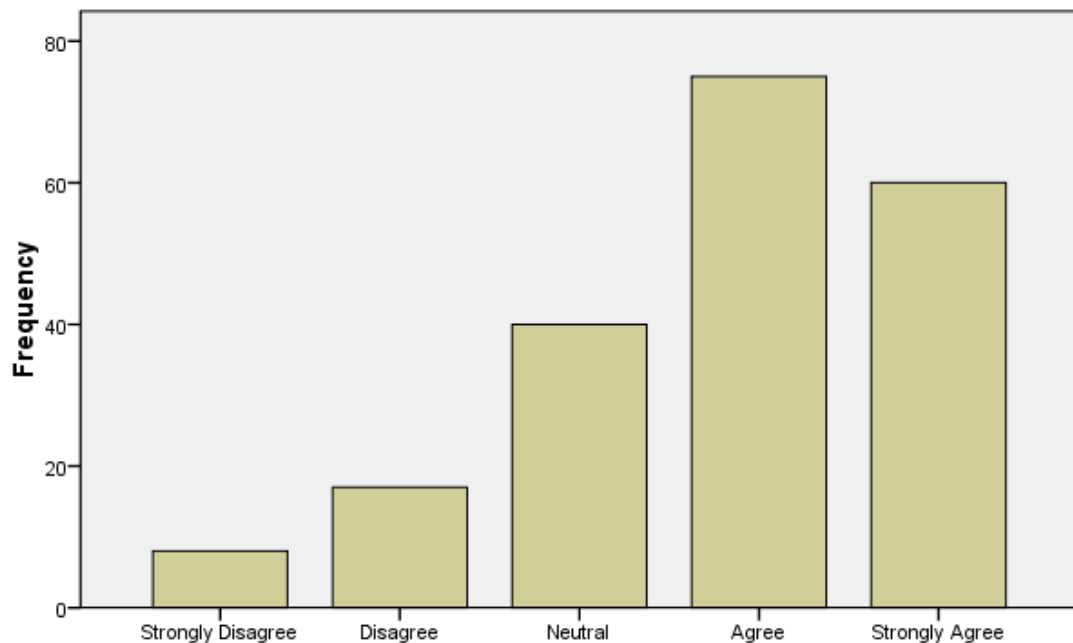
Figure 4.13: In your decision to stick to one brand, you often consider its responsibility towards the society i.e. the ethical branding process

The next question of the survey was related to customers' knowledge and willingness for purchasing from sellers that promote psychological pricing as a branding technique for their offerings. The respondents surprisingly expressed their agreement to the fact that they often visit such places and malls where their attention is diverted to shops promoting psychological prices on items.
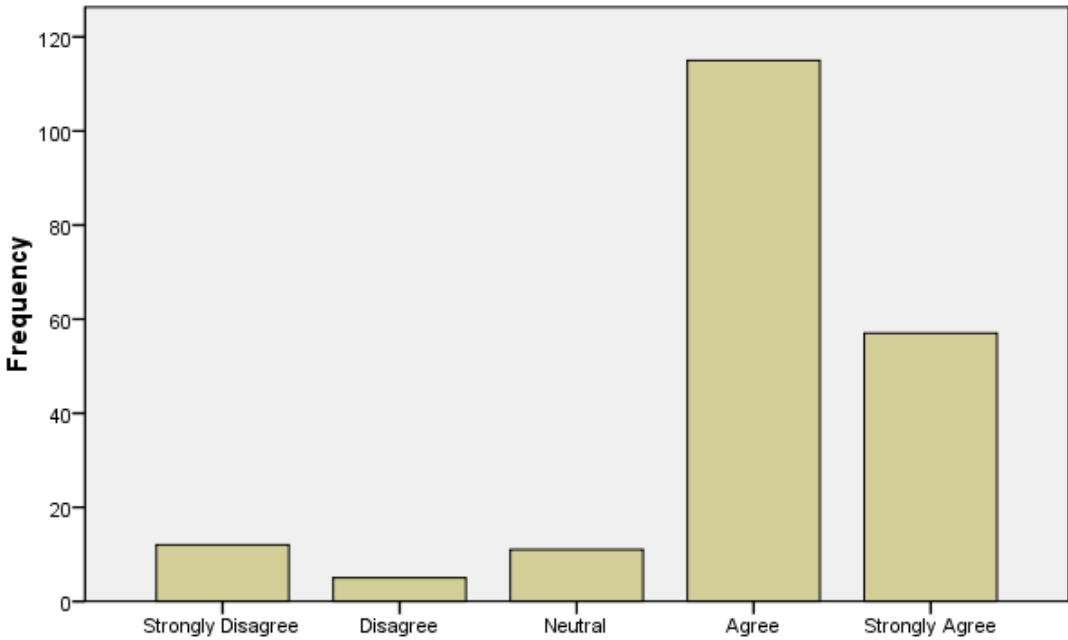
Figure 4.14: You often visit shops that offer psychological pricing on products example: 99 Turkish Lira, 199 Lira, 299 Lira etc.

Attitude of store staff and service representatives play an important role in compelling customers to pay another visit to them. In such a manner, marketers have to work towards improving customer services by hiring and training personnel who can exhibit a pleasant personality and polite attitude towards each type of customer (Hanna & Wozniak, 2001). In response to a question related to the attitude of the store clerk, majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that the attitude of store staff affects their inclination of visiting the store again or making purchases from its repeatedly.
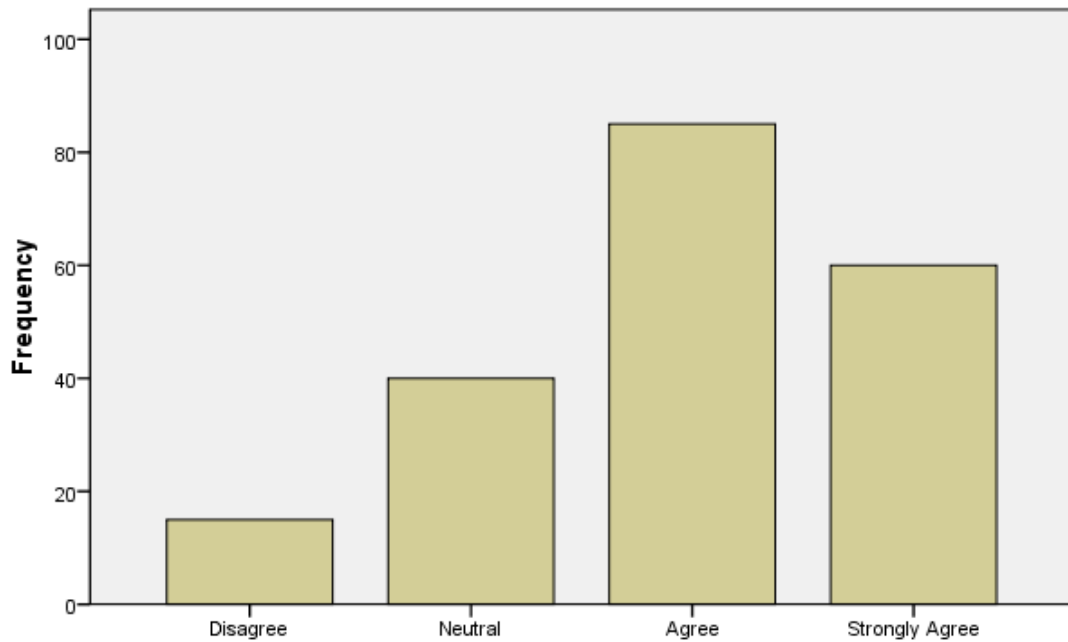
Figure 4.15: If at a store, you experience positive attitude from a store clerk, you will most likely be visiting them again

The next survey question was aimed at inquiring how customers view branding as a process that can save them on their time and search costs. Since brands prove to be a significant factor in making a product noticeable and 'visible' across various other items on store shelves, it definitely helps a customer identify an item that best suits his needs so that he may not look any further for it. This in fact, saves his time and efforts in searching for other varieties or items that may even not fulfill the needs and wants in an adequate fashion.
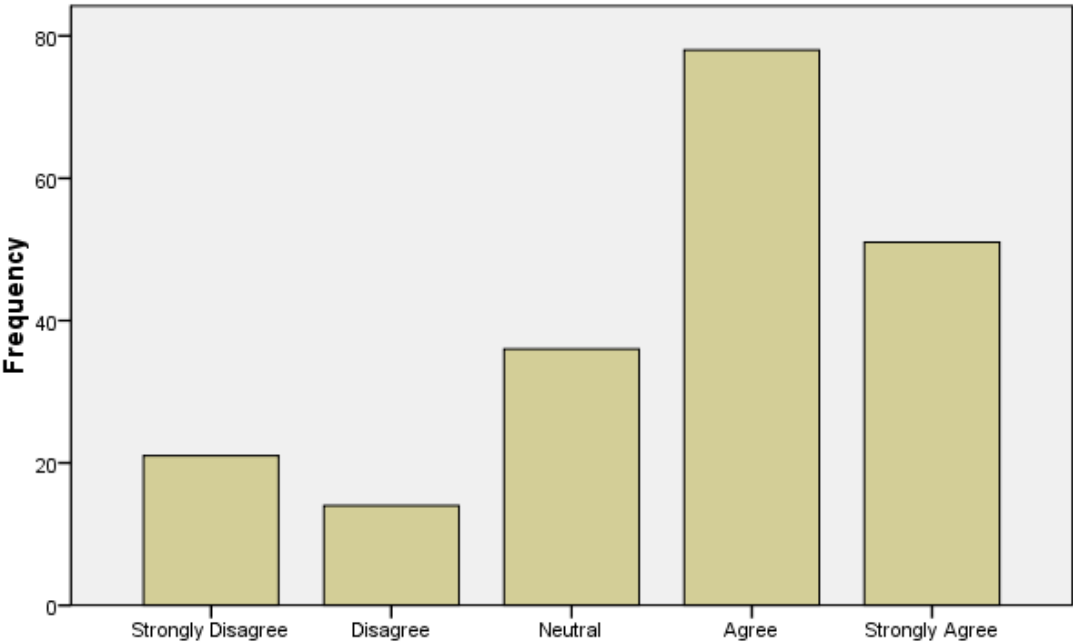
Figure 4.16: Brand allows you the saving on time and search costs where you can know which products to buy and which ones to leave

For branding companies, it is pertinent not only to market their products using successful branding strategies but also to keep their promises (Stephens & Townsend, 2007). If brands keep up with their claims and promises, it is naturally assumable that customers will return towards the same product since they were assured it yields the same satisfaction each time. In the following bar chart it was represented that a large majority of customers as respondents contended that they keep loyal to products and brands which live up to their claims of performance standards and product quality.
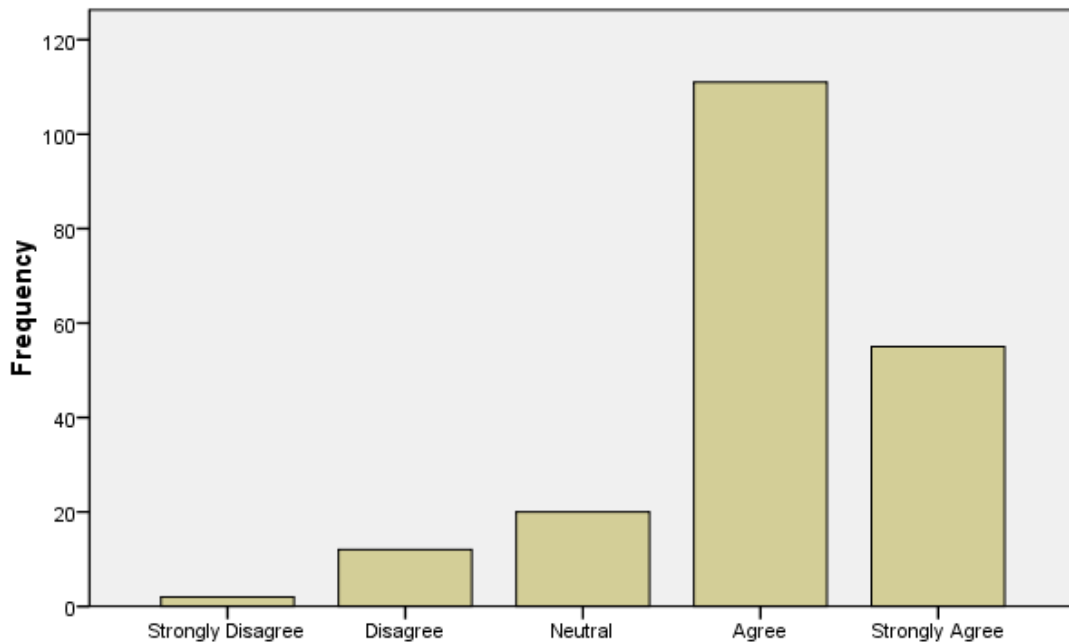
Figure 4.17: Your loyalty depends on the brand promise; if it exceeds your expectation, you are likely to continue buying the same item for longer time period.

Two of the major areas where branding teams really need to work on are the product labelling and packaging requirements since as discussed previously, one of the most important ways to attract the customer is through devising strategies that could help differentiate the product on a store shelf based on its uniqueness and usefulness in the eyes of the customers. 52% of the respondents agreed to the fact that product packaging and labelling helps them choose the brand while saving their time and search efforts. Similarly, another 22% of the respondents strongly believed in the statement, reinforcing their agreement to the posed inquiry aspect.
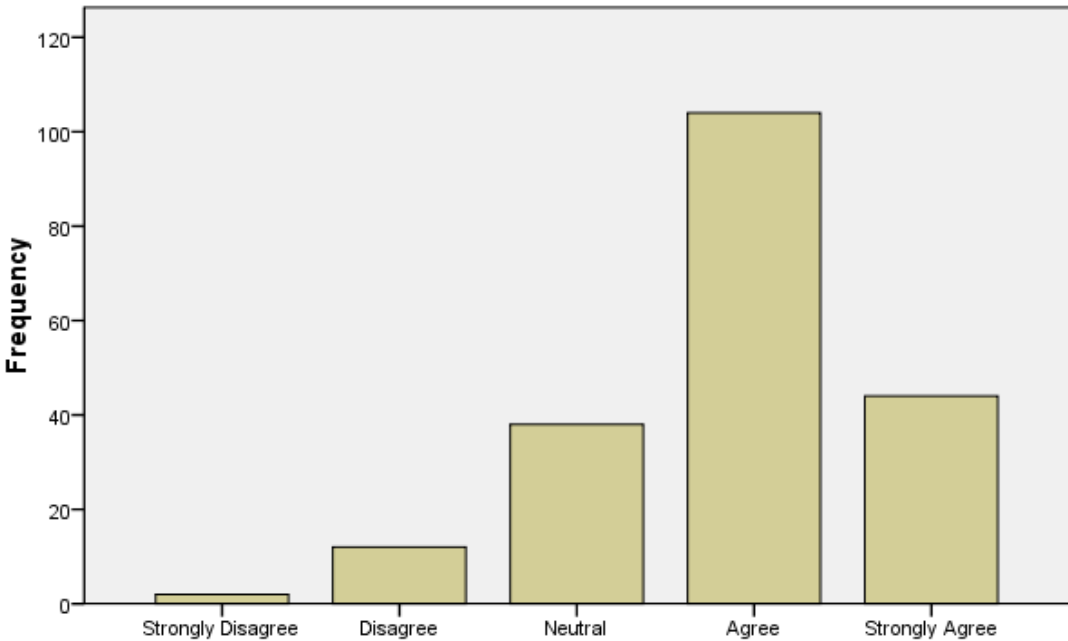
Figure 4.18: Your choice of brand depend upon the packaging and labeling of the product

Loyal customers are not just fair-weather friends; they adhere to a consumption of the same product even if the product price faces an increase. In regards to a similar statement, majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that if they find a product satisfactory, it is more likely that a price hike will not prevent them from using it. A large majority of the respondents agreed with the idea that loyalty engages them in repeated purchases of the same item even if the price of that item is increased.
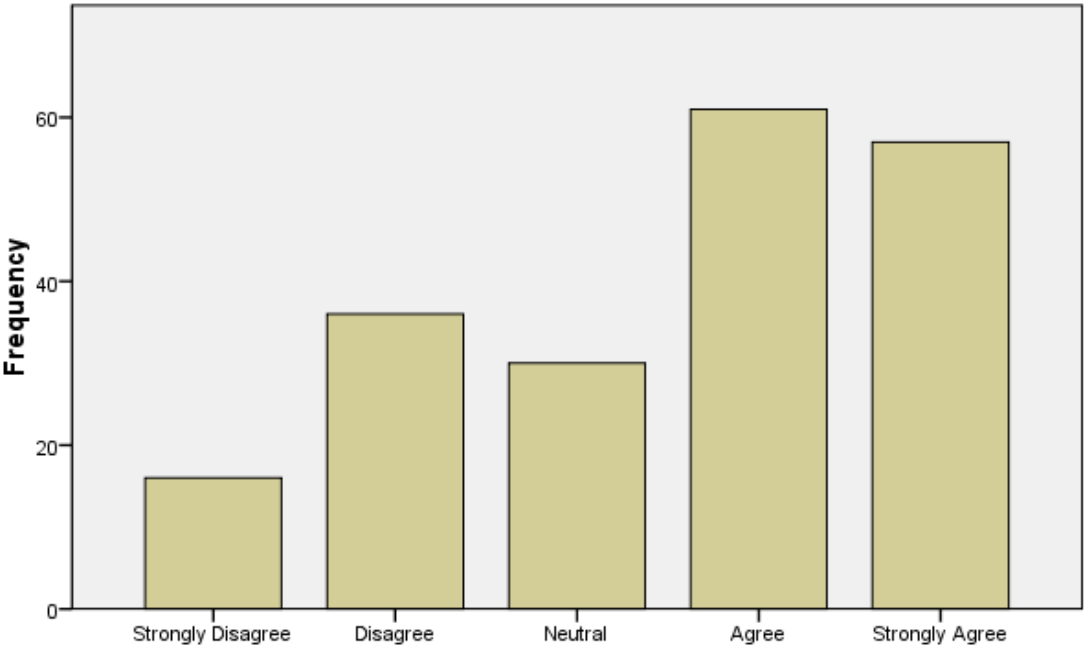
Figure 4.19: You will continue purchasing a familiar product that you find satisfactory to your needs, even if its price increases

It was to be ascertained through this survey question whether or not customers prioritized brands that offered high product quality and superiority as compared to their overall experience as compared to other products. Quite expectedly, a vast majority of the participants contended in affirmation that it was the product quality and superiority that compelled them to look for specific brands out of the many others that rest on shelves. There were only a few respondents for whom product superiority and quality did not matter as such since their choice of brands was dependent on something other than these two factors.
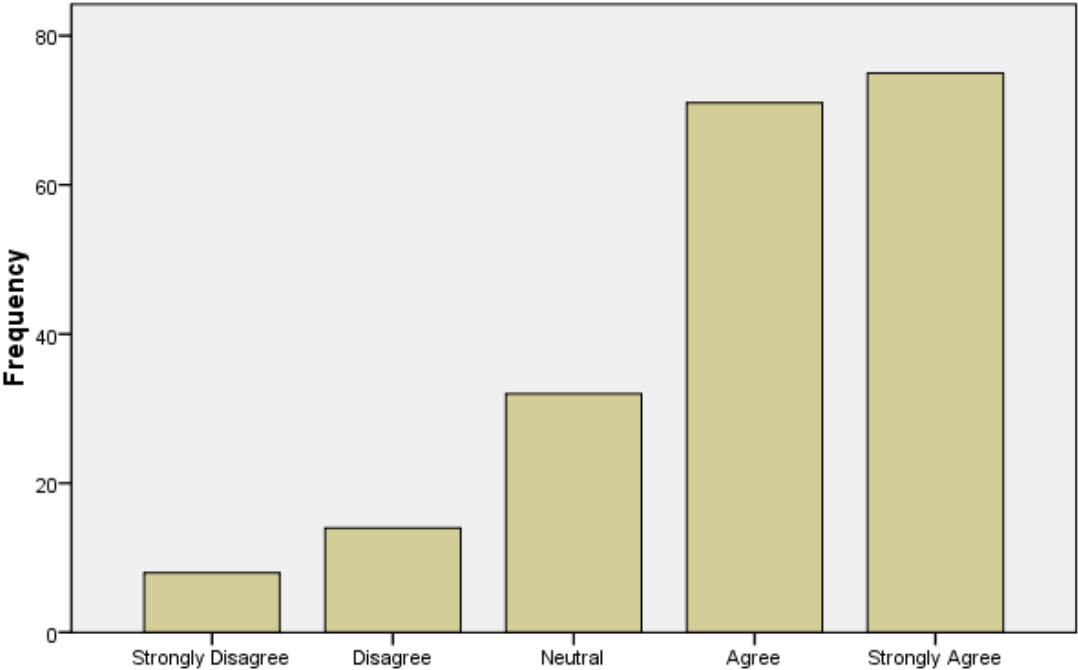
Figure 4.20: Your choice of brand depends upon its quality and superiority

The following section discusses the results of the regression analyses as was run through the SPSS software. The first table given below illustrates the variables that have been put in the system to obtain the regression analysis as defined by particular question numbers in which those specific variables were discussed.

Table 4.1: Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Q13, Q10, Q3, Q7, Q6, Q11, Q12, Q5, Q8, Q9, Q2, Q4[a]	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

Table 4.2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.982[a]	.964	.962	.238

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q13, Q10, Q3, Q7, Q6, Q11, Q12, Q5, Q8, Q9, Q2, Q4

The table given above represents the model summary for the regression model. According to this table, the standard error of the estimated model was 0.238 while an R square value of 0.964 indicates that the model was a perfect estimation of the effectiveness of branding on customer buying behaviors, and the yielded outcomes and results from the activity have been significant. The following table is the representation of ANOVA which is another essential statistical test to study the effect of one variable over another. As per the results indicated in the ANOVA table, the significance of 0.000 indicates that the model is highly significant in depicting a relationship between the two variables and that, there is a significant regression present between the variables selected for this research.

Table 4.3 ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	282.957	12	23.580	416.078	.000[a]
	Residual	10.598	187	.057		
	Total	293.555	199			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Q13, Q10, Q3, Q7, Q6, Q11, Q12, Q5, Q8, Q9, Q2, Q4

b. Dependent Variable: Q1

The following table represents the coefficients in the form of the unstandardized and standardized coefficients that seek to explain the standard error and the t-test values for each constant and variables. The significance value, as given in the very last column of the table, is a measure of the fitness of relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. The answers are categorized question-wise as each variable was chosen in the individual questions as was given in a tabular form previously. Based on the results of the regression analyses, it was observable that there exists a significant relationship between the given variables.

Table 4.4: Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	-.615	.163		-3.779	.000
Q2	-.035	.068	-.034	-.520	.603
Q3	-.057	.045	-.045	-1.264	.208
Q4	.002	.075	.002	.023	.982
Q5	.342	.063	.266	5.396	.000
Q6	.348	.059	.310	5.946	.000
Q7	-.147	.051	-.120	-2.910	.004
Q8	.099	.070	.073	1.409	.160
Q9	.098	.051	.099	1.932	.055
Q10	-.016	.055	-.011	-.294	.769
Q11	.000	.064	.000	-.002	.999
Q12	.088	.053	.093	1.642	.102
Q13	.428	.049	.383	8.742	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q1

The last section of the results analysis is the correlation table representation as illustrated in the tabular form below. Here, the correlation between variables in the study was illustrated while the significance (2-tailed) values indicate that there is a positive correlation between the variables.

Table 4.5: Correlations

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
Q1	Pearson Correlation	1	.914**	.750**	.959**	.931**	.932**	.830**	.907**	.930**	.835**	.882**	.912**	.932**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q2	Pearson Correlation	.914**	1	.814**	.912**	.886**	.907**	.806**	.894**	.939**	.866**	.924**	.940**	.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q3	Pearson Correlation	.750**	.814**	1	.767**	.756**	.672**	.827**	.849**	.787**	.627**	.703**	.847**	.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q4	Pearson Correlation	.959**	.912**	.767**	1	.926**	.937**	.824**	.915**	.929**	.838**	.869**	.920**	.916**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q5	Pearson Correlation	.931**	.886**	.756**	.926**	1	.879**	.886**	.884**	.906**	.854**	.867**	.868**	.881**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Q6	Pearson Correlation	.932**	.907**	.672**	.937**	.879**	1	.754**	.831**	.913**	.872**	.884**	.872**	.827**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q7	Pearson Correlation	.830**	.806**	.827**	.824**	.886**	.754**	1	.871**	.825**	.752**	.800**	.827**	.863**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q8	Pearson Correlation	.907**	.894**	.849**	.915**	.884**	.831**	.871**	1	.897**	.789**	.853**	.932**	.908**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q9	Pearson Correlation	.930**	.939**	.787**	.929**	.906**	.913**	.825**	.897**	1	.856**	.910**	.920**	.865**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q10	Pearson Correlation	.835**	.866**	.627**	.838**	.854**	.872**	.752**	.789**	.856**	1	.885**	.783**	.733**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q11	Pearson Correlation	.882**	.924**	.703**	.869**	.867**	.884**	.800**	.853**	.910**	.885**	1	.861**	.818**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q12	Pearson Correlation	.912**	.940**	.847**	.920**	.868**	.872**	.827**	.932**	.920**	.783**	.861**	1	.878**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000

	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Q13	Pearson Correlation	.932**	.856**	.783**	.916**	.881**	.827**	.863**	.908**	.865**	.733**	.818**	.878**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. CONCLUSION

This research based study was based on finding out whether branding strategies' effectiveness has any impact on how customers make purchasing decisions. Through the combination of an in-depth literary as well as primary analysis, the research contributed towards identifying that branding process is a very important milestone in creating the need of purchase based on its correct and careful projection of the features of the product/service (Petromilli, Morrison & Million, 2002). The findings from the research study indicated that there are many ways in which branding can play a very significant role in compelling or persuading the customer towards specific product experiences while leaving the others. In learning about competitive markets around the world, marketers must make a careful and cautious assessment of the technical challenges that can impede the success of their brands since not every brand can survive in a particular market. Based on the data insights gathered from the research ascertained that branding is an important milestone while a company fights the competition and aims to increase its market share. It is up to the marketing personnel how successfully they design the branding process and the objectives that it hopes to achieve for them.

In the light of the research activity and investigation, it can be concluded that branding effects and influences the customers' mindsets, their inclinations and behaviors in a profound manner. Branding affects the customer in his personal judgment, instinct as well as help in shaping the external influences. It is therefore, necessary that while marketers face the challenges of attracting customers in an era where a myriad of varieties are available in the store and online, they should first pay attention towards the objectives they want to achieve through the branding process. Devising the strategies for effective branding is as important as implementing those to specific products and services. The research contributes towards creating a linkage between how customers' choice is underlain by their specific attention and attitude towards brands that are present in the

markets. Owing to major differences in marketing communication and shopping strategies applicable at various online and offline forums, it was learnt that marketers need to gauge this difference and develop tactics accordingly (Zaltman, 2003).

The primary task lying before a marketer is to differentiate the product using successful branding strategies that could help the company in provoking loyalty. Based on the activity of data collection and analyses, there is some good piece of primary evidence that supports the thought that customers engage with a company on a loyal basis if they find that the brand actually lives up to its 'promises'. In these cases, it was seen that even some price hikes to the chosen product does not affect the purchasing pattern of the customer as long as he or she is satisfied with it. At the core of marketing strategy development and implementation, it is pertinent that marketers be mindful of the technical aspects of the branding activity while also not neglecting its ethical obligations (Hopkins, 2007). Based on cultural differences, customers' perceptions of brand changes as some customers will not like a product no matter how appealing the branding and promotions seem to be, because of cultural norms or social taboos. These concerns, as was discussed in a detailed manner in the literature review, pose strong and robust challenges for marketers who must 'brand' a product in a very careful manner.

The research study discussed the significance of branding as part of the marketing process to ensure that once customer is making a purchase related decision, he should be able to distinguish between brands based on their features, promises, uniqueness and usefulness. Branding is a very demanding task and indeed, a challenge in the digital age where customer is confronted with a lot of varieties. It also comes as a challenge to organizations that must make concerted efforts towards their visibility enhancement in a scenario where there are so many similar products available to fulfill a need or want. In a fiercely-competitive era, only those brands survive that does not only succeed in identifying with the customers but also live up to the expectations and fulfill customers' requirements in an efficient manner. Innovative packaging and pricing strategies, along with tactics to enhance brand awareness for customer has been the need of the hour and lately much work has been produced on these fronts indicating their role in the success of marketing promotions is essential and critical at the same time. Successful managers need to

understand the importance of branding in the present times where even a little less effort in the entire marketing process can result in heavy revenue losses or a total failure to capture the market. Hence, the role of branding in affecting customers while they make purchase related decisions is very crucial as it defines how branding process should be adopted to win more and more customers for a lifetime relationship.

5.1 Recommendations and Future Implications

While undertaking branding, marketers should be able to learn about competitors and come up with differentiated strategies. Systematic planning in this regard plays a crucial role in improving the branding process by helping marketers assess and evaluate the internal as well the external environment before they could reach some conclusions as to how a market segment should be catered. It should be noted that innovation and creativity lies at the heart of branding; the more creative a presentation the more number of people in an audience will find it appealing. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the marketers and branding teams to coordinate with the departments other than remaining limited to promotions side, so that all business units are equally on the same page and a well-developed branding message could be passed on to the customers' markets.

Considering that brands have specific effects on the customer psychology, his attitudes and his intentions for purchasing something, it is pertinent that marketers carefully developing a brand message that can address these aspects of the targeted customer while being aligned with his cultural and social values. It is relevant that brand message is conveyed or should at least, be worked upon in the very initial stage of the product development where the 4 Ps of marketing imply. Again, it is imperative that each decision should be communicated across the organization so that every unit must concentrate its efforts towards building up on the same values and promises.

In future, the implications of this research can mean much to managers, marketers and to organizations who are starting up their business. The contributions from this study will be helpful in understanding the effects of branding so that students can learn about its essentiality as part of the market plan. Managers may use this research as a stepping stone to explore further avenues where the digital age is bringing about far-reaching changes to the brands, and in their reinforcement and contribution to the overall personification of the product. It is also pertinent that managers study the lessons obtained from this research

in the light of increasing possibilities of earning more revenues and engaging the sales team that could help meet organizational objectives and strategic goals. Branding is neither a novel concept nor it is something that is not understandable on a basic level. However, the consequences of adopting what's right and leaving what's wrong in this process define the point where the success or failure of a marketing team is decided. While there is a significant need to discuss the implications of the research theme on customer buying behaviors it is also important that customer psychology is further assessed in the light of how their pre-conceived notions and cognition shapes their perceptions against brands. This is a possible future research avenue that should be explored as part of new research into the subject matter.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Gender	Male	Female			
Age	15-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	Above 45 years	
Education	Primary School	High School	University	Master's Degree or Equivale	PhD. Degre e
Marital Status	Single	Married			
Income Scale	Less than 2000 Liras	2000-4000 Liras	4000-6000 Liras	6000 Liras and above	
Your buying behavior of most product can best be described as	Impulsiv e	Planned	Do not know		
Your purchase habit for routine commodities can best be explained as	loyal to one brand for a long time	experime nt with new brands each time	buy what others buy	only buy what your family has been buying for last many	
Questions	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strong ly Agree**
Different branding strategies of companies can influence on your decision for purchasing a product					

You often visit a mall for shopping purpose, but end up doing ONLY window-shopping					
Your country of origin affects your product purchase decision					
You are most likely to purchase a car from a brand where your father bought one from, too					
You are most likely to repeat purchasing from a company if you think that the selling company is fulfilling its commitment towards providing you with high quality and superior product functionality					
In your decision to stick to one brand, you often consider its responsibility towards the society i.e. the ethical branding process					
You often visit shops that offer psychological pricing on products for example: 99 Turkish Lira, 199 Lira, 299 Lira etc.					
If at a store, you experience positive attitude from a store clerk, you will most likely be visiting them again					
Brand allows you the saving on time and search costs where you can know which products to buy and which					
Your loyalty depends on the brand promise; if it exceeds your expectation, you are likely to continue buying the same item for longer time period					

Your choice of brand depends upon the packaging and labeling of the product					
You will continue purchasing a familiar product that you fine satisfactory to your needs, even if its price increases					
Your choice of brand depends upon its quality and superiority					

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

Sayı:B.30.2.AYD.0.41.00.00/0 20-1755   07.10.2015

Konu: ANKET

Sayın Raghda LUTFI

Enstitümüz Y1312.130022 numaralı İşletme Ana Bilim Dalı İşletme Yönetimi Tezli Yüksek Lisans programı öğrencilerinden RAGHDA LUTFI' nın **"BRANDING: HOW INFLUENCES CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR?"** adlı tez çalışması gereği "Anket Soruları" ile ilgili anketi 28.09.2015 tarih ve 2015/11 İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyon Kararı ile etik olarak uygun olduğuna karar verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Zafer UTLU
Enstitü Müdürü

Frequency Tables indicating Cumulative Percentages

Table A1: Different branding strategies of companies can influence on your decision for purchasing a product

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	11	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Disagree	26	13.0	13.0	18.5
	Neutral	22	11.0	11.0	29.5
	Agree	67	33.5	33.5	63.0
	Strongly Agree	74	37.0	37.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A2: You often visit a mall for shopping purpose, but end up doing ONLY window-shopping

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Disagree	31	15.5	15.5	21.5
	Neutral	45	22.5	22.5	44.0
	Agree	65	32.5	32.5	76.5
	Strongly Agree	47	23.5	23.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A3: Your country of origin affects your product purchase decision

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Neutral	36	18.0	18.0	26.0
	Agree	68	34.0	34.0	60.0
	Strongly Agree	80	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A4: You are most likely to purchase a car from a brand where your father bought one from, too

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Disagree	24	12.0	12.0	15.0
	Neutral	37	18.5	18.5	33.5
	Agree	63	31.5	31.5	65.0
	Strongly Agree	70	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A5: You are most likely to repeat purchasing from a company if you think that the selling company is fulfilling its commitment towards providing you with high quality and superior product functionality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Disagree	19	9.5	9.5	10.5
	Neutral	16	8.0	8.0	18.5
	Agree	96	48.0	48.0	66.5
	Strongly Agree	67	33.5	33.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A6: In your decision to stick to one brand, you often consider its responsibility towards the society i.e. the ethical branding process

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	17	8.5	8.5	12.5
	Neutral	40	20.0	20.0	32.5
	Agree	75	37.5	37.5	70.0
	Strongly Agree	60	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A7: You often visit shops that offer psychological pricing on products for example: 99 Turkish Lira, 199 Lira, 299 Lira etc.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	12	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Disagree	5	2.5	2.5	8.5
	Neutral	11	5.5	5.5	14.0
	Agree	115	57.5	57.5	71.5
	Strongly Agree	57	28.5	28.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A8: If at a store, you experience positive attitude from a store clerk, you will most likely be visiting them again

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Neutral	40	20.0	20.0	27.5
	Agree	85	42.5	42.5	70.0
	Strongly Agree	60	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A9: Brand allows you the saving on time and search costs where you can know which products to buy and which ones to leave

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	10.5	10.5	10.5
	Disagree	14	7.0	7.0	17.5
	Neutral	36	18.0	18.0	35.5
	Agree	78	39.0	39.0	74.5
	Strongly Agree	51	25.5	25.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A10: Your loyalty depends on the brand promise; if it exceeds your expectation, you are likely to continue buying the same item for longer time period

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Disagree	12	6.0	6.0	7.0
	Neutral	20	10.0	10.0	17.0
	Agree	111	55.5	55.5	72.5
	Strongly Agree	55	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A11: Your choice of brand depends upon the packaging and labeling of the product

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Disagree	12	6.0	6.0	7.0
	Neutral	38	19.0	19.0	26.0
	Agree	104	52.0	52.0	78.0
	Strongly Agree	44	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A12: You will continue purchasing a familiar product that you fine satisfactory to your needs, even if its price increases

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	36	18.0	18.0	26.0
	Neutral	30	15.0	15.0	41.0
	Agree	61	30.5	30.5	71.5
	Strongly Agree	57	28.5	28.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table A13: Your choice of brand depends upon its quality and superiority

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Disagree	14	7.0	7.0	11.0
	Neutral	32	16.0	16.0	27.0
	Agree	71	35.5	35.5	62.5
	Strongly Agree	75	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

RESUME

PERSONAL
INFORMATION

RAGHDA LUTFI

📍 Bakirkoy ,Osmaniye,Tez St. 44/29, 34144 ISTANBUL (Turkey)

📱 00905364522438

✉ raghod2006@yahoo.com

STUDIES APPLIED FOR   Exchange Program

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

10/09/1990–25/08/1997	**Bachelor of Economics**
	Damascus University, Damascus (Syria)

22/12/2005–10/07/2006   **Certificate of Master Practioner of the Art and Science of Neuro Linguistic Programming**

The International NLP Trainers Association

General :
-NLP Diploma
-Certified Practioner of the Art and Science of Neuro Linguistic Programming
-Certified Master Practioner of the Art and Science of Neuro Linguistic Programming

25/05/2006–08/06/2006   **Certificate of Completion the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

FranklinCovey (United States)

14/09/2013–Present   **MBA Program**

Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul (Turkey)

WORK EXPERIENCE

27/06/1999–10/02/2010   **Import manager**

ALOMAR EST., Damascus (Syria)

Communication with foreign companies

PERSONAL SKILLS

Mother tongue(s)	Arabic

Other language(s)

	UNDERSTANDING		SPEAKING		WRITING
	Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Spoken production	
English	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2
Turkish	B1	B1	B1	B1	B1
German	A1	A2	A2	A1	A1

Levels: A1 and A2: Basic user - B1 and B2: Independent user - C1 and C2: Proficient user
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Communication skills	-Good communication skills gained through my experience as Import manager especially with foreign companies.
Organisational / managerial skills	-Managing the Import department of Alomar Est.
Job-related skills	-Training and teaching skills gained through working as NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) Trainer .
Digital competence	-Normal command of Office suite (word processor, presentaion software)
Driving licence	B