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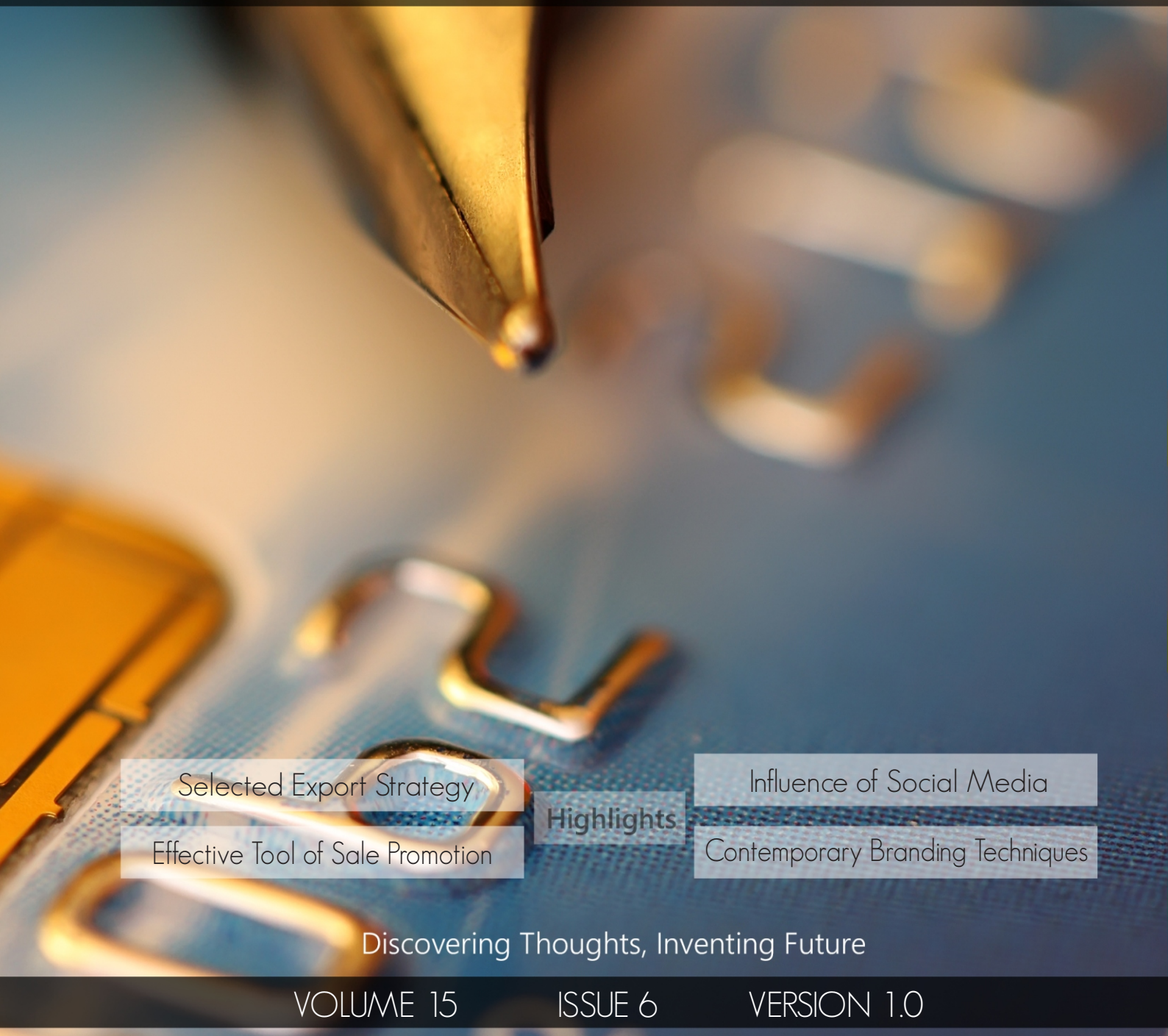

Selected Export Strategy

Effective Tool of Sale Promotion

Highlights

Influence of Social Media

Contemporary Branding Techniques

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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Retail Store Merchandise Assortment and Display and their Influence on Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour in North-West Nigeria

By Effiong Edet Asuquo & Paul B. Igbongidi

University of Uyo, Nigeria

Abstract- This paper determined the influence of retail store merchandise assortment and display on consumer impulse buying behavior in north-west Nigeria. Two specific purposes were set with two research questions to guide the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at .05 level of significance. The study was conducted in 10 Colleges of Education in North-west Nigeria on a target population of Business Education Lecturers. A total of 219 Lecturers who teach Business Education courses in the colleges and who also patronize retail stores as consumers were studied. A structured questionnaire called "Influence of Retail Store Merchandise Assortment and Display on Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour (IRSMADCIBB)" was used to obtain data for the study. The instrument was structured on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was face-validated by three experts in Business Education in University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria all in Nigeria.

Keywords: *merchandise assortment, merchandise display, impulse buying, consumer behaviour.*

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Retail Store Merchandise Assortment and Display and their Influence on Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour in North-West Nigeria

Effiong Edet Asuquo [α] & Paul B. Igbongidi [σ]

Abstract- This paper determined the influence of retail store merchandise assortment and display on consumer impulse buying behavior in north-west Nigeria. Two specific purposes were set with two research questions to guide the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at .05 level of significance. The study was conducted in 10 Colleges of Education in North-west Nigeria on a target population of Business Education Lecturers. A total of 219 Lecturers who teach Business Education courses in the colleges and who also patronize retail stores as consumers were studied. A structured questionnaire called "Influence of Retail Store Merchandise Assortment and Display on Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour (IRSMADCIBB)" was used to obtain data for the study. The instrument was structured on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was face-validated by three experts in Business Education in University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria all in Nigeria. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability index of .75 was obtained. A total of 204 copies of the instrument were retrieved for analysis. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. It was found out that the respondents agreed that retail store merchandise assortment and display are capable of influencing consumers' impulse buying behavior. It was recommended, among others, that retail store merchants should take advantage of training and retraining programmes such as workshops, seminars and conferences to update their retailing skills for better product presentations to their customers.

Keywords: merchandise assortment, merchandise display, impulse buying, consumer behaviour.

I. Introduction

The assortment of items held by a store is a major element of the retail mix which can easily be used to influence consumer buying decision. Kotler and Armstrong (2001) defined merchandise as the products and services or lines that a retailer offers to the target market. In other words, merchandise is the product or service meant for sale and that is capable of giving satisfaction to the consumer.

Cox and Brittain (1993) stated that while some retailers adopt specialized merchandise policy like in the case of those dealing with specialty goods, others operate a scrambled merchandise policy that offers a wide range and variety of product lines. Examples are those retailers that carry convenience and shopping goods such as supermarkets, superstores, and multiple shops.

Merchandise assortment is defined by Bovie and Thill (1992) as the unique mix of products offered by a retailer. It includes the breadth and depth in which these lines are stocked. Similarly, Kotler and Keller (2005) defined product mix or product assortment as a set of all products and items a particular seller offers for sale and this consists of various product lines.

Merchandise management, otherwise known as merchandising is defined by Levy and Weitz (1998) as the process by which a retailer attempts to offer the right quantity of the right merchandise in the right place at the right time while meeting the organisation's financial goal. Similarly, Bovie and Thill (1992) defined merchandising as the process of planning merchandise assortment for a retail store, making sure that the right products are available for target customers. The retailer is, however, limited by the amount of money available for merchandise and the space in the store. He must decide whether to carry a large variety of different types of clothing (categories) for instance, dresses, blouses, and jeans, or carry fewer categories but a larger assortment of more styles and colours within each category.

Not only does the retailer stock goods that meet customer requirements, he must also consider products that can trigger purchase whenever the customer enters the store. Hodge (2004) carried out a study to ascertain the type of product that can easily drive impulse buying in the store and discovered that low marginal products, short life-span products, light or easily carried items, and easily stored products are commonly purchased spontaneously by customers.

Merchandise display is another important element of the retail store. Merchandise in the retail store should be positioned in particular ways to aid customer selection and stimulate sales. Merchandise displays are special presentations of a store's products used to attract and entice the buying public. All merchandise displays are predicated on basic principles

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designed to increase product purchase. Display will be effective by applying the following tips:

- Allocate merchandise display space appropriately in recognition of customer demographics;
- Make certain that the cleanliness and neatness of the display is maintained;
- Do not overcrowd a display;
- Combine products that are used together in display;
- Small items should be displayed so that would-be customers can get a good look at them without having to solicit the help of the staff.

Khan (2014) suggested that knowing the customer in and out will help tremendously when creating an effective merchandise display. According to Khan, it is not only being familiar with demographic data like age, income and educational level, but digging a little deeper into psychographics and behaviours or their lifestyle. Khan further stated that the retail space should be the most productive and most efficient salesperson and that maximizing revenue involves employing the art and science of visual merchandising. Since a good merchandise display is a product of a good store layout, it should be done in such a way as to allow merchandise to be displayed without obstructing the movement of the customers along the store shelves.

Cox and Brittain (1993) observed that a good display continues to catch the customer's eyes the moment he enters the store. Cox and Brittain further maintained that a stimulating and attractive in-store display of products can bring about high stock turnover and economical space management. The store layout and merchandise display involve planning the internal arrangement of different sections according to merchandise variety and assortment. By so doing, the retailer is able to manage available space, and give customers adequate space to move round the store without any traffic jam. When items in store are strategically located, they draw the customer into the store and facilitate purchase of impulse and complimentary goods. Rook (1987) observed that impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately. Furthermore, Miller (2002) described impulse buying as a situation where most purchase decisions are made in-store without a prior plan before entering the store. In this study, therefore, impulse buying shall be defined in relation to product and store features. Thus, impulse buying is defined as a buying action that occurs when the consumer is exposed to an attractively presented or conveniently located product in a store. This is why Ghag (2013) opined that to influence customer buying behaviour, the store design should attract customers, enable them to locate merchandise, keep them in the store for a long time, motivate them to make unplanned or impulse purchase and provide them with a satisfying customer experience.

II. Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted to achieve the following specific purposes:

- To determine the influence of retail store merchandise assortment on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers.
- To determine the influence of retail store merchandise display on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers.

a) Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- What is the influence of merchandise assortment on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers in North-west zone of Nigeria?
- What is the influence of merchandise display on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers in North-west zone of Nigeria?

b) Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of Business Education Lecturers on the influence of merchandise assortment on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers based on their cadre.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of Business Education Lecturers on the influence of merchandise display on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers based on their cadre.

III. Research Method

The design of the study was a survey design. The study was conducted in North-west Nigeria with focus on Business Education Lecturers who are also consumers of goods and services. They are part of the market for consumer goods. The population of the study comprised 219 male and female Business Education Lecturers in the ten Colleges of Education offering Business Education in North-west zone of Nigeria. This population was chosen because as consumers of retail products and as teachers of business subjects, they are knowledgeable enough in the subject matter and could attend to the item questions objectively. The entire population was studied and there was no sample since the population was small and manageable. A structured questionnaire called "Influence of Retail Store Merchandise Assortment and Display on Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour (IRSMADCIBB)" generated from the review of related literature was used for data collection. There were a total of 71 item divided into

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eight sections (A – H) in the instrument. Apart from Section A which contained information on personal data of respondents, the other sections contained items on the seven clusters of variables of the study. The instrument was structured on a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), No Opinion (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Agree (1). The instrument was face-validated by three experts in Business Education in University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria all in Nigeria.

Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability index of .75 was obtained showing a high internal consistency. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the help of three trained research assistants and a total of 204 copies were retrieved for analysis. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Any Mean response below 3.00 was regarded as not accepted while any Mean response of 3.00 and above was accepted as having influence on the impulse buying behavior of consumers. Similarly, null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld when p-value was greater than .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was, however, rejected when p-value was less than .05 level of significance.

IV. Presentation and Analysis of Data

a) Research Question One

What is the influence of merchandise assortment on the impulse buying behavior of consumers in North-west zone of Nigeria? Data relevant to this research question are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Influence of merchandise assortment on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers in North-west N = 204.

S/N	Item Statements	Mean $\bar{x}$	S.D.	Remarks
1.	Merchandise stocked according to consumer needs can influence consumers to make impulse buying in a retail store	4.29	0.54	Accepted
2.	Merchandise stocked according to the needs of specific group of consumers can influence impulse purchase by consumers	4.26	0.69	Accepted
3.	The quality of merchandise a store carries influences consumers' decision to buy on impulse.	4.22	0.73	Accepted
4.	A unique mix of products especially with complimentary goods in a store influences consumers to buy on impulse.	4.23	0.78	Accepted
5.	Consumer goods made available in different varieties of color, model, size, brand, and style in a store can influence impulse buying decision of consumers.	4.27	0.68	Accepted
6.	A retail store with broad assortment of product of many lines is likely to influence consumers' decision to buy more goods on impulse.	4.31	0.67	Accepted
7.	Low marginal products like chewing gum, chocolate, magazines, and biscuit, though not always in shopping list attract consumers impulse buying tendency.	4.35	0.62	Accepted
8	Retail stores that maintain stock availability are likely to influence consumers' decision to stop-over and make impulse purchase.	4.29	0.63	Accepted
9.	Reliable products that function satisfactorily over time attract customers' impulse buying tendency.	4.21	0.84	Accepted
10.	Short life-span products like perishable items are likely to influence consumers' decision to buy on impulse.	4.24	0.63	Accepted
11.	Lighter and easily conveyed merchandise are likely to influence impulse buying decision by the consumers.	4.27	0.67	Accepted
12.	Products that are easily stored and not vulnerable to quick decay can induce impulse purchase by consumers.	4.27	0.71	Accepted
	Grand Mean	4.26		

The data presented in Table 1 above showed that the Mean of all the twelve items on merchandise assortment ranged from 4.21 to 4.35. The Mean of each item was above 3.00. This indicated that the respondents accepted all the items as having influence on consumer impulse buying behaviour. A Grand Mean of 4.26 was obtained in the cluster indicating that all the items in the cluster were accepted as having influence on consumer impulse buying behaviour. The Standard Deviation of the items ranged from 0.54 to 0.84. This

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indicated that the respondents were not too far apart in their opinion.

b) Research Question 2

What is the influence of merchandise display on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers in North-west zone of Nigeria? Data relevant to this research question are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Influence of merchandise display on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers in North-west zone of Nigeria. N = 204

S/N	Item Statement	X	S.D.	Remarks
1.	A good merchandise display in a retail store induces customers to buy on impulse	4.32	0.64	Accepted
2.	A display pattern that has merchandise in categories encourages impulse purchase.	4.32	0.55	Accepted
3.	Items positional at eye-catching level in the store are capable of influencing customers to make impulse purchases.	4.53	0.52	Accepted
4.	Items such as men's suits, women's wears, and jewelry can draw customers into the entire length of the store thereby induce impulse purchase.	4.32	0.72	Accepted
5.	Daily demand lines such as staple food when placed near the store entrance can influence impulse purchase.	4.40	0.59	Accepted
6.	Window display that provides a visual image about the type of merchandise in the store can influence customers to make impulse purchases.	4.23	0.61	Accepted
7.	Impulse items displayed at the check-out point can influence impulse buying by customers while waiting to be attended to.	4.34	0.57	Accepted
8.	Self-service counter encourages customers to examine merchandise and thus influence them to make impulse purchase.	4.30	0.62	Accepted
	Grand Mean	4.33		

The data presented in Table 2 above showed that the Mean of all the eight items ranged from 4.23 to 4.53. The Mean of each item was above 3.00. This indicated that the respondents accepted all the items as having influence on consumer impulse buying behaviour. A Grand Mean of 4.33 was obtained in the cluster indicating that all the items in the cluster were accepted as having influence on consumer impulse buying behaviour. The Standard Deviation of the items ranged from 0.52 to 0.72. This indicated that the respondents were not too far apart in their opinion.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean response of Business Education Lecturers on the influence of merchandise assortment on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers based on their cadre.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Mean Responses of Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers III, II, I, Senior Lecturers, Principal Lecturers and Chief Lecturers of Business Education on the Influence of Merchandise Assortment on consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour.

S/N	Item Statement	Sum of Squares	Df	p-value (Sig)	Rmk
1.	Merchandise stocked according to consumer needs can influence consumers to make impulse buying in a retail store	Between= 2.148 Within= 57.788 Total =59.936	6 197 203	0.297	N.S.
2.	Merchandise stocked according to the needs of specific group of consumers can influence impulse purchase by consumers	Between= 4.568 Within= 92.662 Total =97.230	6 197 203	0.144	N.S.
3.	The quality of merchandise a store carries influences consumers' decision to buy on impulse.	Between= 4.789 Within= 103.721 Total =108.510	6 197 203	0.175	N.S.
4.	A unique mix of products especially with complimentary goods in a store influences consumers to buy on impulse.	Between= 4.039 Within= 122.133 Total =126.172	6 197 203	0.372	N.S.

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5.	Consumer goods made available in different varieties of color, model, size, brand, and style in a store can influence impulse buying decision of consumers.	Between= 3.051 Within= 91.577 Total =94.628	6 197 203	0.367	N.S.
6.	A retail store with broad assortment of product of many lines is likely to influence consumers' decision to buy more goods on impulse.	Between= 3.284 Within= 88.260 Total =91.544	6 197 203	0.297	N.S.
7.	Low marginal products like chewing gum, chocolate, magazines, and biscuit, though not always in shopping list attract consumers impulse buying tendency.	Between= 2.123 Within= 78.167 Total =80.290	6 197 203	0.502	N.S.
8.	Retail stores that maintain stock availability are likely to influence consumers' decision to stop-over and make impulse purchase.	Between= 8.212 Within= 73.724 Total =81.936	6 197 203	0.002	S
9.	Reliable products that function satisfactorily over time attract customers' impulse buying tendency.	Between= 6.523 Within= 139.413 Total =145.936	6 197 203	0.168	N.S.
10.	Short life-span products like perishable items are likely to influence consumers' decision to buy on impulse.	Between= 2.926 Within= 79.780 Total =82.706	6 197 203	0.306	N.S.
11.	Lighter and easily conveyed merchandise are likely to influence impulse buying decision by the consumers.	Between= 5.826 Within= 86.346 Total =92.172	6 197 203	0.043	S
12.	Products that are easily stored and not vulnerable to quick decay can induce impulse purchase by consumers.	Between= 4.233 Within= 98.395 Total =102.628	6 197 203	0.212	N.S.
	Cluster p-value			**0.240**	

Significant at $p < 0.05$, Not Significant at $p > 0.05$

As shown in Table 3 above, the observed p-values for 10 out of the 12 items on retail store merchandise assortment were greater than 0.05 significance level with a cluster p-value of 0.24. The result showed that the hypothesis of no significant difference in respect of 10 out of the 12 items was upheld because the seven groups of respondents did not differ significantly in their Mean responses on the influence of retail store merchandise assortment on impulse buying behaviour of consumers.

However, the data revealed that 2 out of the 12 items had their p-values less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that there was significant difference in the Mean responses of the seven groups of respondents on the 2 items. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference in respect of the 2 items on the influence of merchandise assortment on impulse buying behaviour was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean response of Business Education Lecturers on the influence of merchandise display on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers based on their cadre.

Table 4

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Mean Responses of Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers III, II, I, Senior Lecturers, Principal Lecturers and Chief Lecturers of Business Education on the Influence of Merchandise Display on consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour.

S/N	Item Statement	Sum of Squares	Df	p-value (Sig)	Rmk
1.	A good merchandise display in a retail store induces customers to buy on impulse	Between= 3.171 Within= 81.118 Total =84.289	6 197 203	0.266	N.S.
2.	A display pattern that has merchandise in categories encourages impulse purchase.	Between= 0.962 Within= 61.327 Total =62.289	6 197 203	0.796	N.S.
3.	Items positional at eye-catching level in the store are capable of influencing customers to make impulse purchases.	Between= 2.002 Within= 54.821 Total =56.823	6 197 203	0.308	N.S.
4.	Items such as men's suits, women's wears, and jewelry can draw customers into the entire length of the store thereby induce impulse purchase.	Between= 3.963 Within= 100.122 Total =104.084	6 197 203	0.265	N.S.

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5.	Daily demand lines such as staple food when placed near the store entrance can influence impulse purchase.	Between= 1.851 Within= 70.988 Total =72.838	6 197 203	0.528	N.S.
6.	Window display that provides a visual image about the type of merchandise in the store can influence customers to make impulse purchases.	Between= 3.803 Within= 73.824 Total =77.627	6 197 203	0.125	N.S.
7.	Impulse items displayed at the check-out point can influence impulse buying by customers while waiting to be attended to.	Between= 3.664 Within= 64.317 Total =67.981	6 197 203	0.088	N.S.
8.	Self-service counter encourages customers to examine merchandise and thus influence them to make impulse purchase.	Between= 4.280 Within= 74.877 Total =79.157	6 197 203	0.087	N.S.
	Cluster p-value			0.307	

Significant at $p < 0.05$, Not Significant at $p > 0.05$

Data in Table 4 revealed that there was no significant difference in the Mean responses of the seven groups of respondents on all the items on retail store merchandise display whose p-values in the cluster was 0.30 greater than 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that the hypothesis of no significant difference in respect of all the items was upheld because the seven groups of respondents did not differ significantly in their Mean responses on the influence of retail store merchandise display on impulse buying behaviour of consumers.

V. Findings of the Study on Research Questions

The respondents accepted the following items on merchandise assortment as having influence on consumer impulse buying behaviour. They include merchandise stocked according to general and specific customer interest and needs, the quality of merchandise a store carries, a unique mix of products with complimentary goods, merchandise presented in varieties of colour, model, size, brand, and style as well as merchandise with broad assortment. Others are low marginal products like chewing gum, chocolate, and magazines, stores that maintain stock availability, reliable products that function satisfactorily over time, perishable products that have short life span, and lighter and easily conveyed, as well as easily stored (perishable) products.

The respondents accepted all the cluster of items on merchandise display as capable of influencing consumer impulse buying behaviour. These include stores that have good merchandise display, display pattern with merchandise clearly categorized, items displayed at eye-catching level, daily-demand-lines displayed near store entrance and check out point, window display that provides a visual image about the type of merchandise, and self-service-counter designs that allow customers to examine merchandise freely.

VI. Findings on the Hypotheses

It was found that there was no significant difference in the Mean responses of the seven ranks of consumers (Business Education Lecturers) on the influence of merchandise assortment for 10 of the 12 items. However, significant difference existed in the Mean responses of the seven groups of respondents on items 8 and 10 dealing with (i) stock availability maintenance, and (ii) lighter and easily conveyed merchandise. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld for 10 items because their p-values were greater than .05 level of significance, but rejected for 2 items whose p-values were less than 0.05 significance level.

It was found that there was no significant difference in the Mean responses of the seven ranks of consumers (Business Education Lecturers) on the influence of merchandise display for all the 8 items on consumer impulse buying behaviour. This is because the p-values for all the items were greater than .05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference for this variable was upheld.

VII. Discussion of Findings

- The items on merchandise assortment on research question one were all accepted by the respondents as having influence on consumer impulse buying decision. These include merchandise stocked to satisfy both general and specific group of customers, the quality of merchandise, mixture of products with complimentary goods, merchandise presented in varieties of colour, model, size, brand, and style, merchandise with broad assortment. Others include low marginal products, maintenance of stock availability, presenting reliable products, as well as lighter and easily conveyed merchandise. The findings were in agreement with the views of Hodge (2004) who discovered that merchandise assortment that includes low marginal items, short lifespan products, easily conveyed items, and easily stored products are commonly purchased on

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impulse. The findings also agreed with the opinion of Okeke (2004) who found in her study that offering a unique mix of products, maintaining a high quality of merchandise and adequate balance of items in the store have a high influence on store patronage and unplanned buying.

- The findings in research question two on merchandise display were in consonance with the opinion of Ghag (2013) who stated that the display of items in a store has an important influence on the purchase of the items. The study found that consumers are easily disposed to impulse buying when they enter stores that have good display pattern which clearly categorizes merchandise; stores that display demand lines near store entrance and check-out point; window display that provides a visual image about the type of product; as well as stores that have self-service counter display which allows customers to examine merchandise freely. Equally consistent with this finding is the opinion of Cox and Brittain (1993) who maintained that the way in which merchandise are displayed and presented in a retail store is a vital element in the selling process that is capable of inducing on-the-spot buying decision by consumers. Similarly, the finding was consistent with the opinion of Howe (1992) who stressed the importance of displaying merchandise according to categories. It was also consistent with the opinions of Levy and Weitz (1998) that the more visible a product is, the greater the chance of being purchased.

VIII. Conclusion

The intention of the retailer is to improve in his sales in order to stay in business and continue to offer satisfactory service to his customers. The retailer desires to retain existing customers, win new ones, and compete favourably with competitors within his retailing milieu. All these could be possible if the retailer operates a customer-oriented enterprise that meets all customer needs. Improved shopping environment, quality merchandise offered at conveniently located place at reasonable price, as well as improved customer service quality are basic requirements for drawing customers to the store.

Since all the lecturers who are also consumers of goods and services from the retail stores agreed that all the variables on merchandise display can influence impulse buying behaviour, it could be concluded therefore that merchandise display is an important variable that can improve sales through impulse buying. Similarly, since all the respondents agreed that all the items listed in merchandise assortment are capable of influencing impulse buying, it could be concluded that merchandise assortment is an important element of retailing mix that retailers must maintain in order to meet the buying needs of their customers.

IX. Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made in the study:

- Store merchandise should be carefully selected to meet the buying needs of customers. The services of well trained personnel in the art of stock acquisition and management should be utilized by retailers so as to ensure efficiency in stock management.
- Store items should be strategically displayed in order to attract the attention of any customer visiting the store. Leading items should be located at eye level and impulse items should be placed where customers can conveniently reach.
- Retail store operators and attendants should endeavour to attend entrepreneurship trainings in form of workshops and seminars with a view to updating their knowledge in merchandising.

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Influence of Social Media on Brand Consciousness: A Study of Apparel in Karachi

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Abstract- The world is moving at a fast pace, everything changes quickly. Now a day people love to being brand conscious due to meet their circle status. With increasing social mobility the street trends are going to be outdated, consumers want to be socially accepted and for this following the latest trends through latest sources such as social media. The subsequent paper endeavors to gauge the influence of social media on brand consciousness: a case of apparel in Karachi. The research objective is find out the influence of social media, its usage pattern and also studying the brand consciousness in terms of demographics of respondents. For achieving these objectives types of social media sites are considered such as blogs, media sharing & social network sites. The survey was conducted in Karachi. The findings of regression analysis unveil that social networks negatively related to brand consciousness while blogs and media sharing are positively related. Further the research need to be carried out over large geographical area and sample.

Keywords: brand consciousness, social media sites, consumer generated sites, user generated contents, blogs, media sharing and social network sites.

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Influence of Social Media on Brand Consciousness: A Study of Apparel in Karachi

Sobia Siddique [α] & Muhammad Zaki Rashidi [σ]

Abstract- The world is moving at a fast pace, everything changes quickly. Now a day people love to being brand conscious due to meet their circle status. With increasing social mobility the street trends are going to be outdated, consumers want to be socially accepted and for this following the latest trends through latest sources such as social media. The subsequent paper endeavors to gauge the influence of social media on brand consciousness: a case of apparel in Karachi. The research objective is find out the influence of social media, its usage pattern and also studying the brand consciousness in terms of demographics of respondents. For achieving these objectives types of social media sites are considered such as blogs, media sharing & social network sites. The survey was conducted in Karachi. The findings of regression analysis unveil that social networks negatively related to brand consciousness while blogs and media sharing are positively related. Further the research need to be carried out over large geographical area and sample.

Keywords: brand consciousness, social media sites, consumer generated sites, user generated contents, blogs, media sharing and social network sites.

I. Introduction

a) Background

Before introducing brand consciousness its need to explain what a brand is. A brand is name, phrase, logo design, symbol or combination of these uses to identify and differentiate your product from others (Kotler et al; 2005). Each brand has a differentiated value and discrete uniqueness that it assigns to product. In Old times there were only unvaried or homogeneous products so consumers do not have variety, brands were also not present and they were obliges to purchase what was available.

i. *Brand Conscious*

Brand consciousnesses refer to the degree to which people go for brand name to make purchase decisions. (Ralph p.57).

Brand consciousness refers to the customers' orientation towards the purchase of expensive and well-known brands (Sproles and Kendell 1986). Brand conscious is not just a matter of knowledge or awareness about brand or not to select a brand over another. It is a matter that a brand has distinct image, quality, attributes as far as their name and functions are concerned. Consumers of new generation are taking brands as an essential factor in purchasing decisions and they are running behind a tag or some renowned name. Brands are trying to get the attention of customers and setting a new dimension for marketers. Brands are giving customers with tremendous quality, perceived utility and desirability. Brands are taking as self-representation by customers; they think a selected brand that they are using is representing their personality and a sense of satisfaction.

As the Pakistan's economy is growing, the Pakistani consumers are obsessing with branded products, not only the local brands are getting preferences but also the imported brands are getting popular. Consumers are now able to pay premium charges for reputed brands. As social mobility is growing, general people consciousness for brands is also increasing. The street trends are now obsolete. Consumers those are eager for renowned, image, fame, trend, design, variety would go for brands.

ii. *Social Media*

The tools and strategies to connect with consumers have changed drastically due to emergence of internet in the last decade with the introduction of social networking sites. Social media is the media (contents) that are uploading by consumers or marketers whether a image, video, slide show or blog. The SM known to means of interaction among the people in which they generate, share or exchange information, ideas & experience in virtual communication and network (Wikipedia). S.M is two way communication platform that's why it is also called citizen media or consumer generated media (Rob, 2009). Nielsen measured that internet users are continue to use social media more than any other type of site. SM rely on cell phones apps, web based technologies to generate extremely interactive platform where individuals and groups share, forge, discuss or modify user generated contents. There are many different types of social media sites such as face book, linked in, twitter, instagram, youtube, pintrest, google plus and still many others.

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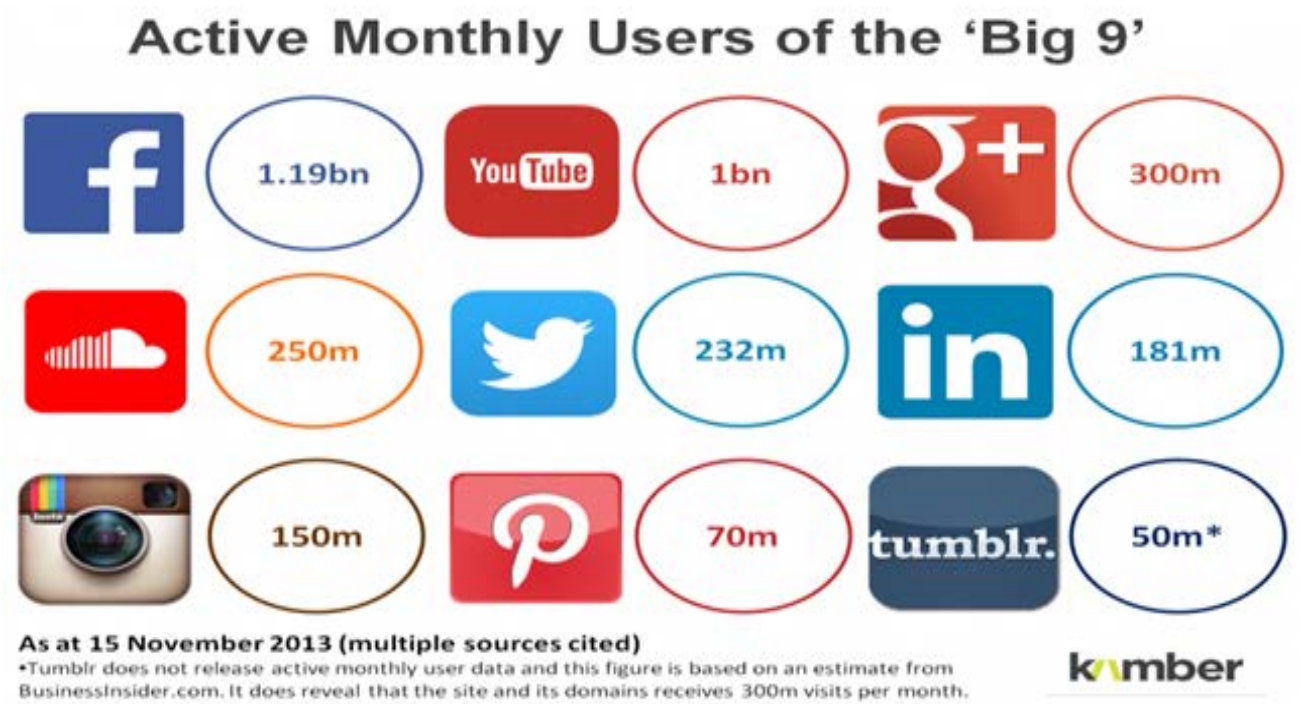

Figure 1 : Statistics of users of social network sites.

Now day's social media sites are becoming popular all over the world. As the statistics of social media sites (November 15, 2013) shows, that about 1.19 billions per month using face book, 150 million using instagram, 1 billion you tube 232 twitters, and 300 million google.

iii. *Social Media as a Marketing Tool*

Because of expeditious popularity of social media usage, it's now one of the important online marketing tools. SM has shift the existing communication pattern and influencing the communication process amongst individuals. Marketers are paying attention toward this emerging media to attract their customers because this media is providing a new landscape for marketers. As a marketing tool, SM has altered from old media in many ways like easy usability, quick response, easy and rapid accessibility, immediacy and eminence. Mangold & faulds (2009), define SM as virtual/ online words of mouth forum. Enormous contents are spread across geographical boundaries and dissemination of these contents known as online words of mouth. Social media brings all together as it is an interactive stage. Consumers share their view with comments, like, share, blogs, discussions and some other ways. It's providing new measures and trends about customers' interests, opinion, feedback, publicity and it is less expensive and a quick to communicate than traditional media. The marketers send their message to their consumers directly as it is a one to one communication.

iv. *Social Media's Integration Theory Model*

The growing adaptation of social media marketing has an impact on communication process i.e. explain by this theory.

Exposure, feedback, engagement (*connecting*) and *exchange* (sharing) that social media platforms changes the traditional media's communication. The information flowing is not only "one way street" in which customers received messages through the "I communicate- you receive" mantra. But as compare to traditional media, social media integration is seen as an interactive process that place consumers in center and sanction equal level information exchange between customers and brands, originating a long lasting feedback communication process and giving to the brands *a total engagement approach.* Thus social media is providing "two ways street" communication.

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Figure 2 : Social Media Integration Theory

v. *Social Media and Brands*

The marketers' created information on social media, affect customer's perception about brands. Social media allowing the marketers to brought a new aliveness to the business world and have emerged with a lot of distinction and eminence in the way of influencing consumers. Also offering customers to interact with other consumers so marketers are no longer the single source of communication about a brand. Moreover, the customers are largely considering social media for finding information and pre-purchase fashion search trend about apparel brand and considering it as reference group. Social media is putting the customers in the center by authorizing them to participate in conversation and broadcast their opinion about brand, and now messages cannot only sent by brand owners to masses. In the world of social media, consumers often involve in conversation about the brands providing positive & negative responses or feedback depend on their past experience and perceptions about that brands. Information that customers display constructed to communicate their personality to their friend and others. All these blogs, posts, etc. that are created by consumers to share with others are known as user generated contents. In this way, social media became a not paid promotion in which a satisfied customer shares that how much he/she like or experience of a brand with others. Each brand has its own social media page that runs an utter marketing campaign focused on gaining the market share and orders from customers.

vi. *Social Media's Types*

Many of the social media types are but few are such as:

- Social networks (face book, google plus, twitter, tumblr, linkdin, instagram, pintreset)
- Media sharing (flickr, youtube, slideshare)
- Blogging post (tumblr, twitter, google buzz)

vii. *Social Networks*

A devoted website or other application that permit consumers or its users to exchange information among them by comments, messages, posting information, images/ photos etc. Normally they consist of profiles, so many ways to communicate with other users, can create groups, etc. Face book & Linked In are most popular among others.

viii. *Media Sharing*

Media sharing are the web sites empower users to store, share and exchange their multimedia files such as photos, videos, musics etc. with others. These sites are free of cost and give modest amount of storage. *Flickr and You tube are most popular.*

ix. *Blogging*

Blogging sites are regularly updated websites that enable its users to send and publish informal conversation messages and sharing their experience observations. The most popular is *Twitter*.

x. *Apparel Brand Consciousness and Social Media*

Now day's people are becoming more conscious for their apparel, they are focusing on their clothing as sense of enhancing their personality. Therefore, in this way apparel industries are growing and inventing new tactics to catch consumers. With the raise of increasing apparel trend, another trend is also growing that consumers are becoming brand conscious. Why mostly customers instinctively go for brands when choosing apparel products? When less costly generic

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ones are available as an option? The brand consciousness is growing day by day in our society. Due to social media, this trend is growing at a very high speed. Mostly the apparel brands are having their page on social media that on the daily basis updating consumers who are following those pages about new design, latest stocks, promotions and discounts. Youngsters are conscious about brands because the think that they look more modish, fashionable, funky and attractive in trade marks. Adults wear branded clothes so that they seem to be more decent, fetching, and adorable and their effect on other people must be good. Now the latest dresses, which are tag with different brands, catch the attention of people. Customers are going insane/crazy in following the race of brands & reducing the street trend markets are now focusing on tagged with latest brands. Well-known and prominent brands of outfits create a sense of indulgence among huge numbers of customers in society. Decision of consumers to bought a specific apparel brand is influence by many unusual factors. Apart from functional benefits, customers may select a brand to covey their personality, social status, recognition, affiliation or to attain their desire of uniqueness & newness (Ksim et al.'2008), or it can be said as because of peers or social influence have an important role in brand choosing, as it help in socialization process, individuality means self expression consumers select brands to express themselves. The few out of many functional motivations may be a brand name, stylish design, price, quality, availability or any other.

The demographic factor also has an impact in selecting branded products such as younger preference for selecting brand is different from adults, male preference are different than females and income is also a factor that affect brand selection.

As the consumers purchase decision for a brand is influence by peers, social acceptance recognition or personality expression the social media networking sites are with an online forum for discussing the brands and this user generated contents having a great influence on consumers these are in the form of online words of mouth may be blogs, friends post e.t.c., and consumers preference for brands also influenced by brand pages on the social media.

There are thousands or more brands of apparel are on social media sites but following are Gul Ahmed, Nishat Linen, Khaddi, Bonanza, Khaadi, Junaid Jamshed and Alkaram studio.

b) Research Question

In order to assess the effectiveness of social media platform as a means of influencing the brand consciousness with a case of apparel. The following question is considered for this research study:

- What is the usage pattern of social media among the people of Karachi with in the age of 14-34?
- What is influence of user generated social media on brand consciousness for apparel products?

c) Research Objective

Objectives for this research are:

- To study the influence of social media on the brand consciousness for apparel products.
- To study the degree of brand consciousness with respect to demographic factors (age & gender) of social media users.
- To find out which social media site is use more than other.
- To know which brands of apparel were frequently purchased through social media.

d) Justification

This study is conducted to view social media influence in creating brand consciousness from many different aspects and this research will help maximum in understanding the degree of brand consciousness and also provide a valuable insights and opportunities to marketers about brand consciousness and social media as a tool for advertising their brand. Research also wishes to study what actually motivates consumers to became brand conscious with respect to social media.

e) Limitation

During the study, there were few limitations.

- The research focus is on just the few aspects of social media and not covering the entire scope of social media platform that is available now days.
- Only the social media users are consider, the non users are not consider in this study.
- Comparatively the sample size is small that limits the generalizability of findings. The study can be strengthened by increasing the sample size.
- Geographical area is another limitation because the research is conduct only in Karachi. So the future research should be conducted to including participants in other geographical areas.
- Time constraint inhibit to cover the entire scope of social media and also respondents can not be studied over time to see how the influence on brand consciousness changes.
- Limited demographic factors considered (age, gender & income), other demographic factors such as living location not considered.
- Only social media has studied no other media is consider.
- The brand consciousness studied only for apparel products.
- Another limitation is that the relationship and impact of different variables on brand consciousness is not studied in this research.

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f) Scope of Study

The finding of study contribute the understanding of social media's recommendation on brand consciousness. This study focusing on the young and as well as adult people of Karachi that made a good section of consumers and helpful for existing marketers and existing market to understand the growing scenario with reference of social media's user generated contents.

II. Literature Review

a) Introduction

In his dynamic book, *Managing Brand Equity (*Aaker, A., D. 1991) starts by quoting Larry Light, a prominent advertising official. Light argued, "The marketing battle will be a battle of brands, a competition for brand dominance ... It will be more important to own markets than to own factories. The only way to own markets is to own market dominant brands." (p. 9).

In the current market scenario, competition between product and services are at its peak and consumers have so many choices to buy a product in any individual category, marketers are striving for gaining the maximum market share. For this, they are trying to differentiating their product by making them brands.

According to (Cowking & Hankinson, 1996): "A brand is simply a product or service which can be distinguished from its competitors". Brands give the base point upon which customers recognize and affiliate either with a single service or product or cluster of them (Weilbacher, 1995).

It was also said by (Kohli & Thakar, 1997) the consumers buy the brand name and are willing to pay premium price for them, they do not buy the product they buy brand name.

This shows that brands are influencing the consumers' choice and now worthy assets of an organization. As the brands are increasing and delivering more values, features and benefits, consumers are moving toward branded products.

b) Brand Consciousness

There are a large number of researchers that over many years have worked and still working on brand conscious through different aspects. "Brand consciousness refers to the customers' orientation towards the purchase of expensive and well known brands. The brand consciousness of a consumer is a mental orientation in which consumers choose brand-name products based on their familiarity with this brand due to advertising and market awareness" (Sproles and Kendell, 1986). Brands are important attracting factor for consumer buying decision (Leibeck, 1996). Ralph Wright (1999) in his research said that in making a purchase decision the brand has a prevalent stratagem. When consumers have a high level of brand Consciousness, they are likely to believe that brands are symbols of both status and prestige (Liao and Wang, 2009). Because of this perception of brand-name products, consumers who are highly brand conscious prefer to purchase expensive, well-known products rather than lesser-known brands (Lehman and Winer, 1997).

(Andrea, 2007) state that rise of brand consciousness is related with the shifting from the community located consumers with compact sense of selection to in many strands of life, to the individual / family decision maker for whom consumption is a major domain or realm for lifestyle choices and later self-identity. Consumers are going to use the brands to value themselves.

c) Social Media

Social media is a media, which are now considered as important tool by marketers because it is providing a new way for marketers to connect with customers directly and at less cost in more effective and efficient way then ever before. SM platform known to be one of the most powerful and fast way of brand building, today social media have exponential power. It is great time for all kind of business to adopt social media and take it seriously (Neti, S. 2011).

Similar to Neti, Cromity, (2012) assert that the social media brings real and significant changes of communication between organization and individuals. The consumers are connecting with brands in new ways through social media that are a far from retailers and marketers control. He added that with social media consumers after the purchase remain connected or engaged with brand. He further acknowledge that the social media platform increasing the brand visibility and the responses from consumers and also user's sentiments about brand in forms of comments increasing the marketers knowledge to better communicate with their customer.

"Brands that stay away from new media such as Social Media will become extinct and would lose contract with their customers in future" (Lovett & Owyang, 2010).

The social media is allowing the consumers to share their perspective, encounters, response or feedback about product these things are consumer generated. User generated contents (UGC) means any type of contents such as digital images, blogs, comments, audio files, videos , discussions form posts and others forms of media that was initiated by end users or consumers and openly available to other consumers or end users. This is also known as consumer generated media (CGM). User generated communication have great influence on consumers perception about a brand. The consumers considering the communication created by other individual on social media as more trust worthiness than other sources. He

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argued that user generated communication has a positive influence on customer's purchase intention (Schivinski & Dąbrowski, 2013).

Supporting the views of Schivinski & Dąbrowski (Gensler, Völckner, et al., 2013) cited in his research that "A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is - it is what consumers tell each other it is." (Scott Cook). In their views increasing scale of consumer to consumer interaction and easy user generation content the consumers are now creating their own brand stories (through i.e., forums, blogs, social networks, video-, photo-, and news-sharing sites) and share with their peers. These multi vocal natures of stories are the electronic words of mouths that have great affected others consumers about that brand than any other forms.

d) Social Media Types

Human creature are social & have an innate need of fellowship or a desire to be accepted & fit in it. Consequently, they tend to be heavily influence by the human beings around them or with whom they spend most of their time on purchase decision making. Such people range in relationship including family, friends, colleague and even just casual familiarity. These people shape their preferences and on which consumers rely for brand or product information. Stallen et al. further clarify this that "the decision making influenced by the behaviors of others". The influence of others now a day comes from the online source that is social media networking sites.

According to Shruti & Anukrati (2013) as social media is a relatively new construct in the communication world takes & SM shortens time to reach out to customers. SM is a well built & powerful communication tool. SM presents brand with extensive reach and innumerable communication possibilities. This assist the marketers to grasp the views of customers by blog writing or commenting on some one else blogs. There were 61.0 percent of customers who are more likely to prefer and engage with those brands that integrate social contents into their digital properties & 72 percent are those users who use SM to get or share information about brand and products.

In recent years there was a research conducted on 249 consumers to analyze the social media influence on buying behavior. The findings shows that the consumers are either buying the expensive or in expensive products are relying on the suggestions and recommendations of people on social media sites by their contacts or friends and respondents especially young customers appear to be pursuing more prompt and quick model of social media such as face book than any other (Forbes & Vespoli, 2013).

The consumer-generated contents are important influencer for any kind of brands. Consumers influence other consumers in numerous ways. They act as models that inspire imitation among those who observe their purchase and consumer behavior, either directly or indirectly. Consumers are searching information from certain individual whose opinions matter a lot for them than others. The online words of mouth or contents are greatly influencing the consumers purchase because with the advent of social media the consumers are now directly linking with others and sharing their experience about brand either positive or negative. As marketers argue it, the contents shared by of consumers are two times more effective than any other advertising media (P. Sema, 2013).

(Matthews, 2013) has argued that bloggers are the most potent spoke in the wheel of influencers. His research revealing that 86 percent of influencers are bloggers. Moreover his study exhibiting that 81 percent of the online U.S population are confident and trusting on that suggestion & contents they got from bloggers.

Bashar, A., Ahmad, I., & Wasiq, M. (2012) found that consumers are embracing social media like anything. Their study found that approximately every respondent of this study obsessed to go on social networking for learning more and more about product, to know about exclusive offers, to find out the response of their friends and others on that selected brands/ products.

Social network is the market leader among other the social media types because people rely more on social network such as face book. Social media activities actually affecting the purchase decision. The finding of this research shedding light on the advertising of brands through social networks are considered by customer during their decision of brand selection. The promotion campaign affecting positively the customers perceptions of brands.

Kotler & Armstrong (1999). Found that there are social, cultural, personal, and psychological factors that influence consumer decision-making (p.131).

Z. Ghazali (2011) investigates the socialization agents' effect on brand consciousness. Her study concluded that peers emerged as the most important agents of consumer socialization and a primary source for influencing decision. The students are influence by peer because they want to be socially accepted among them.

According to Salim & Praven (2010) in their research they pinpoint that the most important reason for moving towards brand is quality, the other features are least important. Moreover, he stated that consumers giving more importance to quality as compare to brand name or company name. If they find good quality in generic products as compare to brand they will go for generic rather than brands.

M. Rehman (2013) averred that more often the consumers, who are quality conscious and unaware or unsure about product performance usually, go to purchase brands over generic products. He further

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added that the consumers perceived the branded products are of good quality and generic products are not. Consumers are taking the brands as a signal of reflective of personality. As like Rehman, (T. Hassan, A. Lanja, & B. Hurrah, 2014) stated that consumer wear branded clothes to look attractive and to impress people.Price of branded clothes is not a big issue for them and they prefer branded clothes over non-branded regardless of high price. They buy branded clothes because they provide more value for money and because of their good quality and because of comfort and recognition that they give. Promotion of the brand by a well-known personality hardly affects the decision. People get influenced by price offers, design and style of products to change the brand. Fashion, family and friends influence the choice of brand.

(Mittal & Aggarwal, 2012) "Brands enhance the personality of person" (p. 576). In his research, he was trying to find out the awareness about branded clothing and factors for buying the branded clothes. Among brand characteristics, factor consumers prefer quality to all other factors and among expectation or motivation; they choose recognition as major source for branded clothes.

(Nandini & Jeevananda, 2012) Clothing as a form of non-verbal communication reflects wearer's identity. The branded clothes may be considered as a symbol of status. Branded clothing is now considered as a medium for expressing self and to adjust in the social environment. The factors that were taken in consideration are purchase knowledge, Social Consciousness, Materialism, and Quality Interest. The conclusion of this research explaining the purchase knowledge is the most dominant factor in choice of clothing or apparel and social conscious is the second factor.

Another study done by Fernandez, (2009) study focuses on the impact of branding on clothing choice. The motivational factors such as peer influence and advertising were taken into account. He further added that the clothing choice motivations are prestige, individuality, social influence and functionality. As consumers are considering the apparel as status so the reference group, (peer pressure) influences decision most. Consumers prefer those brands of clothing that give them the social acceptability so this thing leading toward brand consciousness. In his research other than reference group, he also studied the advertising impact. The advertising giving positive impression about a brand because the consumer will not buy that with which they are not familiar.

III. Conclusion

The literature review consider the different studies related to brand conscious about apparel and social media types. It is supporting the view that consumer during purchase decision considering the social media contents and review different types of social media sites. The contents that s available on these sites is providing by their friends, family and advertiser and these information influencing the brand consciousness of social media users. It is also found that brand consciousness is due to social acceptability, self recognition and also quality assurance. The user-generated contents are considered because created by these influencers among which consumers want to be accepted.

a) Theoretical Framework

The influence of social media on brand consciousness main theme of this research and a literature review was conducted on brand consciousness. This research is supported by the literature not directly but somehow. In this research, study two variables are discussed the independent, dependent. The social media types (blogs, social networks and media sharing) are independent variable and brand consciousness is the dependent variable. The relationships between variables are depicted in this framework.

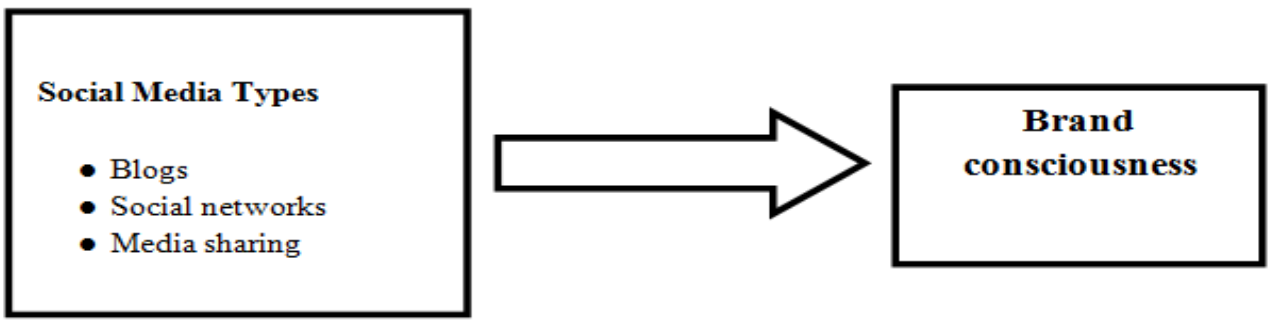

Figure 3 : Theoretical Framework

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IV. Research Methodology

The intent of this chapter of research is to expound the chosen research methodology and research paradigms or philosophy. Following onto this, the chapter explores the approach, purpose of research, its strategy options, extent of researcher interface, study setting, its time horizon, unit of analysis and as well as the selected data collection methods.

a) Research design

The research onion model of Saunders et al. (2012) has adopted and its structure is useful for research design. The model is an onion and each layer of the onion is a stage in the process of research design at which important decisions are to be made.

This research study has conducted from a pragmatist point of view with deductive approach. Its nature is quantitative and mono quantitative method adopted. The research is descriptive by its purpose and strategy of research is survey. The type of investigation of research is correlation and extent of the researcher interface is minimal (studying events as normally they occur). The settings for the study are non-contrived (natural environment) and the unit of analysis for data collection is individual.

A cross sectional time horizon has selected instead of longitudinal study because a 'snap shot' or one shot study of the situation is possible in this limited time. Questionnaire is use as tool for data collection and different statistical techniques and software use to analyze the data.

Both the primary and secondary method used to collect data:

Primary data: has been collected by the self administered questionnaire.

Secondary data: has been gathered from research journals, articles, books, previous research papers.

b) Procedure

- The research started by reading different researches, articles and reports to get insight about the topic selected.
- Then a proposal has prepared and submitted, after the proposal approval.
- When a proposal approved the research move to its first chapter introduction followed with its second chapter is literature review, third is research methodology and fourth is data analysis.
- Respondents participate in a survey about apparel selection and with respect of social media.
- The survey data has collected from respondents in the month of October and November.
- The questionnaire use to collect data through online survey.
- Then finally, data analyze on SPSS and interpret.
- At the end, recommendations are making based on the data.

c) Population

Population of this research is current users of social media sites in the Karachi are 1,046,848 which include both male and female. Out of which 764,1999 are males and 282,649 are females. The active users with age limit of 14-34 are 942,161 and males are 674,637 and 249,523 are females.

d) Sampling

Sampling units: the active users on any of the social media sites both young (14-24) and adults (24-34).

Sampling approach: the approach use for selecting sample size is the confidence interval approach with 95% confidence interval and 10% marginal error.

Sample size: the sample size for this research study is about 100 respondents decided for survey. The sample comprising of dissimilar proportion of male and female 100 respondents the questionnaire were distributed among 100 people but only 87 completely filled & other 13 are non respondents because some of them refuse to response and some didn't filled. So, response rate is 87%.

Sampling method: the sampling technique which adopted for survey is non-probability and convenient sampling.

e) Instrument selection

Both the primary & secondary data has collected.

Secondary data was collected for the extracting information about brand consciousness and social media by using the research articles and literature available online. The survey technique is use to collect primary data from respondents with the help of questionnaire tool.

Questionnaire is design to know consumers view point about the degree of social media that influence customers' brand consciousness. The questions in questionnaire are structured (close ended) which consist of both multiple choices and simple dichotomous and also unstructured open ended. Questionnaire is consist of different section. First part is including information about demographics and second part consist of the series of questions base on the different variable which are design to know impact or influence of social media on respondent regarding their apparel brand consciousness and social media usage pattern of respondents. The survey conducted in different places such as universities, homes etc. That are convenient with in the age of 14-34 years old.

f) Variables

The variables that has considered in this research study are both the dependent and independent variable. The brand consciousness is dependent variable and social networks, media sharing, micro blogging and blogs comments.

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g) Plan of Analysis

- The analysis of data requires the analysis of questionnaire questions that are both structured and unstructured so both demand different analysis and analysis is done to achieve the research objective:
- The first part of questionnaire is demographic characteristics and are in nominal scale. So, the descriptive analysis of this section is done through the frequency and presentation of this showed by bar graphs.
- Then next is reliability analysis of items by using cronbach's alpha.
- The cross tabulation between gender and brand importance and also between age and brand importance to know the degree of brand importance with respect to demographics.
- Further the frequency and percentage analysis use for knowing the meaning of brand name that respondent attach to the brand.
- Regression analysis use to know the relation between dependent variable over independent variable.
- Frequency analysis use for knowing mostly spending time of respondents on social media sites and mostly purchasing brand.
- Finally the for open ended question quasi statistics used to find out the most popular and mostly used social media site.

h) Software Employed

The IBM SPSS (Statistical Package For The Social Sciences) used for data analysis.

i) Research schedule

The research started from the month of august and work has divided in different session:

- 1st session: 1 weeks for research proposal.
- 2nd session: 2 weeks for studying the introduction of research
- 3rd session: 3 weeks for literature review
- 4th session: 4 weeks data collection through questionnaire.
- 5th session: 1 week for data analysis and interpretation.
- 6th session: 2 week for publishing and binding.

j) Ethical Consideration

There are following ethical consideration that has taken for the research are:

- Respondents are aware about the nature and purpose of research.
- Consents of respondents acquire before asking them to fill the questionnaire.
- The respondents are volunteered to fill the questionnaire and are aware of their right to withdraw.
- The data is presents and analyzed with honesty with out making changes or misrepresenting the data.

V. Data Analysis & Findings

a) Reliability

Nunnally (1978) recommends reliability of about 0.70 or higher is better because it shows higher internal consistency.

Table 1 : Reliability

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.803	.763	26

Table 1 shows the measure of reliability for data is measure by Cronbach's Alpha. Reliability statistics of cronbach's alpha is 0.803 which shows a higher level of internal consistency for this data.

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i. *Respondent Profiles*

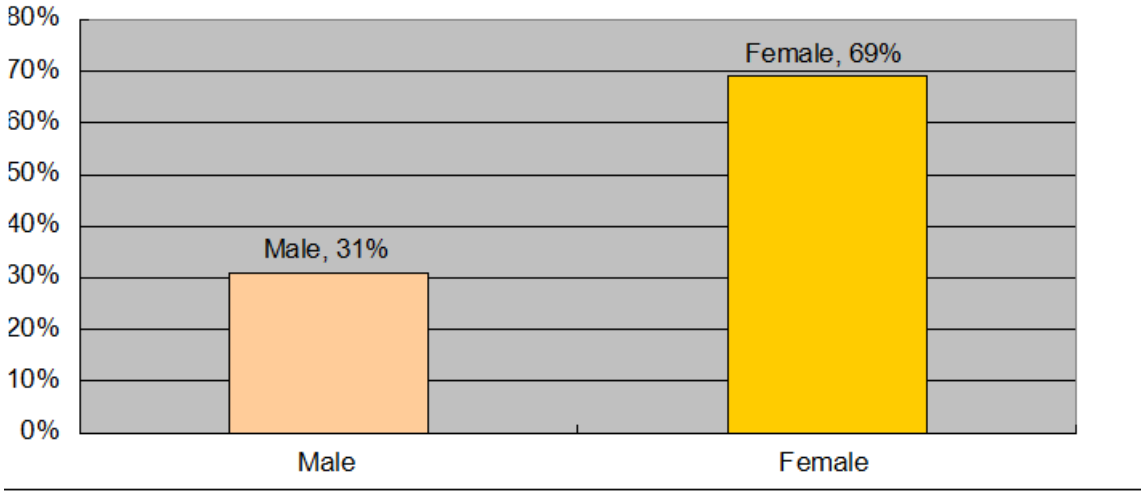

Figure 4 : Gender

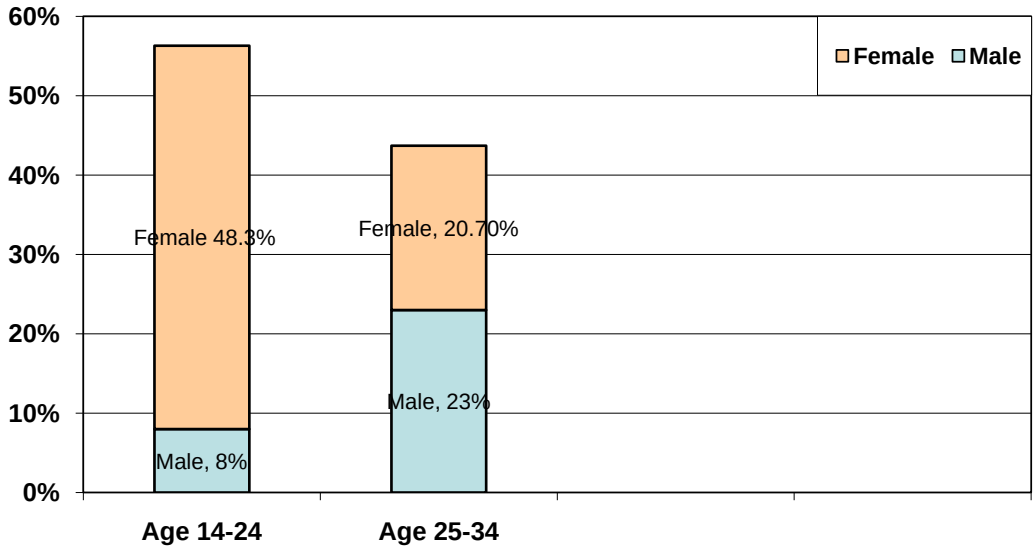

Figure 5 : Gender and Age

Respondents' profiles indicate that out of 87, 69% are females and 31% are males. All respondents fell between the 14 to 34 age group. The out of 69% female 48.3% of fell into the 14–24 age bracket and 20.7 % are in the age bracket of 25-34years. Out of 31% male only 8% are in the age bracket of 14-24and remaining 23% are in 25-34 age bracket.

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Table 2 : Cross-Tabulation between Gender and Brand importance

Gender * Brand Importance Crosstabulation								
			Brand Importance					Total
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Gender	Female	Count	24	21	11	3	1	60
		% within Gender	40.0%	35.0%	18.3%	5.0%	1.7%	100.0%
		% within Brand Importance	61.5%	72.4%	78.6%	75.0%	100.0%	69.0%
	Male	Count	15	8	3	1	0	27
		% within Gender	55.6%	29.6%	11.1%	3.7%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Brand Importance	38.5%	27.6%	21.4%	25.0%	0.0%	31.0%
	Total	Count	39	29	14	4	1	87
		% within Gender	44.8%	33.3%	16.1%	4.6%	1.1%	100.0%
		% within Brand Importance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

When gender wise brand importance analyzed this highlights that female are more considering brand name as compare to male.

Table 3 : Cross-Tabulation between Age and Brand Importance

Age * Brand Importance Cross-tabulation								
			Brand Importance					
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Age	14-24	Count	21	15	9	3	1	49
		% within Age	42.9%	30.6%	18.4%	6.1%	2.0%	100.0%
		% within Brand importance	53.8%	51.7%	64.3%	75.0%	100.0%	56.3%
	25-34	Count	18	14	5	1	0	38
		% within Age	47.4%	36.8%	13.2%	2.6%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Brand Importance	46.2%	48.3%	35.7%	25.0%	0.0%	43.7%
	Total	Count	39	29	14	4	1	87
		% within Age	44.8%	33.3%	16.1%	4.6%	1.1%	100.0%
		% within Brand Importance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Cross tabulation between age and brand importance exhibit that Young with age bracket of 14-24, 53.8 % respondents are strongly agree and giving more importance to brand name than adults (25-34).

Table 4 : Frequency and Percentage of Reviewing Comments of Social Networking sites

Reviewing Comments					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	19	21.8	21.8	21.8
	Moderately important	20	23.0	23.0	44.8
	Neutral	17	19.5	19.5	64.4
	Less important	28	32.2	32.2	96.6
	Not important	3	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 illustrate that 32.2% respondents replied reviewing comments of others at the time of making apparel purchase are less important and only 21.8 % respondents consider very important.

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Table 5 : Regression

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.546[a]	.298	.273	.58034
a. Predictors: (Constant), Blogs, Social network, Media-sharing				

Table 6

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.871	3	3.957	11.749	.000[b]
	Residual	27.954	83	.337		
	Total	39.824	86			
a. Dependent Variable: Brandconsciousness						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Blogs, Socialnetwork, Mediasharing						

This table of regression model summary predicting the dependent variable (brand conscious) significantly well. The $p<0.0005$, i.e less than .05, & denote that, regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (i.e, it is a good fit for the data).

Table 7 : Co efficient

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.955	.243		3.925	.000
	Socialnetwork	-.081	.104	-.090	-.785	.434
	Mediasharing	.299	.088	.416	3.416	.001
	Blogs	.190	.076	.265	2.486	.015
a. Dependent Variable: Brandconsciousness						

This table shows that beta for independent variable social networks is -0.09 which shows that social network less influencing brand consciousness as compare to other variables and showing negative relation. Media sharing is influence more among three variables and are positive relation with brand consciousness.

Table 8 : Time spent

Time Spent On S.M.S					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30 minutes	34	39.1	39.1	39.1
	An hour	24	27.6	27.6	66.7
	Two Hour	12	13.8	13.8	80.5
	More	17	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

This table illustrates that respondents 39.1% spend 30 minutes on social networks sites.

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Table 9 : Frequency for Brands

Apparel Brands Name	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Khadii	32	36.8	55	63.2
Junaid Jamshed	27	31	60	69
Alkaram Studio	14	16.1	73	83.9
Nishat Linen	17	19.5	70	80.5
Bonanza	12	13.8	75	86.2
Gul Ahmed	46	52.9	41	47.1

This table showing the total responses of mostly purchasing brands. out of 87 respondents only 32 are purchasing khaddi brand, 27 Junaid Jamshed,14 Al-karam studio, 17 respondent replied that the mostly buy Nishat linen and 12 say yes for buying bonanza. Now 41 respondent said that they mostly buy this brand and it is the brands that is mostly purchased among all other brands.

ii. *Open Ended Question Analysis*

Table 10 : Quasi statistics

Social Media Sites Name	Frequency
Face book	49
Google plus	20
Twitter	19
Linked in	7
You tube	9
Total	104

The total is more than 87 respondents because some respondent give more options. It is found that face book is more using social media sites among other sites.

VI. Evaluation & Findings

The growing trend of brand consciousness and social media sites storm are analyzed by collecting data through survey and analyze by SPSS software. The finding suggesting that female are more brand conscious as compare to male and young with in age bracket of 14-24 are more giving importance to brand as compare to adult age group. It is further reveal that social acceptability, social status and self recognition are important meaning that customers assigning with branded products over generic. The social media has inversely relation as compare to blog and media sharing, and media sharing has positive correlation with brand consciousness. Mostly respondent spent 30 minutes on social media sites and mostly used social media sites are face book less spent more than this time. The Gul Ahmed brand is mostly purchased among all other brand.

VII. Conclusion & Recommendations

a) Conclusion

In the end, now the business trend for marketers and purchasing trend for customer has been changed from traditional to social trend. So, this research paper attempt to assess the social media influence on brand consciousness and result indicate that social media types such as media sharing and blogs are positively influence brand consciousness and contents sharing by friends, family and advertising are influencing customers and customers are reviewing them in brand selection. The research also got that female are more brand conscious than male and adult are less brand conscious than young. The important attributes due to which branded products are preferred than normal or unbranded products are the quality assurance and self recognition are most popular.

Based on these finding, it is concluded that customers are considering the contents of blogs, media sharing sites in-short social media sites so marketers should give them importance.

As per the result of this research, further studies are needed to asses those factors by considering more details for better evaluation. This study could be useful for contributing to new studies on social media and brand consciousness for the industry or/and academic research purposes.

b) Future Research Recommendation

While social media has became an emerging research field. A huge number of opportunities for further research in this area. As this study is limited to apparel so further research should be carried out in other product category to know the impact of these social media types on the others things such as brand equity, brand image or brand awareness. Further research could be expanded to a greater pool of

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subjects representing more of an international population since a large percentage of social media users are found outside the Karachi or Pakistan.

Another suggestion is that further research should be carried out for knowing the influence of culture on social media sites users and customer purchase decision.

VIII. Acknowledgment

Foremost, I wish to express my heartfelt thankfulness to my instructor Dr. Zaki Rashidi for his full support, professional guidance, understanding and encouragement throughout the course of this term paper. Without his incredible patience, timely wisdom and invaluably constructive criticism and friendly advice, this term paper would have been a frustrating and over whelming pursuit. I am truly grateful to them for sharing his immense knowledge on a number of issues related to this paper.

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Relationship of Export Market Orientation, Selected Export Strategy, and Export Performance: An Empirical Study

By B. Peter Hoang
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Abstract- Since its introduction, market orientation (MO) has emerged as a major construct within the strategic management literature. Efforts have also been made to extend the concept into export operations. In contrast to MO, empirical studies of export market orientation (EMO) is relatively limited, and most of the studies tend focus on the direct causal relationship between EMO and performance. From a resource-based perspective, however, EMO may not influence performance directly, but only a mediating effect by facilitating strategic actions that direct affect performance. In this study, a structural equation modeling is employed to examine the role that export strategies play in the context of the relationship between EMO and export performance. The research results, based on 142 small export manufacturing firms suggest EMO influences performance directly as well as indirectly via export strategies. This partial mediating evidence provides a further understanding of how the EMO construct is related to performance.

Keywords: *export market orientation, export strategy, export performance, structural equation model.*

GJMBR - E Classification : *JEL Code : M19, M30*



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Keywords: export market orientation, export strategy, export performance, structural equation model.

I. Introduction

In recent years, an increasing number of research studies have focused on the concept of "market orientation" with the intention of understanding the effect of corporate culture and behaviors on business performance (Chin et al. 2013, Eris and Ozmen 2012, Faryabi et al. 2011, Goldman and Grinstein, 2010, Hoang and Chang 2000, Han et al. 1998, Kohli and Jaworski 1990, Narver and Slater 1990,). Market orientation, with its emphasis on customers' needs and their satisfaction, is a basic element in the formula for success (Houston 1986). It is an organization's disposition to deliver superior value to customers continuously, which entails an organization-wide commitment to continuous information gathering and coordination of customers' needs, competitors' capabilities, and the provisions of other market authorities (Slater and Narver 1995). The result is an integrated effort on the part of the employees across departments in an organization (Kohli and Jaworski 1990), which is vital to success (Song and Parry 1997).

Studies on market orientation in the domestic market context have typically operationalized the concept as the sum of an organization's emphasis on three behavior components: customer orientation, competition orientation, and inter-functional orientation (Narver and Slater 1990). Internationally, the extant literature proposes several concepts including "international market orientation" and "export market orientation." Tung and Miller's (1990) define the former as "a new and powerful way for managers to cope with the complex set of market interrelationships, to understand clearly who the firm's competitors are, and to design a framework for responding effectively to the varied needs and demand of customers, regardless of where they are located" (p.15). In contrast, Cadoganet al. (1999) suggest an "export market orientation" to depict a firm's orientation toward overseas markets operations. The authors operationalize the construct on three behavior components: (1) export intelligence generation, (2) export intelligence dissemination, and (3) export intelligence responsiveness. Cadogan and Cui (2004) further delineate export market-oriented firms as those regularly generate export market intelligence, and use the information they generate to help select export markets, identify what customers in those export markets value, and deliver that value to them. In other words, high export market-oriented firms are able to generate more market intelligence about their export markets including the competitors' behavior and the customer needs and wants, and are able to respond to market changes more quickly (Akyol and Akehurst, 2003). This study will adopt Cadogan et al. (1999), Cadogan and Cui's (2004) definition of export market orientation.

While there is evidence suggesting that an export market orientation can lead to superior performance in export markets (Cadogan et al. 2002, Cadogam and Cui 2004, Dodd 2005), what remains less clear is whether market orientation influences performance directly or indirectly via some intermediate variables. From a resource-based perspective, however, export market orientation may not influence performance directly, but only mediating effect by facilitating some strategic actions that exert an impact on performance. In this vein, Newbert (2007) has observed that marketing capabilities rather than resources that make an impact on performance. Barney and Hesterly (2012) further suggest that resources are useful if they enable a firm to develop and implement strategies that effectively exploit

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business opportunities and improve operations. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) reiterate this viewpoint and suggest that strategic activity is an important part of corporate initiatives influenced by the firm's orientation, which scholars have regarded as an organizational embedded nontransferable firm-specific resource (Knight 1997; Lumpkin and Dess 1996). Accordingly, Strategies are likely the intermediate variables between market orientation and export performance, in a sense that firms with greater market orientation are likely to develop certain type of strategies, and such strategies will lead to different scales of performance. This contention frames the central research question of this study: To what extent a firm's export market orientation influences its export strategy and how this strategy relates to export performance. This study attempts to make a small contribution to current strategic management literature by examining the causal relationship of export market orientation, export strategy, and export performance of small export manufacturing firms located in a Confucius culture.

II. Literature Review and Hypotheses Developent

A review of the literature suggests small manufacturing firms can adopt a wide range of strategies to compete in overseas markets. The present study will focus on the three relevant strategies: Export expansion strategy, export product strategy, and export production strategy. These strategies are selected because they are relevant to the study that focuses on small firms that involve both manufacturing and exporting.

a) Export Expansion Strategy

Internationalization theory argues that firms expand globally to realize the value of tangible and intangible assets such as equipment, marketing skills, technical capabilities, and organizational competence (Barlett and Ghoshal 1989, Casson 1990, Cadogan et al. 2002, Rose and Shoham 2002). It is a means to generate profit and growth (Moen et al. 2010). International expansion is particularly important for small firms whose business scope is geographically confined, and resources are not fully exploited (Barringer and Greening 1998, Lu and Beamish 2001). However, implementation of such strategy involves many unique challenges for small firms. For one, international operations are often associated with higher risks, entails more time and efforts, and drains more resources (Nelson and Winter 1985). The development of a market orientation is presumed to overcome such impediments and reinforce the firm's international involvement. In this regard, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) argue that strategic orientation is particularly important for small firms trying to organize resources efficiently and conceive an effective strategy. It helps businesses overcome the psychic barriers and engage in strategies oriented toward innovation and expansion (Brown, Davidson, and Wiklund 2001). Furthermore, it helps to facilitate the development of strategies that effectually make use of market opportunities (Ireland, Hitt, and Sirmon 2003). Thus, the study hypothesize that:

> *H_1: A firm's export market orientation has a positive impact on its export market expansion strategy, which, in turn, will have a positive influence on export performance.*

b) Export Product Strategy

Studies suggest that the choice of competitive strategies is one of the most important decisions for business success (Ward and Duray 2000). In general, small manufacturing companies have several strategic options to attain a competitive advantage in the market, such as product differentiation, cost leadership and focus strategy (Porter 1985). Small manufacturing firms are expected to favor differentiation and focus strategies since they are rarely able to realize the economies of scale and scope. Differentiation primarily affects performance through reducing directness of competition. The approach is appropriate where the target customers have particular needs that are possibly under-served. Small firms are also more likely to adopt a focused strategy that calls for concentrating marketing efforts on a few niches or small segments of the market to avoid direct competition with the dominant companies. Accordingly, they are likely adopt two product strategies to serve their overseas markets. The first approach is to provide new market demands with the company existing products developed for domestic or other markets. This strategy is considered to be low risk, depending on the nature of products and target markets served, firms may have to make some modifications of their products to meet the new market requirements. The major challenge of the market development strategy is to find the new suitable markets for the company existing products. Alternatively, small manufacturing companies may have to develop new products for new or existing markets. This is a relatively risky marketing practice, but often is necessary for corporate survival (Henard and Szymanski 2001), profitability (Copper 1998), and growth (Danneels and Kleinschmidt 2001).

Matsuno and associates (2002) maintain that strategic orientation promotes values such as being highly proactive toward market opportunities, tolerance of risk, and receptive to innovations. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) also suggest the construct necessitates firms to assume greater risk and engage in creative processes and pursuing new ideas, which lead to the development of new products. Similarly, Hult and Ketchen (2001) contend that high strategic-oriented firms are more willing to commit resources and engage in the "pursuit of new market opportunities and the renewal of existing

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areas of operation" (p.190). Others assert that the proactive and flexible nature of the small firms allow them to exploit market opportunities more quickly (Narula 2002) and fill the overseas market needs with new or modified products ahead of competitors (Slater and Narver 1995). Their small size will also encourage them to pursue specific markets that are less attractive to large ones. Thus, creating opportunities for these companies to introduce new or modified products in undeveloped markets that enable them to gain substantial first-mover advantages. Therefore,

H_2: A firm's export market orientation has a positive impact on its export product strategy, which, in turn, will have a positive influence on export performance.

c) *Export Manufacturing Strategy*

Strategic management theory suggests that competitive advantages may be realized through economies of scale or experience curve and market power (Woo and Cooper 1982). Clearly, these sources of advantages are often available to large multinational corporations that possess abundant resources. For small firms, flexible production (or manufacturing) is an important means to attain or enhance competitiveness (Fiegenbaum and Karnani 1991). The approach allows the firm to respond swiftly and effectively to changing customer needs and competitive situations via readily adaptable product and production processes (Galbraith and De Noble 1992). It is particularly vital for industries that are impacted by unpredictable or rapidly changing technology, consumer tastes, and short product life cycles (Pine et al. 1993).

As Lumpkin and Dess (1996) observe, a firm's strategic orientation reflects its propensity to pursue new market opportunities and concerns with its posture of anticipating and acting on customer needs and wants. Small manufacturing firms with a high export market orientation are thus more willing to take risks, and commit resources to exploit overseas market opportunities. These firms are likely to focus their marketing effort on particular niche markets to avoid direct competition with large ones. They are also likely to adopt a product differentiation approach and provide their overseas customers with unique and customized products (Keh, Foo, and Lim 2002). This necessitates the adoption of flexible manufacturing strategy that enable the firms to produce products in various lot sizes and shapes. As a result, these firms will be able to sell more and attain a better export performance.

H_3: A firm's export market orientation has a positive impact on its export manufacturing strategy that, in turn, will have a positive influence on export performance.

III. Methology

a) *Instrument and Sample*

The Taiwanese small and medium-size firms involved in both manufacturing and export operations were chosen to test the hypotheses. The sampling frame was obtained from the Ministry of Economic Affairs' "Small and Medium-Size Enterprise Directory." Questionnaire protocol served as the primary means for data collection. The instrument was derived from the related literature and written in Chinese language. After several revisions, the completed questionnaires were sent to 525 small and medium-size export manufacturing firms. Others, such as pure domestic operations, foreign subsidiaries, service companies, and pure OEM manufacturers, were excluded from the survey because they are not relevant to the current study. Two weeks after the initial posting, follow-up telephone calls were made to the potential participants. As a result, 142 useful returned questionnaires were received (four incomplete questionnaires were discarded), yielding a valid response rate of 27 percent. The *waves* comparison method suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977) was used to assess the effects of non-response.

b) *Measurement*

The export market orientation construct was assessed using ten measurement items derived from Cadogan et al. (1999), Cadogan and Cui (2004). Some minor semantic changes were made to make the questionnaire more compatible with the Chinese culture in Taiwan.

Export strategies: Three international strategies were appraised using 10 measurement items derived from Anand and Ward (2004), Cavusgil and Zou (1994), Hoang (1998), Lages and Montgomery (2004), and Pagell and Krause (2004). A firm's export expansion was captured by three measurement items reflecting the level of export activity the firm involved. The export product strategy was assessed using three measurement items intended to capture the degree of newness and uniqueness of products offered in export markets. Finally, export manufacturing was appraised by three measurement items reflecting the level of flexibility the firm was willing to engage in producing customized products in different sizes and shapes.

Export performance: is measured by (1) the average export sales growth in the past five years, (2) average export profit growth in the past five years, and (3) top managers' assessment of meeting export target. These multiple indicators are used to offer a complete picture of a firm's performance in export operations while avoiding the data sensitive issue. All questions were presented in 5-point Likert scales.

c) *Analytic Approach*

Consistent with the two-step approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the overall measurement model was examined before estimating the structural portions of the overall model. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the hypothesized factor structure as recommended by Byrne (2001), and AMOS

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17 with the maximum likelihood (ML) method was adopted to assess the overall measurement model.

IV. Results

a) Testing the Overall Measurement Model

As shown in Appendix A, the measurement model attains a good fit (χ^2=195, df=137), with significant loadings for each of the items. A chi-square of less than two times the degrees of freedom is accepted as a good fit (Hughes, Price, and Marrs 1986). However, the χ^2 statistic could overestimate the fit for some samples and, for that reason, additional fit indicators were examined. As Appendix A shows, a Goodness of Fit Index = .88, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index = .83, Comparative Fit Index= .93, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = .055.

b) Testing the Structural Model

To test the hypotheses, the study employed structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation method. Table 1 presents the research results. As shown, the theorized structural equation model achieves a good fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .065) is well below .08. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI=.83) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = .80) is greater than or equal to .80. The normed Chi-Squared is 1.60, which falls within the recommended level of 1 to 3. The examination of the t-value associated with each of the factor loadings in the hypothetical model indicates they exceed the critical values for the 0.001 significant level (critical value = 3.30).

Table 1 : Assessment of Research Hypotheses

Normed X^2 = 1.60, RMSA=.065. CFI=.83, AGFI=.80				
	Constructs	Path Coef. (Stand)	t-val.	Assess. (*p<.001*)
H_1	EMO → Export expan. Export expan → Export perform.	.71 .16	10.44 6.12	s
H_2	EMO → Export product Export product → Export perform.	.39 .29	5.01 7.26	s
H_3	EMO → Export manufact. Export manufact. → Export perform.	.31 .37	3.72 5.31	s
	EMO → Export performance	.11	9.17	s

V. Findings and Discusson

The objective of this study is to examine the role of export strategies play in the context of the relationship between export market orientation and export performance. In general, the study empirically provides evidence that export market orientation facilitates the development of export strategies, which, in turn, positively influence the firm's export performance. The research result also suggests export market orientation exerts a direct effect on export performance though the coefficient between the two variables relatively weak. This partial mediational evidence provides a complete understanding of how export market orientation may be related to the firm's export performance.

Specifically, the research results indicate that export market orientation influences the development of export expansion strategy, which, in turn, affects the firm's export performance (H_1). The finding suggests that higher export market-oriented firms are more likely to adopt an aggressive export expansion approach. They are actively participated in export operations. They seek out constantly for new business opportunities include those considered to be more psychically distant, and are more willing to commit more resources to exploit new export opportunities. As a result, they attain a better market performance. The research outcome also suggests export market orientation influences a firm's export product approach, which, in turn, affects its export performance (H_2). The result verifies the role of export product strategy as an intermediate variable between EMO and export performance. The result suggests firms with higher EO are more innovated, and more willing to take risks and commit resources to fill overseas markets with new or customized products. This marketing effort leads to a better performance in terms of profit and sales. The research results also substantiate the postulation that export market orientation influences the firm's export manufacturing approach, which, in turn, affects its export performance (H_3). The finding confirms the mediation role of export manufacturing strategy in the EO-performance relationship. The research outcome suggests that small manufacturing firms, with higher export market orientation, are more willing to adopt a flexible manufacturing approach and more yearning to accept customized production orders and adjust production facilities/schedules to meet customer demands. As such, they attain a better export performance. Finally, the research result also reveals a direct causal relationship between export market orientation and export performance. The finding suggests EO not only facilitating the development of export international strategies that have a positive impact on export performance, the construct also exerts a direct effect on the firms' export performance.

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a) Limitations and Future Research

This study advances research on the mediating role of export strategies in the relationship of export market orientation and export performance in two aspects. First, the study develops a conceptual framework linking export market orientation, export strategy, and export performance. Second, it validates the conceptualization using data collected from 138 small export manufacturing firms. The study offers several implications in several areas. First is the mediating role of export strategies in the export market orientation-export performance relationship. The research result verifies the indirect nature of the said relationship. However, the research outcome also indicates a direct causal relationship between export market orientation and export performance, albeit the standard coefficient is relatively small. This partial mediation evidence provides a complete understanding of how export market orientation may be related to the firm's export performance. The research result lays the groundwork for further research on this issue. Future inquiries should expand to include other variables and industries. The longitudinal design spanning over a number of years will certainly enrich the understanding of the dynamic relationship of export market orientation, export strategy, and export performance.

The second area relates to the dimensions of export market orientation and measurement scales suggested by Cadogan and colleagues (1999). Though the factor analysis indicates they are also applicable to the different cultural environment, future studies should reexamine the three dimensions of export market orientation, and their measurement scales can further improve to meet the new international market environment.

Finally, the study evaluates the export market orientation construct at a firm level, suggesting the concept permeates an organization uniformly across all hierarchical levels. This is fine with small export firms. However, it may not be the case with large corporations as Wales et al. (2011) contend, the pervasiveness of a strategic orientation can be manifested in the organization in a heterogeneous manner. Future research should examine a firm's export market orientation at the business unit level.

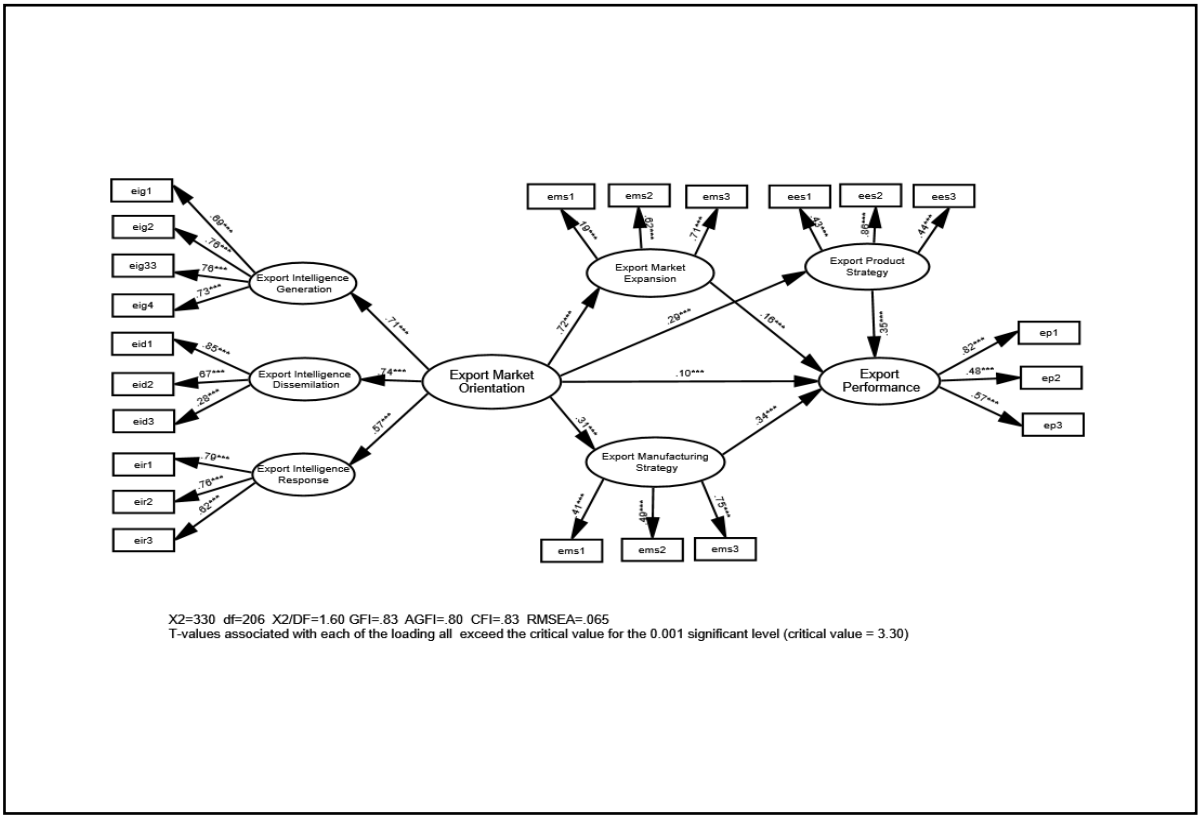

Fig. 1 : Causal Relationship of EMO, Export Strategy, and Export Performance

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Appendix A : CFA Measurement Model

Constructs	Loading	t.value	Significant
EXPORT MARKET ORIENTED			
Export Intelligence Generation (eig)			
Egi1: We periodically review the likely effect of changes in our export environment	.768	8.61	***
Egi2: We regularly generate information concerning trends (regulation, technological developments, and economy) in key export markets	.757	9.05	***
Egi3: We generate a lot of information in order to understand the forces that influence our overseas customers' need and preferences.	.848	8.14	***
Egi4: We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving export customer needs.	.727	7.64	***
Export Intelligence Dissemination (eid)			
Eid1: Important information concerning export market trends (regulatory, technology) often reaches decision makers punctually.	.766	6.08	***
Eid2: Information about our export competitors' activities is distributed to relevant personnel promptly.	.753	7.64	***
Eid3: Information which can influence the way we serve our export customers is delivered to export personnel immediately.	.567	5.97	***
Export Intelligence Responsiveness (eir)			
Eir1: We would promptly respond to competitive actions that might threaten our key export markets.	.758	5.89	***
Eir2: We would respond swiftly to significant changes in our competitors' price structures	.690	6.06	***
Eir3: If a major competitor were to launch an intensive campaign targeted at our foreign customers, we would implement a response immediately.	.653	5.93	***
Export Expansion Strategy (ems)			
Ems1: We constantly explore for new export opportunities	.675	6.12	***
Ems2: We regularly enter new/unfamiliar markets	.803	6.43	***
Ems3: Export is a major part of our business operations and we will devote more resources to export activities	.523	5.01	***
Export Product Strategy (eps)			
Eps1: We Typically serve our key foreign customers with new or customized products	.310	5.90	***
Eps2: We always try to satisfy our customers with the products they want	.466	6.30	***
Eps3: Our products generally encounter few competitors in the key overseas markets	.478	6.39	***
Export Manufacturing Strategy (ems)			
Ems1: We typically adopt a flexible manufacturing approach	.613	5.02	***
Ems2: We often receive small customized production orders	.734	4.30	***
Ems3: We are willing to adjust production facilities/schedules to meet demands	.553	4.39	***
Export Performance (ep)			
Ep1: Average export sales growth in the recent 5-year period	.71	5.73	***
Ep2: Average export profit growth in the recent 5-year period	.72	5.38	***
Ep3: Overall export performance has met the company's target	.68	6.20	***

X^2/df =1.43 GFI=.88 AGFI=.83 CFI=.93 RMR=.045 RMSEA=.055

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Customers Loyalty Increase as Effective Tool of Sale Promotion

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Abstract- In the global world the competition in the business sector motivates the companies to pursue the goal of increasing the competitive advantage and keeping the constant growth. Marketing professionals state that a modern company has to create and support a long-term relationship with its buyers. This relationship will safeguard the company from losing its market share and the kept loyal buyers will also increase the revenue as keeping the old buyers is a lot cheaper than attracting the new ones. After the literature analysis it is clear that the definition of the loyalty is unambiguous despite the research that lasted over three decades. The academicians state that the definiton of loyalty is separated into three groups. The newest one states that the loyal buyer is the one who buys certain goods or services repeatedly and recommends the mentioned to the friends or colleagues. A loyal buyer is also tied to the company through a long-term relationship. Most buyers would like to have a better service quality. Second biggest desire is the price. The third criteria is cash registers without any queues. The fourth group desires a better parking lot. All in all, these criterias suggest that the buyer wants an easier, faster and more comfortable buying experience.

Keywords: *loyalty, sale promotion, customer loyalty.*

GJMBR - E Classification : *JEL Code : M31, M37, M30*



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Customers Loyalty Increase as Effective Tool of Sale Promotion

Margarita Išoraitė

Abstract- In the global world the competition in the business sector motivates the companies to pursue the goal of increasing the competitive advantage and keeping the constant growth. Marketing professionals state that a modern company has to create and support a long-term relationship with its buyers. This relationship will safeguard the company from losing its market share and the kept loyal buyers will also increase the revenue as keeping the old buyers is a lot cheaper than attracting the new ones. After the literature analysis it is clear that the definition of the loyalty is unambiguous despite the research that lasted over three decades. The academicians state that the definiton of loyalty is separated into three groups. The newest one states that the loyal buyer is the one who buys certain goods or services repeatedly and recommends the mentioned to the friends or colleagues. A loyal buyer is also tied to the company through a long-term relationship. Most buyers would like to have a better service quality. Second biggest desire is the price. The third criteria is cash registers without any queues. The fourth group desires a better parking lot. All in all, these criterias suggest that the buyer wants an easier, faster and more comfortable buying experience.

Keywords: loyalty, sale promotion, customer loyalty.

I. The Concept of Loyalty

Customer loyalty is the concept developed last century eighties, when the law has introduced new technology solutions that help companies keep regular customers, promote sales and profit growth, strengthen competitiveness. Customer loyalty is the creation of a business strategy, not just a marketing program. All companies, organizations should strive to develop loyalty and increase the number of users. There are no precise rules or indications of how to achieve that consumers become loyal.

During three decades of customer loyalty concept definitions it was formed most diverse. But it and there was no single concept. Bakanauskas. Pilelienė[1] (2009) all interpretations of the concept of loyalty divides into three main areas: consumer behavior expressed loyalty, consumer loyalty and an expression of the provisions, reflecting the provisions affected behavior. corporate strategies, sees that it is no longer focused solely on existing products /improving services, which increasingly relies on customer loyalty programs Various marketers (Lomsargis, 2000[2]; Vaitiekūnienės, 2006[3]; Žigienė, Maciūtė, 2006[4]; Leenheer, Heerde, and Bijmolt et al., 2007[5]), analyzing customers' loyalty as one of the most significant contemporary allowing businesses to create situations, where economic, emotional and social benefits It receives not only the company itself, but also the consumer. Today's businesses are becoming important to support long-term relations with customers - to strengthen the latter loyalty.

The first behavior by the consumer loyalty in the field of the fall of the concept, which is based on repeated purchase behavior of the same sales dealer or service provider. Such customer loyalty concept is related to consumer behavior in school, which representatives of consumer loyalty equated with repeat buying behavior.

After the repeated purchasing behavior definition based on the concept of user loyalty, they began to criticize. Bakanauskas. Pilelienė[6] (2009) notes that "the interpretation of the concept of customer loyalty, which is based on the re-procurement, can not fully explain the development of customer loyalty and the strength of its evolution."

Those users who are constantly buying from the same company are not necessarily loyal, because they can be exposed to inertia, indifference or company raised exit barriers or conditions. Behavior based on loyal consumers behave as loyal, but have no emotional attachment to the brand or company as the provision has loyal customers. According to the provisions of loyalty is much stronger than behavioral loyalty. For the above named and other reasons innominate customer loyalty started to analyze the user's settings through the prism of expression.

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Loyalty marketing theory has long been perceived as recycling of certain marks, goods or services and the purchase was described as repetitive action by the user. The definition of loyalty evolving now is increasingly being discussed in the attachment to the importance of trademarks loyalty, is significant not only act, but also a psychological reason for this action.

According to the author Zikienė[7] (2010) detailing examination of customer loyalty, reflecting the provisions affected behavior, conception, consumer loyalty is expressed as: 1) behavioral loyalty, which reflects the actual brand-specific product / service procurement number specified period; 2) the attitude of loyalty, which is reflected in preference for a particular brand of product / service, satisfaction with the product / service, commitment, repeat purchase intentions, advocacy (positive feedback, guidance).

In summary it can be said that has not yet been finally led to the single concept of loyalty. These interpretations of the concepts grouped into three group. Bakanauskas. and Pilelienė[8] (2009) separated areas: consumer behavior expressed loyalty, loyalty as an expression of consumer attitudes and loyalty, reflecting the provisions affected by the behavior, and describes the main features of this work it was decided to abide by the loyalty reflecting the provisions affected by the behavior of the concept. This decision is motivated by the fact that customer loyalty can not fully describe the behavior of consumers solely or exclusively based on the provisions of the concept, it is being developed in both of these factors.

So loyal customers, (according to loyalty, reflecting the provisions affected by the behavior of the concept) must be regarded as the person who repeatedly buy the company, which differentiates the company from other potential outlets which has some kind of a level, and competitors' bids, which recommends this company to your friends, acquaintances and others. As state Bakanauskas, Pilelienė[9] (2009) loyalty is the ambiguous, because there is still a debate among scientists.

Hoffman focuses on brand loyalty - six functions necessary and sufficient conditions. It is argued that brand loyalty is based on: the buyer's personal behavior, which is expressed through a certain period of time, according to the relevant decision-making unit, which is attached to one or more brands and is part of the psychological process functions. This historic definition despite its focus on brand loyalty, loyalty to modern definition, however, is not highlighted external influences criterion (Hoffman (2015)).[10]

Hoffman (2015)[11] stated that loyalty is a long-term customer commitment, service, or stores that promote the purchase of those goods or services, maintaining further relationship with customers and maintaining existing customer behavior. According Bakanauskas (2009)[12] examination periods of several decades of loyalty definition is not possible to accurately determine the concept of loyalty by a single criterion. In the scientific literature, the interpretation of this concept is based on a three marketing school of thought.

According to Bakanauskas, Pilelienė (2009)[13] the first category of claims that the concept of loyalty can be defined on the basis of the concept of customer behavior. This marketing school of thought present this concept as a repeated customer behavior. Customer loyalty is determined by the recurring specific goods or services the purchase of a single sales point. Bakanauskas traced marketing schools influence the formation of concepts, has identified and defined several concepts of loyalty to existing customers on the basis of the concept of behavior: Loyalty - the obligation to re-purchase your favorite product or service. Customer loyalty is based on repeated purchase behavior, which is caused by marketing actions. The situation in which the buyer's attitude is positive with respect to the organization, he would like to see again and again to buy from that organization, and not from its competitors. Academician together with other scientists critical of the first definition option. This interpretation is based on the school's marketing principle of customer behavior, customer loyalty interpretation of the concept, which is based - repeated purchases can not fully explain the development of customer loyalty and the strength of its evolution. Customer loyalty can be established only through a repeated purchase of classification. The Company may have regular customers who buy its products or services in a renewable cycle, but in reality these customers are not loyal. Repeat purchase without the second part does not create an emotional relationship marketing school-based long-term relationship was formed (Goodman

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(2015))[14]. The said customers can be attributed only to the part of loyal buyers. Seen the first definition shortcomings scientists began based on the concept of relationship marketing through the school developed. From the resulting relationship marketing provisions define the areas of customer loyalty more widely. Academician of relationship marketing school of scientists on the definition, excluding the highest loyalty defining concepts: "The intention to recommend, based on the higher value and good relations with the perception of the organization.""Positive emotions experienced by the buyer when purchasing a product or service, regardless of the fact that elsewhere he would be the same thing, only better conditions." "A state of mind, provisions, beliefs and desires set (Bakanauskas, Pilelienė (2009))[15]. The second division is based on the concept of relationship marketing through the school of thought suggesting a long-term relationship with the buyer. Said buyer evaluates shops, goods or services received value from the company, which must be higher than other competing companies benefits. These benefits can be measured in a variety of characteristics, such as quality, price, prestige. However, the provisions reached relationship should be based not just a commodity, and even emotional part. Because of these special conditions, the buyer will become the company's ambassador and performs the function of marketing - to improve the company's image and encourage other potential buyers to visit it. This type of buyer is very important to the company as being a loyal and attract new customers - the company increases revenue and reduces the potential costs, which are designed to attract new customers (Bakanauskas, Pilelienė (2009)).[16] The third category is based on the breakdown of buyer behavior and relationship marketing schools bred hybrid concepts. Cooperation-based conception combines the first buyers of the behavior recurring services or purchase goods from the store. The second part of the concept of relationship marketing is based on the school provided the provisions of paragraph justifying the long-term relationship function between the buyer and seller. The above provisions are directly linked, for example expressed greater support services for sale or promotion of a product other customer loyalty. Academician traced the terms and behaviors, by reflecting the best loyalty concepts: "Buyer's desire to friends and colleagues. "Buying and willingness to use the product or service in the future, which manifests It self in the same brand repeated purchases, despite situational circumstances and the influence of marketing actions to promote a switch to competitors. "Good faith maintain long-term relationships with the organization, re-buy and use exclusively the latter proposed goods or services and voluntary organizations to recommend to purchaser buys regularly re-buy related products or services that has some kind of a level of immunity to competitors and recommend to others" (Bakanauskas, Pilelienė (2009))[17].

II. Customer Loyalty Evaluation

Loyal customers help businesses earn higher incomes as retain existing customers is cheaper than attracting new ones. Customer loyalty benefits are being developed on the basis of long-term co-operation - the seller can obtain information to satisfy customer habits and meeting the needs of the buyer to obtain a lower price (Bakanauskas, Pilelienė (2009))[18]. Academics customer loyalty offers are various models. It was found that customer loyalty can be traditionally evaluated by 2 methods:

Behavior. Expressed repeated buyers conduct during the relevant period.

Approach. Expressed as relationship marketing provisions of the model school. Buyer feeling resulting value is loyal to the company, or at least wants to buy it (Hoffmann (2007)).

Wood behavior expressed determination method is the simplest and most adaptable outlets method. Loyalty is measured shops, through a special formula:

$L = (r|s) * 100\%$

L-buyers retention index;

s- buyers beginning of the year;

r- maintain the number of customers at the end of (Hoffmann (2007))[19].

III. Trade Centre Maxima Loyalty Program Analysis in Lithuania

MAXIMA - Lithuanian trade market leader. It is the largest Lithuanian company and the largest employer in the Baltic countries.

The largest Baltic retail network history began in 1992, opened the way stores with different names. Today the retail chain Maxima creation story can certainly be viewed as a business success story,

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because after the declaration of independence of the Baltic countries, the company did not receive any of the financial success and reputation in society buyers evaluation.

Every day, a different format stores Maxima Lithuania is visited more than 550 thousand customers. 2013 1 January MAXIMA in Lithuania had 225 shop.

Maxima is used for complex loyalty program. The main part of it is directed at the "Thank You" card and the ongoing share-based processes. Another part of the program is directed to the customer service standard ensuring payment of the additional services that create value for the customer.

Discount Card "Thank you" works out of the value of money principle. This principle requires the dealer to repay a percentage of the buyer's amount of money spent. Maxima stores is returned 1 percent. "Thank You" card to accumulate money can not be exchanged for cash, are also subject to other payment restrictions: Buyers can cover up to 99% of the purchase amount. It shall be prohibited to purchase tobacco products, MAXIMA gift cards or vouchers, third-party services, such as prepaid cards replenishment, billing, insurance, electronic ticket is purchased or interchangeable containers."Thank you" card is partially open-ended, it can be bought for 1.45 EUR. Despite only a partial opening, this card has a large audience. Designed relationship with the customer is not very strong, but is more focused on relatively broad and well-defined target group of buyers. The buyers of state is unpredictable, because with large amounts of consumer loyalty programs are a lot of inactive members. Maxima in order to maintain a correct database by periodic updates cards - every year there are reversed spare money, but they do cost a relatively high cash resources.

MAXIMA discount program is relevant to the customer. The card allows you to buy certain goods at a discount, such as during the summer sell-off discounts up to 70 per cent., While traditional ~ 20 - 30 percent. "Thank You" card increases the comfort level of customer service by providing many partners or outlets. The Partnership program is the principle of cooperation with the McDonalds, Lukoil, Forum Cinemas, Euro pharmacy. A card holder may use the time valid discount, this discount depends on the partner company. For example Lukoil gas stations can refuel with 0.03 EUR per liter discount and a car wash with a 20 percent discount.

Loyal customers receive offers by email. At Christmas, they are usually sent to the gift - a coupon to buy a box of chocolates for Christmas 1 cent. The most common personal offers are printed on the receipt of additional cash, which together with the purchase receipt is given a personal offer. This offer is activated upon "Thank you" loyalty card, only then you can use it the next time shopping.

Loyalty program developed services. Maxima aims to develop long-term relationships with customers, not only by offering discounts and promotions. Customer loyalty is encouraged through the resulting added value. 2015 installed and updated customer service standard, which requires employees to follow work ethic. Buyers Maxima stores can not only shop, but also to handle daily affairs. Shop at the box office or information sections can be paid for the various financial, telecommunications and utilities, buy mobile account recharge vouchers. It also stores Maxima buyers can buy international bus tickets, an electronic ticket for public transport, public pay the fines and buy fishing permits.

TAX FREE. Available in stores TAX FREE service, which allows non-EU citizens shopped Maxima stores can recover VAT. Foreign buyers before filling TAX FREE form received by the departure of the last EU country to the customs staff. After receiving a customs stamp buyer will turn to their country benefits thereof, and which can recover 21 per cent VAT, which attracts more customers from non-EU countries. This allowance can be recovered in several ways - cash, bank check or wire transfer to a bank card, but in any case it is clear that the MAXIMA shopping for non-EU citizens are economically rational. Most of the program used by buyers from the Caucasus, Russia, China, Belarus and Ukraine.

Amateur fishermen ticket. The shopkeeper tickets can be purchased at all MAXIMA stores at the box office. For two days, a month or a year in force fisherman tickets entitles all non-leased fishing waters in any chosen period, as well as at sea, if there are no other restrictions.

E-ticket. Information Division sold in Vilnius official card. These cards Purchase and supplement allows the customer to save time and encourage the return to the Maxima shop. Gift cards and kits. Maxima stores is wide choice of gift cards. The shopping center stands are more than 60 different content of gift cards and gift sets 6. Gift cards range is very wide: Holiday Spa centers and hotels, entertainment, water parks, rides on karts, jumping with a parachute and plane flights. This is a unique service where the same beneficiary may choose a gift. Each gift set is from fourteen to thirty different proposals, which are grouped according to interests.

Gift Set "Adventures" is designed for intense excitement thirsty people. Buyers can entertain program "Entertainment" and "Exceptional entertainment, relaxation spa or luxury accommodations - pleasant leisure, a break from the daily routine and special relaxation. MAXIMA gift cards. MAXIMA card is the company released a standard document entitling its author and without additional remuneration MAXIMA store to get supplies for the amount specified therein. You can donate 10, 20, 30 or EUR variable

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denomination gift cards. Tickets to events. EN TICKETS, TICKETS WORLD, expect TICKET PRO and distributed tickets Lithuanian territory and beyond the ongoing events can be purchased at the supermarket MAXIMA information offices.

Loans. All MAXIMA chain stores at the box office can withdraw money from SEB and DNB bank account. Withdrawals can be carried out with SEB and DNB bank cards. The buyer must inform the employee about the desired cash to cash money.

Take-away coffee. The shop offers 5 types of coffee. Currently standing stores makers produce espresso, mocha, latte, cappuccino and customary black coffee, which can now be different flavor condiments.

Means	IKI	NORFA	RIMI
front-end fee	0.87 EUR	2.90 EUR	1 EUR
Restrictions	-	Tobacco products, sugar and services provided by third parties.	Denying tobacco products, the addition of cards and other third-party services.
Additional function	Debit card. It may be supplemented in cash.	-	-
Type	Favorite, Maestro, Seniors	Classic, Silver, Gold.	usual
Partners	Very wide network	Neste	Short untill 1 month.
Discount	Tuesday -Seniors to 10%, usually 3%. Up to 40%.	From 1 till 5 proc.	-
The settlement rate	100	50	99

Figure 1 : Maxima competitors loyalty programs comparison

Down payment. Buyer is convenient to buy the card, and the second is Rimi, the third NORFA card which costs around 3 euro. Comparing all these cards to see that last card is the most expensive, although NORFA focus on practical buyers.

Restrictions. Both Rimi and NORFA provide constraints using its internal cash. There is a ban on the purchase of third party goods or services in order to reduce the possible theft of marketable goods and fraud. TO limitation rules are not provided. All cards openness is partially open, because you need to pay the appropriate fee and to register, but the entrance barrier is easily overcome, but the social group of buyers.

Additional function. Only the card has a chance to settle in cash and internal cash. BY cooperating with SEB Bank and constantly reminds its customers about ongoing promotions. Type. Most loyalty programs running under partial openness to the program, but it is not a big artificial barriers. Acquiring cards is very easy, you just have to pay a few euro and to sign up. The mentioned activities will be applied so as to reduce the invaluable data added to the database damage. RIMI Network as well as MAXIMA have only a single type of card. NORFA have cards that are split into several target groups. NORFA card type changes the amount of money spent during the relevant period. Up offers a simple discount card or loyalty combined with a debit card, it is also proposed card for seniors. A ripe old age people dedicated card provides 10 percent on Tuesday. discount, while a normal day up to 3 percent.

Discount. NORFA card holder is given the stable a few percent discount and is stored inside money. TO cards for seniors on Tuesday gives 10 percent. discount for these goods and a normal day for only 3 percent. Rimi card normally does not give concessions accumulates only 1 percent. of the purchase amount. During the shares Networks discounts ranging from - 15 percent. up to 70 percent.

Partners. NORFA cooperate only with Neste Oil station and offers the added benefit of not particularly high, as a separate NESTE card offers the same discount. Rimi Network provides exceptionally short-range and collaborates with various companies in the field, such as a spa center, dental clinic, hair salon. UNTIL list of partners is very broad: taxi, bank, gas station, pizzeria, building materials store, furniture store, an optician's shop, car repair, wheel and tire shop. UP uses the segmental partnership approach in order to avoid increased competition in the retail trade of food products. Both before and Rimi have a wider list of partners than Maxima. TO MAXIMA uses as few fixed partners, while NORFA have only one partner, Rimi are limited to short-term collaborations.

Summarizing it can be said that competitors Maxima card is targeted to a more segmented group of customers through special offers. MAXIMA "Thank You" cards are one of the most popular cards, because they target audience is quite broad, but do not have a strong feedback. Rimi network card is relatively unpopular, because a relatively small share of the market.

IV. Conclusions

Loyal customers tend to spread oral advertising and recommendations for their loyalty associated with

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friendly approach to product dissemination service provider prejudice oral information to others. Loyal consumers buy most of the company's convices or products, additional products and services to less marketing efforts over that ship what (Sin et al., 2006)[20]. According Khadraoui, Gharbi (2008)[21] loyal customers are also more receptive to new services proposals and more are likely to try something new. This is due to a smaller need to perform a variety of actions which relate to new sales process: understanding, the creation of works definition, creation of comfort, competitive proposals and presentations. Loyal customers tend to make frequent similar orders, resulting in less cost and service. This benefits the company and emphasize Khadraoui, Gharbi (2008)[22], assuming that loyal customers serviced price-discrimination is lower, it is easier to be as loyal customers are well aware of the service provider procedures and requires less staff time.

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Information Quality in Customer Relationship Management

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Abstract- The most essential and fundamental key to any successful customer relationship management (CRM) investment is information quality. Even the most sophisticated system in the world will ultimately fail without high quality information residing within the system.

In today's business world where information is the ultimate currency, the higher quality the information, the more valuable and powerful the information is to those who possess it.

Good and accurate information is the most important factor in determining how successful a company is in its usage of the CRM application. A successful CRM strategy is primarily determined by the quality of information residing in the application. High quality information is essential to a company that manages its sales and marketing goals using a CRM system.

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In today's business world where information is the ultimate currency, the higher quality the information, the more valuable and powerful the information is to those who possess it.

Good and accurate information is the most important factor in determining how successful a company is in its usage of the CRM application. A successful CRM strategy is primarily determined by the quality of information residing in the application. High quality information is essential to a company that manages its sales and marketing goals using a CRM system.

I. Introduction

Customer information is the lifeblood of CRM. Therefore, the development and maintenance of consistent, high-quality customer information is critical to CRM success.

Unfortunately, many businesses do not devote proper focus to the importance of information quality and consistency. In fact, findings from a 2001 information management study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers reveal just how widespread information quality problems are in businesses worldwide. Based on a survey of 600 large and midsize businesses in the Unites States, Europe and Australia, the study's findings included the following:

- Seventy-five percent of the organisations surveyed admitted that defective information had a negative financial impact on their business. Fifty percent incurred extra costs to reconcile information.
- One-third had been forced to delay or scrap new systems - and a similar percentage had failed to bill or collect receivables - due to information problems.
- One survey respondent reported that information problems caused an $8 million loss in a single fiscal year. Another reported that an incorrect unit of measure in its system led to the delivery of two containers that were bigger than the customer recipient's entire warehouse.

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II. Concepts of Information Quality

a) *Information quality definition*

The concept of quality has been discussed extensively over recent decades. Various definitions are to be found in a wide range of literature. Gilmore (1974) defines quality as conformance to specifications. This definition is relatively straightforward and frequently used in manufacturing industries. It facilitates measurement and increases measuring efficiency. Organizations can determine the quality of products by measuring how well the product conforms to an established specification. Also, the measuring procedure can be automatically implemented. However it fails to capture the customer's view on product performance. To compensate for the disadvantage of this definition, Gronroos (1983) defines quality as meeting and/or exceeding customer's expectations. This definition is especially prevalent in marketing research and the service industries. Following this definition, researchers posit that it is the customer who is the ultimate judge of the quality of a product/service. Thus organizations can make a quick response to market changes. However, it is difficult to measure the extent to which a product/service meets and/or exceeds the customer's expectation. Since different customers may assign different values to Product/service attributes, coordinating and unifying the various quality results are the principal difficulties facing this definition. To provide a general definition, Juran (1974) introduces the definition of quality as fitness for use, which is used to measure the extent to which a product successfully serves its intended use. As this is the definition widely used in information quality research, we adopt fitness for use as the definition of quality in our research.

There are two significant definitions of information quality. One is its inherent quality, and the other is its pragmatic quality. Inherent information quality is the correctness or accuracy of information. Pragmatic information quality is the value that accurate information has in supporting the work of the enterprise. Information that does not help enable the enterprise accomplish its mission has no quality, no matter how accurate it is.

Inherent information quality is, simply stated, information accuracy. Inherent information quality is the degree to which information accurately reflects the real-world object that the information represents. All information is an abstraction or a representation of

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something real. Jean Baudrillard, the French semiologist, observes that "the very definition of the real becomes: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction."

Information is an equivalent reproduction of something real. If all facts that an organization needs to know about an entity are accurate, that information has inherent quality- it is an electronic reproduction of reality. For example, if someone has a information value of "October 24, 1976" for my daughter Ashley's "Birth Date," that information has inherent quality. Inherent information quality means that information is correct.

Pragmatic information quality is the degree of usefulness and value information has to support the enterprise processes that enable accomplishing enterprise objectives.

In essence, pragmatic information quality is the degree of customer satisfaction derived by the knowledge workers who use it to do their jobs.

Information in a information base or information warehouse has no actual value; it only has potential value. Information has realized value only when someone uses it to do something useful; for example, to ship an order to a customer, or to determine the correct location to drill a well shaft. Pragmatic information quality is the degree to which information enables knowledge workers to meet enterprise objectives efficiently and effectively.

Information quality can be generally defined from two perspectives: information and user. From the information perspective, information quality is defined as information that meets specifications or requirements (Kahn and Strong, 1998). Some researchers argue that ultimately it is the information consumer who will judge whether or not an information product is fit for use. Thus from the user's perspective, information quality is defined as information that is fit for use by information consumers (Wang and Strong, 1996).

b) Information quality dimension

Many studies have confirmed that information quality is a multi-dimensional concept (Ballou and Pazer 1985; Redman 1996; Wand and Wang 1996; Wang and Strong 1996; Huang et al. 1999). Over the last two decades, different sets of information quality dimensions have been identified from both information base and management perspectives. We review information quality dimensions from four angles: identification, definition, classification, and dependency.

- *Identification of Information Quality Dimensions*

Wang and Strong (1996) propose three approaches to study information quality: the intuitive, theoretical and empirical approaches. We adopt these approaches in our analysis of the identification of information quality dimensions. The intuitive approach derives information quality dimensions from the researchers' experience or from the requirements of particular cases. In this approach, information quality dimensions are identified according to specific application contexts. For example, O'Reilly (1982) used accessibility, accuracy, specificity, timeliness, relevance, and the amount of information to assess information quality in the context of decision-making. Ballou and Pazer (1985) employed accuracy, timeliness, completeness and consistency to model information quality deficiencies in multi-input, multi-output information systems. The theoretical approach generates information quality dimensions on the basis of information deficiencies in the information manufacturing process. For example, Wand and Wang (1996) used an ontological approach to derive information quality dimensions by observing inconsistencies between the real-world system and the information system. The empirical approach provides information quality dimensions by focusing on whether the information is fit for use by information consumers. For example, Wang and Strong (1996) captured 15 information quality dimensions of importance to information consumers. Kahn et al. (2002) selected 16 information quality dimensions for delivering high quality information to information consumers. From the discussion above, we found that varying sets of information quality dimensions can be identified using different approaches.

- *Definition of Information Quality Dimensions*

The three approaches above can also be considered as three perspectives for defining information quality dimensions. The intuitive approach defines information quality dimensions from the information perspective. For example, Ballou and Pazer (1985) defined completeness as a situation in which all values for a certain variable are recorded.

The theoretical approach defines information quality dimensions from the real-world 32 perspective. For example, Wand and Wang (1996) defined completeness as the ability of an information system to represent every meaningful state of the represented real world system. The empirical approach defines information quality dimensions from the user's perspective. For example, Wang and Strong (1996) defined completeness as the extent to which information are of sufficient breath, depth, and scope for the task at hand.

The advantage of using a information perspective is that information quality can be automatically assessed and objectively controlled. The advantage of employing a real-world perspective is that the referencing quality specification is theoretically perfect. However, both perspectives fail to capture the expectations of information consumers. From a user perspective, a comprehensive set of dimensions can be used to measure information quality. Also, underlying this perspective is the idea that information quality can

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be improved according to the intended use. Yet this perspective fails to measure information quality automatically, making it difficult to negotiate a large amount of information. Considering the advantage of each perspective, we use information perspective to define the dimensions and assess the quality of raw information. When assessing the quality of information products, we define the dimensions from user perspective.

- *Classification of Information Quality Dimensions*

Wang and Strong (1996) proposed a hierarchical framework that consists of four information quality categories: intrinsic information quality, contextual, representational and accessibility. Wand and Wang (1996) used an ontological approach to derive information quality dimensions and categorized them by internal view and external view. Internal view is use-independent and contains a set of information quality dimensions that are comparable across applications. External view is concerned with the use and effect of information systems, which represent the real-world system. Naumann and Rolker (2000) organized information quality dimensions with three main factors that influence information quality: the perception of the user, the information itself, and the process of accessing information. These three factors can be considered as subject, object and process. Helfert (2001) classified information quality dimensions by employing semiotics and two elements of quality, which are quality of design and quality of conformance. Semiotics comprises three levels: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. The syntactic level considers the basic representation of information. The semantic level focuses on information related to real world objects. Finally the pragmatic level deals with information processes and information users. Kahn et al. (2002) developed a two-by-two conceptual model to describe information quality dimensions. Whilst the two rows are product quality and service quality, the two columns are conformance to specifications and meeting and exceeding consumer expectations. Therefore information quality dimensions are located in four quadrants: sound, dependable, useful, and usable. Bovee et al. (2003) presented a categorisation of information quality dimensions with the sequence of using information. The sequence includes the following four steps: obtaining the information (accessibility), understanding the information (interpretability), connecting the information with the given context (relevance), and assuring the information is free from error (integrity).

III. Customer Relationship Management

a) Definition of Customer relationship management

In the marketing literature the terms customer relationship management and relationship marketing are used interchangeably. As Nevin (1995) points out, these terms have been used to reflect a variety of themes and perspectives. Some of these themes offer a narrow functional marketing perspective while others offer a perspective that is broad and somewhat paradigmatic in approach and orientation. A narrow perspective of customer relationship management is information base marketing emphasizing the promotional aspects of marketing linked to information base efforts (Bickert, 1992).

Another narrow, yet relevant, viewpoint is to consider CRM only as seeking customer retention by using a variety of after marketing tactics that lead to customer bonding or staying in touch with the customer after a sale is made (Vavra, 1992). A more popular approach with the recent application of information technology is to focus on individual or one-to-one relationships with customers that integrate information base knowledge with a long term customer retention and growth strategy (Peppers & Rogers, 1993).

Thus, Shani and Chalasani (1992) have defined relationship marketing as "an integrated effort to identify, maintain, and build up a network with individual consumers and to continuously strengthen the network for the mutual benefit of both sides, through interactive, individualized and value added contacts over a long period of time" (p. 44). Jackson (1985) applies the individual account concept in industrial markets to suggest CRM to mean, "Marketing oriented toward strong, lasting relationships with individual accounts" (p. 2). In other business contexts, Doyle and Roth (1992), O'Neal (1989), and Paul (1988) have proposed similar views of customer relationship management.

McKenna (1991) has professed a more strategic view by putting the customer first and shifting the role of marketing from manipulating the customer (telling and selling) to genuine involvement with the customer (communicating and sharing knowledge). Berry (1995), in somewhat broader terms, also has a strategic viewpoint concerned with CRM. He has stressed that attracting new customers should be viewed only as an intermediate step in the marketing process and that developing closer relationship with these customers and turning them into loyal ones should be equally important aspects of marketing. Thus, he proposed that relationship marketing be seen as "attracting, maintaining, and – in multi-service organizations – enhancing customer relationships" (p. 25).

Berry's notion of customer relationship management resembles that of other scholars studying services marketing, such as Gronroos (1990), Gummesson (1987), and Levitt (1983). Although each one of them has espoused the value of interactions in marketing and its consequent impact on customer relationships, Gronroos and Gummesson take a broader perspective and advocate that relationships

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with customers be the focus and dominant paradigm of marketing. For example, Gronroos (1990) states: "Marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. This is achieved by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises" (p. 138). The implication of Gronroos' definition is that forming relationships with customers is the "raison de etre" of the firm and marketing should be devoted to building and enhancing such relationships. Similarly, Morgan and Hunt (1994) draw upon the distinction made between transactional exchanges and relational exchanges by Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) to suggest that relationship marketing "refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relationships."

The core theme of all CRM and relationship marketing perspectives is its focus on a cooperative and collaborative relationship between the firm and its customers, and/or other marketing actors. Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) have characterized such cooperative relationships as being interdependent and long-term orientated rather than being concerned with short-term discrete transactions.

b) The emergence of Customer relationship management

As observed by Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995b), developing customer relationships has historical antecedents going back into the pre-industrial era. Much of it was due to direct interaction between producers of agricultural products and their consumers. Similarly, artisans often developed customized products for each customer. Such direct interaction led to relational bonding between the producer and the consumer. It was only after the advent of mass production in the industrial era and the advent of middlemen that interaction between producers and consumers became less frequent leading to transaction oriented marketing. In other words, the production and consumption functions became separated leading to the marketing functions being performed by middlemen, and middlemen, in general, are oriented towards economic aspects of buying since the largest cost is often the cost of the goods sold. In recent years however, several factors have contributed to the rapid development and evolution of CRM. These include the growing de intermediation process in many industries due to the advent of sophisticated computer and telecommunication technologies that allow producers to directly interact with end-customers. For example, in many industries such as the airline, banking, insurance, computer software, or household appliances industries and even consumables, the de-intermediation process is fast changing the nature of marketing and consequently making relationship marketing more popular. Information bases and direct marketing tools give these industries the means to individualize their marketing efforts. As a result, producers do not need the functions formerly performed by middlemen. Even consumers are willing to undertake some of the responsibilities of direct ordering, personal merchandising, and product use related services with little help from the producers. The recent success of on-line banking, Charles Schwab and Merryll Lynch's on-line investment programs, direct selling of books, automobiles, insurance, etc., on the Internet all attest to the growing consumer interest in maintaining a direct relationship with marketers.

The de-intermediation process and consequent prevalence of CRM is also due to the growth of the service economy. Since services are typically produced and delivered at the same institution, it minimizes the role of middlemen. Between the service provider and the service user an emotional bond also develops creating the need for maintaining and enhancing the relationship. It is therefore not difficult to see that CRM is important for scholars and practitioners of services marketing (Berry & Parsuraman, 1991; Bitner, 1995; Crosby & Stephens, 1987; Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Gronroos, 1995).

Another force driving the adoption of CRM has been the total quality movement. When companies embraced the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy to improve quality and reduce costs, it became necessary to involve suppliers and customers in implementing the program at all levels of the value chain. This created the need for closer working relationships with customers, suppliers, and other members of the marketing infrastructure. Thus, several companies, such as Motorola, IBM, General Motors, Xerox, Ford, and Toyota, formed partnering relationships with suppliers and customers to practice TQM. Other programs such as "just-in-time" (JIT) supply and "materials-resource planning" (MRP) have also made use of interdependent relationships between suppliers and customers (Frazier, Spekman, & O'Neal, 1988).

With the advent of digital technology and complex products, the systems selling approach has become common. This approach has emphasized the integration of parts, supplies, and the sale of services along with the individual capital equipment. Customers have liked the idea of systems integration and sellers have been able to sell augmented products and services to customers. Then, the popularity of system integration began to extend to consumer packaged goods as well as to services (Shapiro & Posner, 1979). At the same time some companies started to insist upon new purchasing approaches, such as national contracts and master purchasing agreements, forcing major vendors to develop key account management programs (Shapiro & Moriarty, 1980). These measures created intimacy and cooperation in the buyer-seller relationship.

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Instead of purchasing a product or service, customers were more interested in buying a relationship with a vendor. The key (or national) account management program designates account managers and account teams that assess the customer's needs and then husband the selling company's resources for the customer's benefit. Such programs have led to the establishment of strategic partnering within the overall domain of customer relationship management (Anderson & Narus, 1991; Shapiro 1988).

Similarly, in the current era of hyper-competition, marketers are forced to be more concerned with customer retention and loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994; Reichheld, 1996). As several studies have indicated, retaining customers perhaps offers a more sustainable competitive advantage than acquiring new ones. What marketers are realizing is that it costs less to retain customers than to compete for new ones (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984). On the supply side it pays more to develop closer relationships with a few suppliers than to work with more vendors (Hayes, Wheelwright, & Clarke, 1988; Spekman, 1988). In addition, several marketers are concerned with keeping customers for life rather than with only making a one-time sale (Cannie & Caplin, 1991). There is greater opportunity for cross-selling and up-selling to a customer who is loyal and committed to the firm and its offerings. In a recent study, Naidu, Parvatiyar, Sheth, and Westgate (1999) found that relational intensity increased in hospitals facing a higher degree of competitive intensity.

Also, customer expectations have been changing rapidly over the last two decades. Fueled by new technology and the growing availability of advanced product features and services, customer expectations are changing almost on a daily basis. Consumers are less willing to make compromises or trade-offs in product and service quality. In a world of ever changing customer expectations, building cooperative and collaborative relationships with customers seems to be the most prudent way to keep track of their changing expectations and appropriately influencing them (Sheth & Sisodia, 1995).

Finally, many large internationally oriented companies are today trying to become global by integrating their worldwide operations. To achieve this they are seeking cooperative and collaborative solutions for global operations from their vendors instead of merely engaging in transactional activities with them. Such customers' needs make it imperative for marketers interested in the business of companies that are global to adopt CRM programs, particularly global account management programs (Yip & Madsen 1996). Global account management (GAM) is conceptually similar to national account management programs except that they have to be global in scope and thus more complex. Managing customer relationships around the world calls for external and internal partnering activities, including partnering across a firm's worldwide organization.

IV. Information Quality in CRM

a) *Place of information in CRM*

The term CRM - encompassing the largest grouping of IT concepts to date - refers to the overall concept of moving ownership of the customer away from the individual departments and consolidating it at the enterprise level. Under the CRM concept, individual departments are still responsible for customer interactions, but the enterprise is responsible for the customer. Enterprises approach CRM by automating each customer touch point: Sales force automation, the Internet, point of sale (POS) technologies and call centers are all pieces of CRM, although they are not substitutes for it.

The backbone of any CRM solution is the information behind it. Enterprises have invested considerable effort and expense in deploying CRM solutions to make their customers' experiences more satisfying, increase retention and foster loyalty. Despite this expense and effort, however, many of these enterprises still fail to understand that a CRM solution is only as good as the quality of the customer information that feeds it.

Enterprises must have three types of information to effectively manage their customer relationships: (Frazier, Spekman, & O'Neal, 1988).

- *Descriptive Information*

Descriptive information focuses on the customer, which could be an individual, a household, a business or some combination of the three. Demographic, lifestyle and psychographic information fit into this category, because all of these types of information attempt to describe some aspect of the customer. Because it is customer focused, this information is common across multiple industries and relationships, although some elements will be more important in certain industries than others.

Much of this information comes from operational systems within the enterprise or from external information providers. This information is easily available to most competitors within an industry and, therefore, yields little competitive advantage.

- *Relationship Information*

This information set includes details on the transactions and interactions that comprise the relationship between the enterprise and its customers. Acquiring relationship information has proven to be the biggest challenge for many enterprises, because they must strike a balance between collecting too much and too little information. Conceivably, the enterprise could collect vast amounts of information about every interaction, but in reality, only so much can be assimilated. Therefore, choices must be made about

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which interactions, and which information about these interactions, are most valuable.

Because this information personalizes the customer/enterprise relationship, it overcomes the lack of differentiation characteristic of the generic customer information that most enterprises already have. It can also pose challenges in the areas of systems integration and information management (e.g., collecting and managing information from multiple channels and systems before identifying which information points are actually valuable).

- *Contextual Information*

Contextual information is the least common type of information for an enterprise to have; however, without the information that this information can provide - an understanding of the context of the enterprise's relationship with its customers - the enterprise is unlikely to maintain a strong customer relationship as circumstances changes.

Consider, for example, a bank that offers a fixed-rate mortgage. Customer loyalty will likely vary inversely with interest rates, so little information about the customer's description - or his or her previous relationship with the bank - will be as important to his or her loyalty as the context of rising or falling interest rates.

Because contextual information is both diverse and unstructured, it is difficult to integrate with operational customer relationship systems. Identifying the relevant pieces of information will be the first major challenge for the enterprise. Because this information describes the context of the enterprise/customer relationship, what is relevant will vary considerably among industries, and even among enterprises within an industry. For some enterprises, weather forecasts may be critical; for others, government deregulation, competitor behavior, current-affairs television programs or changes in financial markets may be important factors.

b) Information Analysis for CRM

How does customer information fit into overall picture of CRM? Building an understanding of the customer relationship requires different types of analysis of customer information, depending on how an enterprise will eventually use this information. This, in turn, requires an understanding of the difference between operational and analytical CRM: (Berry & Parsuraman, 1991; Bitner, 1995; Crosby & Stephens, 1987; Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Gronroos, 1995).

- *Operational CRM* is the business strategy that focuses on the day-to-day management of the customer relationship across all points of customer contact, enabled by sales and service technologies.
- *Analytical CRM* is the component of the CRM business strategy that drives increased customer intelligence and makes information actionable across all touch points. Key components of analytical CRM include:

- Customer segmentation analysis to develop formal segments, or ad hoc selections customers for one-time-only marketing campaigns
- Customer profitability analysis to derive profitability information and predict lifetime value, enabling more profitable marketing, sales and service initiatives
- Predictive modeling to forecast likely product purchases, customers most likely to buy and customers most likely to be lost by the enterprise
- " What if " analyses to determine how specific marketing, sales and service strategies will impact customer profitability
- Real-time event monitoring and triggering, which leverages customer insight to take advantage of opportunities as they unfold
- Campaign management (or relationship optimization), which uses analytics to develop, execute, manage and measure marketing campaigns across multiple touch points -
- Personalization across all points of customer contact to deliver the most relevant message to a customer, at the right time, via the most appropriate channel

A successful CRM strategy dictates that both analytical and operational CRM be integrated, and that enterprises understand the difference between segmenting customers (analytical CRM) and targeting them (operational CRM). Segmentation is about understanding behaviors and characteristics common to groups of customers. Many enterprises think this is synonymous with customer targeting, but it actually serves a different purpose.

Segmentation enables enterprises to understand the dynamics of customer relationships and is used in two key ways: (Berry & Parsuraman, 1991).

- Determining characteristics of profitable customer segments, enabling enterprises to target prospect groups more effectively and aid in the process of targeting current customers
- Identifying information elements that indicate a change in the relationship, enabling enterprises to prepare for future events affecting other customer groups

c) Information quality Process in CRM

In today's business world where information is the ultimate currency, the higher quality the information, the more valuable and powerful the information is to those who possess it.

Good and accurate information is the most important factor in determining how successful a

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company is in its usage of the CRM application. A successful CRM strategy is primarily determined by the quality of information residing in the application. High quality information is essential to a company that manages its sales and marketing goals using a CRM system.

The Oracle/Siebel CRM on Demand user has strong analytical suites available at their fingertips, but these powerful tools are dependent on the accuracy and usability of the information. If poor quality information is either imported or resides in the system, then the robust analytical potential of Oracle/Siebel CRM on Demand is rendered less powerful, if not entirely neutralized. Businesses throw people and money at the troubles caused by poor quality information, but technology that solves the problem more effectively, and with fewer resources, is now available.

- *Discovery & Analysis* To implement a CRM application, information migration must take place. This involves consolidating information from various enterprise source systems and information bases and mapping it to the target CRM system. Too often, organizations undertaking information migration rely on inaccurate metainformation and out-of-date documentation, resulting in design specifications based on erroneous assumptions about the source information. Information migration based on flawed mapping specs is akin to building a house on a shaky foundation. Each successive phase of information migration - including extraction, cleansing, matching and house holding - that builds on the faulty mapping specs is inherently flawed. Unfortunately, the resulting information problems don't manifest themselves until the testing phase, when it's too late. Information analysts are then forced to go back to the discovery and design phase, adjust the assumptions, and repeat the entire process. As a result, information migration projects can spiral out of control, wasting precious time and resources. Clearly, early detection and correction of problems in the source information can drastically reduce the risks associated with information migration. The CRM project can then be planned and executed with accuracy and confidence. As well, project costs can be managed more effectively: an error detected during the project-testing phase can cost up to 100 times more to correct than the same error found during the design phase. To handle source information issues upfront, organizations need to employ a powerful, automated discovery and analysis tool that provides a detailed description of the information's true content, structure, relationships and quality. This kind of tool can reduce the time required for information analysis by as much as 90 percent over manual methods. Information discovery and analysis allows organizations to understand whether their source systems are account-based or customer-based and whether customers have been properly identified as individuals or organizations. It is also important to know if more than one record exists per customer, and if so, how to identify the best record. Or better yet, how to combine the best elements of each record into a new, consolidated record. Having determined the true nature of the underlying source information, the organization is ready to create the necessary information quality transformation rules for the information migration to its CRM system. Gratner, 2003; Jill; 2004).
- *Information Conversion & Cleansing* At this stage, the organization is ready to identify and correct formatting errors in customer and product information. This information can range from basic contact information to tax ID numbers and product numbers to any other information the user may wish to correct. Misspellings, transpositions and other anomalies can be amended, as well. Information quality also includes the identification and elimination of duplicate records for individuals, corporations and households. But more than reducing duplicate records, this kind of information matching or house holding is a powerful way to establish highly sophisticated customer networks. By linking customers who share a name, address, account number or other user-specified commonality, organizations can begin to ascertain a customer's total sphere of influence and to formulate a complete view of the customer's wealth and potential for wealth. This type of house holding can include linking individuals to other individuals and individuals to corporations. For example, a financial services institution implementing a marketing and service campaign targeting its premier clients would want to understand the customer's entire relationship with the bank, including personal accounts, business holdings and any custodial or trust accounts associated with the customer. This total view of the customer's network provides the institution with a much richer understanding of how best to market to and service this premier client. Without understanding the extent of this individual's relationship, the institution would likely not target this client as part of its premier campaign, losing the opportunity to realize the benefits of its CRM strategy. Building more sophisticated networks also provides manufacturing organizations with a better view of their business partners, as well as their customers. Corporate house holding allows the manufacturer to build hierarchical relationships with the different business entities of a single supplier. For example, Acme Manufacturing may make purchases from Division

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A, Division B and Division C of parent company Global Supplier. Yet, each division, as well as the parent company, may be based in different locations and do business under different names. If the manufacturer can link the divisions to the parent, it can begin to understand the total amount of business it transacts with this single corporate entity. This puts the manufacturer in a much better position to negotiate volume discounts with the parent company. These discounts can then be applied to the various division-level purchases. In the case of automotive manufacturers, establishing the customer's identity can be a complex proposition. Customers can be the dealers who sell the cars or the individuals who buy the cars. However, there is a hierarchical relationship in these customer networks that the automotive company cannot afford to overlook: the end-client "belongs" to the company, as well as to the dealer. To establish effective marketing and service strategies for either the dealer or the end-client, the automotive company must first understand the relationship that exists between the dealer and the end-client, as well as the relationship that the end-client and the dealer each share with the automotive company. These are sophisticated relationship networks that go beyond linking on common name and address. Implementing the necessary conversion rules for correcting errors and establishing customer networks requires more than software. It also requires an understanding of the organization's business rules. Only with that knowledge is the company ready to use software that includes built-in business rules for information quality processing. These pre-configured solutions can save an organization substantial time and money when compared to the more laborious and error-prone method of manual cleansing or when compared to software that requires the organization to build all of the necessary business rules for conversion from scratch. By taking advantage of intelligent solutions that provide comprehensive sets of universal information quality transformation rules, organizations can focus on building only the rules that are truly unique to their business. This approach allows organizations to accelerate the implementation of their CDQ programs.

- *Information Quality Maintenance* Best practitioners of CDQ won't stop once they've completed the initial information analysis, information conversion and information cleansing. Ongoing information quality processing is necessary to maintaining the integrity of any CRM system. Changes are constantly being made and new information is always being introduced into the system from various sales channels, including and especially the Web. The Web presents a special challenge to information quality maintenance because the responsibility for information input lies more with the e-customer and less with the organization. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, in 2000, more than 58 million U.S. consumers engaged in online transactions, generating $28.5 billion in sales. As e-commerce continues to grow, organizations committed to CRM increasingly will need to ensure that information is clean as it comes into the organization from the Web. Organizations that value their customer information will place a information quality filter at all customer interaction touch points, including the Web. This filter is the organization's defense against customer information corruption. After the CRM system is populated with cleansed and linked information, organizations will want to focus their preventative information quality measures on the front-line, rather than on more costly and time-intensive back-office clean-up. Just as business rules were critical to the conversion, information quality filters must be flexible and robust enough to support the organization's established business rules. This consistency will ensure the organization's information quality conversion efforts are maintained going forward.

V. Information Security Management System and the Creation of Security Policies in CRM Systems

Evidently, in modern digital economy, information is the lifeblood of business and organisations are increasingly dependent on the use of information systems and networks to process information. Computer 'literacy' is now widespread making systems ever more open to abuse, whether deliberate or accidental. Consequently, businesses are increasingly at risk through use of the very tool introduced to increase efficiency, i.e. information technology (IT). Managers must therefore address these risks where they would affect their systems and the information used on them in terms of: (George, 2008).

- confidentiality
- integrity
- availability.

Security requirements are identified by a methodical assessment of security risks. Expenditure on controls needs to be balanced against the business harm likely to result from security failures. The results of the risk assessment will help to guide and determine the appropriate management action and priorities for managing information security risks, and for implementing controls selected to protect against these risks. Risk assessment should be repeated periodically to address any changes that might influence the risk assessment results. If managing an organization's

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information security risks quality, the most important is to choose the best methodology.

In the increasingly interconnected business environment, information is an asset that, like other important business assets, is essential to an organization's business and consequently needs to be suitably protected. As a result of this increasing interconnectivity, information is now exposed to a growing number and a wider variety of threats and vulnerabilities. Information can exist in many forms: it can be printed or written on paper, stored electronically, transmitted by post or by using electronic means, shown on films, or spoken in conversation. Whatever form the information takes, or means by which it is shared or stored, it should always be appropriately protected. It is important to stress that information security is the protection of information from a wide range of threats in order to ensure business continuity, minimize business risk, and maximize return on investments and business opportunities.

In organisation environment, information security is achieved by implementing a suitable set of controls, including policies, processes, procedures, organizational structures and software and hardware functions. These controls need to be established, implemented, monitored, reviewed and improved, where necessary, to ensure that the specific security and business objectives of the organization are met. This should be done in conjunction with other business management processes. Information security policy3 in accordance with the application of ISO 27001:20054 4.2.1 b must be defined as follows: "The organization must do the following:"(https://bib.irb.hr/datoteka/-514103.285-883-1-PB1.pdf)

- Define the scope and limits of ISMS in terms of business features, organization, its location, assets and technology including details and justification of any exclusions from the scope
- Define the ISMS policy in terms of features, business, organization, its location, assets and technology that:

- includes a framework for setting goals and establishing overall sense of direction and principles for acting in relation to information security,
- takes into account the business and legal or regulatory requirements and contractual obligations related to security,
- it is consistent with the organizational context of strategic risk management within which will be made the establishment and maintenance of ISMS;
- establishes the criteria by which risks will be evaluated is approved by management.

VI. Conclusion

As it is shown, consistency and quality of CRM data are crucial for business success. In order to prevent incorrectness of data, enterprises develop strategy and goals of data quality. Enterprises use descriptive, behavioral and contextual data types to effectively manage their customer relationships.

Factors which ensure consistent high data quality are represented by six-step approach including: data profile and context, data control, data integration and storage, data augmentation, data monitoring, assigning ownership, users training and commitment to data-quality process.

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Strategic Service Factors Leading to Grameenphone's Success

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Abstract- With the rapid development of telecommunication industry and usage rates of mobile phone users in Bangladesh truly it is significant to know whether the customers are satisfied with the service of their operator or how the operators think to provide better service to attract its valued customers. In this study, we have examined the determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty conditions of Grameenphone to recommend what service factors could be applied strategically to sustain the leadership over the telecom industry in Bangladesh. The findings confirm that customer satisfaction and loyalty would be enhanced if the operator emphasis on core service factors like service quality, brand image, service charges, network quality and Value Added Services (VAS) etc. For this the study is conducted on 150 Grameenphone subscribers in Bangladesh. The Chi-square test for customer satisfaction factors and customer loyalty factors suggests that GP's customers are satisfied with their services but 40% of them still are not willing to subscribe about GP to other potential users. On the basis of the findings, the study concludes by recommending some potential service factors that could be helpful for GP to gain the competitive advantage and will create a positive impact over customer's mind about receiving GP's service.

Keywords: *strategic factors, grameenphone, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty.*

GJMBR - E Classification : *JEL Code : M39*



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Md. Asfaqur Rahman [α] & Md. Hasebur Rahman [σ]

Abstract- With the rapid development of telecommunication industry and usage rates of mobile phone users in Bangladesh truly it is significant to know whether the customers are satisfied with the service of their operator or how the operators think to provide better service to attract its valued customers. In this study, we have examined the determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty conditions of Grameenphone to recommend what service factors could be applied strategically to sustain the leadership over the telecom industry in Bangladesh. The findings confirm that customer satisfaction and loyalty would be enhanced if the operator emphasis on core service factors like service quality, brand image, service charges, network quality and Value Added Services (VAS) etc. For this the study is conducted on 150 Grameenphone subscribers in Bangladesh. The Chi-square test for customer satisfaction factors and customer loyalty factors suggests that GP's customers are satisfied with their services but 40% of them still are not willing to subscribe about GP to other potential users. On the basis of the findings, the study concludes by recommending some potential service factors that could be helpful for GP to gain the competitive advantage and will create a positive impact over customer's mind about receiving GP's service.

Keywords: strategic factors, grameenphone, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty.

I. Introduction

Grameenphone, widely known as GP, is the leading telecommunication service provider in Bangladesh. With more than 51.5 million subscribers *(Grameenphone, 2014),* GP is the largest cellular operator in the country. With the slogan Stay Close, the goal of GP is to provide affordable telephony to the entire population of Bangladesh and promises to bring the best of communication technologies so that the customers can Go Beyond. The expansion of telecom industry along with customized services has created severe competition among the six mobile phone operators and measuring the customers' satisfaction level is an important issue to achieve the ultimate goal to be the market leader. That is why the competition based on specific service factors is increasing day by day and the telecom industry is experiencing significant changes to its ecosystem of customers, operators, device vendors and service suppliers. As a market leader GP is continuously coming up with new products and services. Since the market payers are designing their strategy with the combination of traditional and modern armors and the culture and the practice of innovations are highly emphasized in this industry, the competition among the operators are escalating day by day because Robi, Citycell, Airtel, Banglalink and Teletalk are also trying to increase their customer based on their specified service factors. Thus it realizes us to consider the factors that the company competing in the sector must recognize the needs, wants, tasted, fashion criteria and the perceptions of their consumers in the first place. Successful marketing strategies are based on assets that are strong relative to those of competitors. These assets include brand equity, scale, scope, and efficiency of operations, financial conditions, locations, and government support. All these assets sum up as total asset which helps GP to take the competitive advantage and be the leading company in the telecommunication industry of Bangladesh. GP has been a pioneer in bringing innovative mobile-based solutions to Bangladesh. In mobile telecommunication industry, there are direct and indirect factors that influence customer satisfaction. On the basis of these realities authors have been motivated to identify the core factors that are to be proposed as strategic factors that will lead GP's success as: Network Coverage, Emergency Balance, SMS Service, Internet Service, Mobile Banking Platform, My Zone Facility, Advertisement and Promotion, Available Retail Stores, Voice Call, Telecommunication Service, Quality of Telecommunication Service, Information Service, Voice Massage, Three G Service, Variety of Package, Customer Care Service, Cost of MMS, Health Care Service, Video Call Service, Cost of Using Internet, Responsiveness to Customer, Cost of Using Internet, CSR Activity, Hotline Service, Cost of Video Call, Cost of Voice Call, Offers, and Call Rate.

a) Objectives of The Study

Gaining customers' satisfaction and loyalty have already been the strategic parameter for GP's success. Regardless of these two issues the authors have tried to identify what the customers actually consider most about GP's strategic service factors. In this context, a survey was conducted to find out the customer's liking and disliking and collected information

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was analyzed to find out the strategic service factors responsible for GP's success. So ultimately the general objective of this study is to analyze the customer's satisfaction and loyalty to GP and the specific objectives are as follows:

- To rank the strategic service factors that lead to GP's success.
- To find out the strategic weak points and rank them.
- To show the strategic service factors linkage to customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- To draw an overall conclusion and recommend the core strategic service factors for GP.

II. Literature Review

Marketing is merely a civilized form of warfare in which most battles are won with words, ideas, and disciplined thinking. Understanding customers are not enough in these days because marketers are facing intensive competition from all corners of the market. Competitive advantage is the key to success in this warfare and thus distinguishes it from other companies. According to the study of *Akter et al. (2005)* on the telecommunication industry in Bangladesh, the English term 'strategy' is derived from Greek word 'strategia' which means generalship and it is a plan of action designed to achieve the long-run goals of the organization. To them, marketing strategies evolve from more general business objectives which include the following dimensions:

- The product or service market in which someone expects to compete.
- The level of investment needed to grow, and maintain the business.
- The product line, positioning, pricing, and distribution strategies needed to compete in the selected market.
- The assets or capabilities to provide a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA).

As competition has been escalating among corporations, it is ardently necessary for them to learn about the consumers' perception about the price, promotion, product, service quality and important factors that may have been playing vital role for their success *(Haque, Rahman & Rahman, 2010). Shamsad (2014)* also focused in his study about the main factors that are instrumental for the growth of the mobile operators is: huge competitions, advancement in technology, reduced tariff, falling handset price, innovative pricing strategy, new attractive schemes, service quality, brand image, service charges, network quality and Value Added Services (VAS) etc. Different researchers have proposed different factors from strategic point of view for the telecommunication industry such as *Paulranjan et al. (2011)* in India revealed that communication and price are the key and influencing factors. Again *Khan (2010)* in Pakistan emphasized that providing promised service timely, accurately, and dependably should be given the highest priority. The other factors that are the promptness of response to the complaints and how quickly it is resolved, network coverage and internet facilities have also given strong priorities.

a) GP

GP received its license for cellular phone operation in Bangladesh from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications on November 28, 1996. GP started operations on March 26, 1997, in the Independence Day of Bangladesh. Subsequently GP converted as public limited company on June 25, 2007 and listed on the Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchange on November 11, 2009. During the first quarter of 2014, all 64 district headquarters of the country were brought under 3G coverage and provided lowest priced GP branded 3G modem and 3G pocket router for the subscribers. GP surpassed 51.5 million subscribers, including adding 4.9 million 3G subscribers and 100 billion revenues through its innovative and customer centric product and their countrywide robust and reliable network, innovative and value-for-money products and services. Despite the pressure of competitive environment, GP continued to focus on enhancing quality services, innovation and driving market expansion. GP simplified the portfolios of all 3G data, Voice call, SMS & MMS with more affordability. Throughout the commitment of GP towards the customer, they introduced 60 seconds equivalent call reimbursements on every call drop for all subscribers and emergency balance of BDT 10 to BDT 100 based on their past usage pattern and network age. In the interim period GP completed upgrading their entire IP transmission backbone and backhaul with a more robust solution for their strategic ambition of 'Internet for ALL'. They are also focusing on improving customer service and customer experience and mostly on CSR initiatives for building societies and secure a better future for all. By building on their strengths, applying the right mindset and executing the strategy, GP always take aggressive approach in the market and ensure to stay ahead of the competition. *(Grameenphone, 2014).*

i. *CSR Strategy: Lantos (2001)* contended about CSR activity in his article that the ethical responsibilities of corporations have to be taken as additional responsibilities going beyond legal compliance and profit making and include those that the firms believe are the right things to do. Ethical responsibility origins from humanistic, religious and moral orientation of corporation. Companies are now performing specially in the non-financial areas such as human rights, business ethics, environmental policies, community development,

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and workplace issues. Here with the help of telecommunication technology GP can empower people to bring positive changes in their lives. As the company continues to connect people with essential services, it is also using its core expertise for social development especially in the areas of health, education and climate with the vision of "Empower Societies".

ii. *Climate Change Strategy:* Energy use in GP's network an operation represent around 81% of the total energy consumption and is the main source of our CO2 emissions. GP continually strives to reduce the environment and climate impact of its operations and services and inspires employees to act responsibly. This is why the Climate Change Program was initiated by GP in 2008, with the objective of minimizing the negative environmental impact on the community. At the same time GP also adopted the EMS (Environmental Management System) for sustainable operations. The corporate headquarter, GP House, as part of awareness and adoption, has also become a magnificent model of true green architecture in the country. Mobicash and Billpay have been instrumental in reducing customers' travel requirement and hence contributed to minimizing carbon emission of the society.

b) Strategic Service Factors

The service sector is expanding in an increasing rate and is becoming intensely competitive day by day. In today's very competitive marketplace a strategy is that insures consistent approach of offering products or services in a way that will outsell the competition is critical. It would not create any value if the organization lacks either the resources or the expertise to implement it. In the process of implementing the strategy, the organization should address some unique considerations to important factors, not all at generic level *(Marketing Plan, 2015).* Many studies have found a direct positive link between service quality perceptions and customer behavioral intensions *(Zeithaml et al., 1996).* Customer service is a system of activities that comprises customer support systems, complaint processing, speed of complaint processing, ease of reporting complaint and friendliness when reporting complaint *(Hanif et al., 2010).* According to *Turel and Sereko (2010)* improved customer services are the focal point of the telecom service providers for social as well as for economic reasons. From a social view point, services should be available to the customers on reasonable terms. As far as economic factor is concerned, service should satisfy the needs of the customers. *Kim, Park and Jeong (2004)* argued that service provider should provide customer oriented services in order to heighten up customer satisfaction. It was also found that the customers get satisfied to a brand more if they get all the needed services accumulated in that very brand *(Ahn, Han and Lee, 2006).* In this respect GP have also been focused on several strategic service factors that are comprised of service innovativeness, service reliability, service competitiveness, and service consistency for taking the competitive advantage on others. Other strategic factors such as Network Coverage, Emergency Balance, SMS Service, Internet Service, Voice Call, Information Service, Customer Care Service, and CSR Activity also need to be considered to satisfy its customers.

c) Customer's Satisfaction

In today's competitive telecommunication industry, customers have many options available. Factors that enable an organization to attract and retain a customer should be studied carefully. Mobile service provider should find out effective and creative ways to attract and retain or foster a stronger relationship with customers *(Salleh, 2012). Rahman et al. (2014)* indicated that it is obvious, customers are the important stakeholders in organizations and their satisfaction is a priority for management. Now customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal of business. So customer satisfaction has been a subject of great interest to organizations and researchers alike. It is the measurement of consumer's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to his/her expectation. Previous literatures have indicated that customer satisfaction can be classified into two ways: transaction-specific satisfaction and general overall satisfaction. Transaction-specific customer satisfaction refers to the assessment customers make after a specific purchase experience and overall satisfaction means the customers' rating of the brand based on their experience *(Deng et al., 2010).* Different factors have different influence on customers. There is considerable evidence that quality factors affecting customer satisfaction in numerous ways. *Rahman (2014a)* mentioned in his paper that the factors responsible for customer satisfaction on GP users are service innovativeness, service reliability, service competitiveness, service consistency, network and signal coverage, pricing, quality of offering, customer fulfillment, brand value, value added services, and operator' contribution to society. These factors should have also been taken into consideration to formulate the strategies for customer satisfaction. *Ahn, Han and Lee (2006)* shows that in the mobile telecom arena the customer's satisfaction also depends on how the company dealing with customers complaints. Furthermore, the friendly attitude and courteous behavior of the service workers at service firms leaves a positive impression on the customer which lead towards customer's satisfaction. *Islam (2011)* argued that customer value is more viable element than customer satisfaction because it includes not only usual benefits

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that most organizations focus on but also a consideration of the price that the customer pays. Customer value is dynamic that must be managed. Customer satisfaction has been found to positively affect a firm's profitability *(Anderson, 1994)* and its market value. Several studies in the marketing literature have been considered the relationship between customer satisfaction and performance at the firm level. It is obvious that the results generally prove that the customer satisfaction provides economic profit to the firm. From the above literature review on customer satisfaction, some elements can be taken as the indicator of performance measurement criteria of GP comparing with other rival telecom operators such as Network, 3G Service, Customer Care Service, Billing Cost, Information Service, Mobile Banking Platform, and the GP Offers. The company needs to focus more on these strategic factors to meet customer wants and demands.

d) Customer's Loyalty and Loyalty Program

Customer loyalty mostly plays the vital role for any organization's success. It is the main objective for the organizations to go for strategic marketing planning since it brings many favorable outcomes *(Pratminingsih et al., 2013).* Further, loyal customers discuss past service experiences positively than non-loyal customers and it is much less expensive to retain current customers than is to seek new ones. Customer's loyalty towards the organization can be examined through behavioral and attitudinal approach. Behavioral loyalty is customer willingness to continue a relationship and repurchase the product and attitudinal loyalty is the level of customer advocacy and psychological attachments to the service provider *(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).* For this organizations should offer unique set of benefits to its' loyal customers so that the competitors cannot imitate and thus strengthen customer retention. *Sharp & Sharp (1997)* recommended that the loyalty programs are the structured marketing efforts that reward, and therefore encourage buying behavior – behavior which is potentially beneficial to the firm. Loyalty programs have been initiated to satisfy and retain the valued customers as well as attract new customers. *O'Malley (1998)* stated that the basic idea of loyalty program is to reward customers' repeat purchase and encourage loyalty by providing targets at which various benefits can be achieved. Loyalty programs have been revealed in large scale especially in banking, superstores, airline, consumer goods like jewelry, clothing etc. *O'Brien and Jones (1995)* identified five elements which determine the value of loyalty program which includes cash value, choice of redemption options, aspirational value, relevance and convenience. Proper and planned loyalty programs can create customer commitment which builds long term relationship with customers *(Liu &Yang, 2009).* As GP is holding an important customer base for a very time, they initiated a loyalty program to recognize and appreciate its' valuable subscribers under "GP STAR" subscriber program. Customers will be more loyal if GP fulfill the expectations of its valued subscribers are as follows:

- Privileged and free 121 service
- Faster problem-solving
- Exclusive booth in GP center
- Hand set servicing facility
- Reduced tariff for high and old users
- Reduced price of Value Added Services(VAS)
- Incentive providing etc.

e) Strategic Service Factors Linkage to Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Findings of previous researches proved that the higher level of customer satisfaction lead to greater customer loyalty. Researchers describe that satisfaction and loyalty relationship is affected by two factors. The first one is trust and the other factor is commitment. In case of mobile phones, the customer satisfaction is largely depend on how much he or she uses the product and their experience with the product would tell how much they are satisfied or dissatisfied that leads them to loyalty or to switch *(Goode et al., 2005).* Since customer satisfaction reflects the degree of a customer's positive feeling for a service provider in a mobile commerce context, it is important for service providers to understand the customer's vision of their services *(Deng et al., 2009).* On the other hand, a high level of customer satisfaction may have a positive impact on customer loyalty. *Lee (2013)* suggested that the concept of perceived value, perceived price, and perceived switching cost should go to the mobile phone service market in order to gain a deeper understanding of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Many researchers have focused on determining the distinction between customer satisfaction and service quality. *Oliver (1980)* discussed in his early discussion that customer satisfaction results from comparing and experiencing a service quality which is encountered with what was expected. *Lee (2013)* once again found a bewildering array of "expectations" that reflected what might, could, will, should, or better not happen. When someone says that the "service exceeded my expectations," what they generally mean is that the service was better than they had predicted it would be. A high level of customer satisfaction may have a positive effect on customer loyalty. *Deng et al., (2009)* also recommended that customer loyalty is not only the ultimate object for customer satisfaction measurement, but also a key determinant of a firm's long term viability. *Fornell (1992)* mentioned that the higher the level of a customer satisfaction, the greater the level of customer loyalty. Moreover, compared with loyal customers, non-

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loyal customers are much more influenced by negative information about the products or services *(Donio, Massari and Passiante, 2006).Dube and Maute, (1996)* argued that a few dissatisfied customers may complain after a poor service experience, but will not switch. However, many dissatisfied customers will not complain but will switch silently and create negative word of mouth. So GP should consider the strategic service factors that have a tight linkage with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

III. Research Methodology

The study is conducted to examine the strategic factors that lead to GP's success. For this purpose a constructive questionnaire was developed to cover the factors that lead to strategic service factors and strategic weak points of GP. The questionnaire was designed to rank the strategic factors that satisfy the GP subscribers as well as to rank the strategic weak points for recommending GP to restructure their service quality and attention on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The population was consists on the university students of Pabna University of Science and Technology, Pabna, Bangladesh as pilot survey for this research. The technique that used was convenient sampling and questionnaire were distributed to the students who were GP subscribers. For more reliability and validity the population for the study included all categories of GP subscribers from Pabna based on the demographic characteristics. The factors have been measured and investigated through 5 Point Scale such as Strongly Agree/ 1, Agree /2, Undecided /3, Disagree /4 and Strongly Disagree /5. The survey was conducted in between January 2015 to June 2015 and total 150 number of GP users has been taken to conduct this research.

SPSS Statistics software package version 16 is used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques such as mean and standard deviation were used to measure the mean scores and their variability. Chi-Square test has been conducted to observe the linkage among the strategic factors with customer satisfaction and loyalty.

IV. Analysis and Findings

a) Strategic Service Factors

Descriptive Statistics: Strategic Service Factors				
Rank	Strategic Service factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
01	Network Coverage	150	3.49	1.174
02	Emergency Balance	150	3.37	1.096
03	SMS Service	150	3.37	1.006
04	Internet Service	150	3.17	1.116
05	Mobile Banking Platform	150	3.03	1.042
06	My Zone Facility	150	2.99	1.290
07	Advertisement and Promotion	150	2.97	1.167
08	Available Retail Stores	150	2.95	1.271
09	Voice Call	149	2.93	1.076
10	Telecommunication Service	150	2.91	1.051
11	Quality of Telecommunication Service	150	2.89	.998
12	Information Service	150	2.82	1.075
13	Voice Massage	150	2.73	.988
14	Three G Service	150	2.68	1.083
15	Variety of Package	150	2.65	1.056
16	Customer Care Service	150	2.57	1.089
17	Cost of MMS	150	2.52	1.066
18	HealthCare Service	150	2.51	1.122
19	Video Call Service	150	2.50	1.067
20	Responsiveness to Customer	150	2.47	1.127
21	Cost of Using Internet	150	2.45	1.207
22	CSR Activity	150	2.42	.936
23	Hotline Service	150	2.27	1.258
24	Cost of Video Call	150	2.18	1.050
25	Cost of Voice Call	150	2.16	1.112
26	Offers	150	2.11	1.159
27	Call Rate	150	2.01	.980

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Descriptive statistics such as mean is used to measure the average value of the variables and standard deviation is used to test variability of the mean value. Five point scales is used to collect perception regarding the variables. Therefore, mean value of variables ranges 1 to 5. A mean value below 2.5 is below average, mean value 2.5 to 2.9 above average, 3 to 3.9 is moderate and mean value 4 to 5 is high. The mean value of the variables of the study ranges 3.49 to 2.01. The mean values for the strategic service factors ranked up to 27 items do not indicate of any high value. Mean value ranges up to Above Average (2.5 to 2.9) except Network Coverage (3.49 Moderate), Emergency Balance (3.37 Moderate), SMS Service (3.37 Moderate), Internet Service (3.17 Moderate), Mobile Banking Platform (3.03 Moderate). My Zone Facility (2.99), Advertisement and Promotion (2.97), Available Retail Stores (2.95), Voice Call (2.93), Telecommunication Service (2.91), Quality of Telecommunication Service (2.89), Information Service (2.82), Voice Massage (2.73), Three G Service (2.68), Variety of Package (2.65), Customer Care Service (2.57), Cost of MMS (2.55), Health Care Service (2.51), Video Call Service (2.50) ranges within the value 2.5 to 2.9 which indicates the value of above average. Rest of the strategic service factors have been ranked for Below Average because of their value ranged within 2.5. The Standard Deviation ranges 0.936 to 1.290. Therefore, higher variability in perception regarding variables has been observed.

b) Strategic Weak Point of GP

Descriptive Statistics: Strategic weak point of GP				
Rank	Strategic weak point of GP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	High Call Rate	150	3.97	1.144
2.	Time Consuming Customer Care Service	150	3.85	1.091
3.	Limited F&F Number	150	3.76	1.157
4.	Limited Balance Validity Time	150	3.66	1.061
5.	Enough Time in Changing F&F Number	150	3.52	1.197
6.	Busy Network	150	3.17	1.172

The success strategy also depends on considering the weaknesses and threats regarding the services and nature of competitive market structure. The researchers also emphasizes on the specific weak points of GP for developing the success factors. The strategic weak points recommended by the researchers in this paper have been developed through 150 GP subscribers. They proclaim the strategic weak point of GP according to the rank are of High Call Rate, Time Consuming Customer Care Service, Limited F&F Number, Limited Balance Validity Time, Enough Time in Changing F&F Number and Busy Network. The mean value of the variables of the study ranges 3.97 to 3.17 which indicates that all the items are of moderate value. The Standard Deviation ranges 1.061 to 1.197. Therefore, higher variability in perception regarding variables has been observed.

c) Customer Satisfaction Factor

Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig
Satisfaction with Network	14 (9.3%)	15 (10%)	21 (14%)	72 (48%)	28 (18.7%)	150 (100%)	77.667	4	.000
Satisfaction with Three G Service	19 (12.7%)	34 (22.7%)	31 (20.7%)	59 (39.3%)	7 (4.7%)	150 (100%)	50.267	4	.000
Satisfaction with Customer Care Service	26 (17.3%)	41 (27.3%)	22 (14.7%)	57 (38.0%)	4 (2.7%)	150 (100%)	53.533	4	.000
Satisfaction with Billing Cost	25 (16.7%)	35 (23.3%)	38 (25.3%)	46 (30.7%)	6 (4.0%)	150 (100%)	31.533	4	.000
Satisfaction with Information Service	13 (8.7%)	30 (20.0%)	22 (14.7%)	80 (53.3%)	5 (3.3%)	150 (100%)	115.933	4	.000
Satisfaction with Mobile Banking Platform	10 (6.7%)	16 (10.7%)	24 (16.0%)	84 (56.0%)	16 (10.7%)	150 (100%)	124.800	4	.000
Satisfaction with GP Offers	37 (24.7%)	54 (36.0%)	17 (11.3%)	36 (24.0%)	6 (4.0%)	150 (100%)	46.867	4	.000

Opinion has been served in respect to satisfaction with GP's network among one hundred and fifty (150) respondents. Among the respondent 9.3% Strongly Disagreed, 10% Disagreed, 14% Undecided,

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48% Agreed, and 18.7% strongly Agreed with Chi-Square value 77.667(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. Therefore, it can be concluded that GP's customers are satisfied with GP's network. In case of GP's 3G service 12.7% Strongly Disagreed, 22.7% Disagreed, 20.7% Undecided, 39.3% Agreed, and 4.7% Strongly Agreed with Chi-Square value 50.267(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. Therefore, it can be concluded that the customers are satisfied with GP's 3G service. Again for Customer Care Service 17.3% Strongly Disagreed, 27.3% Disagreed, 14.7% Undecided, 38% Agreed, and 2.7% Strongly Agreed with Chi-Square value 53.533(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. So we can easily decide that GP's customers are satisfied with GP's Customer Care Service. For Billing Cost the results of the respondents shows that 16.7% Strongly Disagreed, 23.3% Disagreed, 25.3% Undecided, 30.7% Agreed, and 4.0% Strongly Agreed with Chi-Square value 31.533(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000 which means GP's customers are not very satisfied with its Billing Cost. But the customers shows their highly satisfaction with Information Service which represents that the respondents are 8.7% Strongly Disagreed, 20.0% Disagreed, 14.7% Undecided, 53.3% Agreed, and 3.3% Strongly Agreed with Chi-Square value 115.933(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. Again the customers shows their highly satisfaction with Mobile Banking Platform because the respondents shows their opinion as 6.7% Strongly Disagreed, 10.7% Disagreed, 16.0% Undecided, 56.0% Agreed, and 10.7% Strongly Agreed with Chi-Square value 124.800(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. But the customers are somewhat satisfied with GP Offers because the respondents are Strongly Disagreed 24.7%, Disagreed 36.0%, Undecided 11.3%, Agreed 24.0%, and Strongly Agreed 4.0% with Chi-Square value 46.867(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000.

d) Customer Loyalty Factor

Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig
GP has Better customer relationship	15 (10.0%)	32 (21.3%)	15 (10.0%)	72 (48.0%)	16 (10.7%)	150 (100%)	80.467	4	.000
I am willing to Recommend my friends and relatives	6 4.0%)	31 (20.7%)	24 (16.0%)	79 (52.7%)	10 (6.7%)	150 (100%)	113.800	4	.000
GP is better than other operators	7 (4.7%)	18 (12.0%)	25 (16.7%)	80 (53.3%)	20 (13.3%)	150 (100%)	109.933	4	.000
Trust and Loyal Customers of GP	9 (6.0%)	16 (10.7%)	38 (25.3%)	63 (42.0%)	24 (16.0%)	150 (100%)	60.867	4	.000

High degree of service quality translates into loyalty. Loyalty of customers is expected to increase when customer's service quality expectations are met. In this case the researchers found out that GP is maintaining better customer relationship that the respondents has shown their opinion with Chi-Square value 80.467(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. Satisfied customers draw new customers. GP's satisfied customers are willing to recommend their friends and relatives because the respondents has shown their opinion with high Chi-Square value 113.800(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. In comparison with the competitive advantage among the other operators of Bangladesh the subscribers mentioned that GP is better than other operators which is indicated by the Chi-Square value 109.933(*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000. Lastly the loyalty factor is measured with trust and loyal customers of GP which has low impact on GP's strategic service factors measured with the value of Chi-Square (60.867) at (*df*=4) with *Asymp. Sig.* =.000.

V. Conclusion & Recommendations

This work studied to determine the strategic factors by which GP can lead the telecommunication industry in Bangladesh. First, we explore the factors that help GP enriching their customers' satisfaction and customer loyalty, but recommending the service provider about strategic service factors have seldom concern by other researchers yet. Thus our research fills the gap in understanding what GP should consider in providing better service beyond the traditional service to gain the competitive advantage, retain the loyal customers, attract more new customers and being the market leader in the telecommunication industry. Second, we have analyzed the service factors based on 27 strategic variables; none of them crossed the high mean value (4 to 5). Some items took place in moderate range but most of the items remain in the range of above average which is alarming for GP if they remain unconscious about developing the services like Voice Call, Information Service, Voice Massage, 3G Service, Customer Care Service, Video Call Service, and the like. High Call Rate, Limited F&F Number, Busy Network have been found very crucial among the strategic weak points and need a special consideration about its old and loyal customers. Finally the overall results suggested that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty may be most significantly influenced by high-quality services, but maintaining perceived quality is still critical for retaining customers and maintaining competitiveness.

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In respect of these areas GP should also give attention on the relative factors that maintaining quality is the most important thing in growing telecommunication sector. Because customers most often complaints about their network fail in busy time. An incentive called 'Call Ferot' is introduced by the operator but the absence of strong network coverage and signal strength may lead the customers to strong dissatisfaction. So they should develop the quality of network and signal coverage area.

Rahman et al. (2014) argued that it is obvious that designing an offering with expected attributes and quality of those offerings according to the demand of customer is very much significant for customer satisfaction. But increasing the attributes within an offering and maintaining the quality of those offerings is not free of cost. But this study finds that most of the offers are tends to attract the new customers ignoring the loyal and old customers. So GP should emphasize on maintaining the quality and balancing of their offering rather than to promise for offering with more new attributes.

Customers are now more and more demanding than before. Hence, GP should serve the customers additional and prompt service by their trained, loyal and expert employees through their customer care centers. They should enhance their adaptability and sensitivity to realize, understand and to response quickly and more effectively to customer problems and inquiries.

At present consumers are not influenced by advertising rather publicity and the publicity is the outcome of the CSR activities of a company. Through this the company can create a good image to the society and gain a brand value. Thus it is recommended that GP should also give more emphasize on CSR activities with more service innovativeness, service consistency, quality and quantity of offerings etc.

Finally GP must do more market research periodically and take proper steps quickly which they get as a feedback from research. Research from external should give equal importance as they conduct internally for enriching the customer's feedback and upgrading their service.

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The Review of Contemporary Branding Techniques that can Influence Current Consumer Buying Behavior

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Abstract- This paper intends to discuss and understand contemporary branding techniques in marketing that can influence current consumer buying behavior. By thoroughly examining and understanding the way consumers feel about and perceive brands that influence their buying decisions, companies can adapt to the particular markets they are trying to serve, and promote their brand products using the most suitable branding techniques for their brand that would serve the customers' interests.

Keywords: *brand definition, contemporary branding techniques, internet, social media, luxury goods.*

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The Review of Contemporary Branding Techniques that can Influence Current Consumer Buying Behavior

Ooi Jin [α] & Rashad Yazdanifard [σ]

Abstract- **This paper intends to discuss and understand contemporary branding techniques in marketing that can influence current consumer buying behavior. By thoroughly examining and understanding the way consumers feel about and perceive brands that influence their buying decisions, companies can adapt to the particular markets they are trying to serve, and promote their brand products using the most suitable branding techniques for their brand that would serve the customers' interests.**

Keywords: brand definition, contemporary branding techniques, internet, social media, luxury goods.

I. Introduction

The ways brands are marketed to the public are expanding throughout time. In mid-1960s, about 80% of the American adult population can be reached through three national television advertisement broadcasts, of which, now requires at least 117 primetime spots just to reach that same amount of population today. Television channels have exploded in numbers ever since the mid-1990s (Clifton, 2009). Nevertheless, in this day and age, more than three-quarters of Americans go online for their communication and technology needs (Clifton, 2009). Mass media holds a crucial part in influencing the general public in their perception of brand products. The consumer response would depend on the brand awareness, also how consumers associate themselves with the brand (Ladha, 2007) of which, may be heavily influenced by the media.

The meaning of 'brand' can be different according to context or perspective. From the perspective of service oriented marketing, Rod Brodie of the University of Auckland looks at brand as having a crucial role in the marketing process; a service brand that facilitates and mediates the process used in realizing the experiences involved in creating value and meaning in the marketing world. According to Burmann, Hegner, and Riley, as cited in Brodie and De Chernatony (2009), a brand is not just a communication vehicle, but is also how actual and potential buyers perceive it, and how it is created and managed by its owner or manager based on the identity of the brand. A brand gives meaning to the product's attributes whether it is good or bad and defines the personality of the product, which thus says something about the person (consumer) who purchases the product (Altstiel & Grow, 2006, as cited in Carter, 2010). Branding is often associated with the world of marketing, which is primarily concerned with selling, promoting, and advertising a particular product. Although selling is its central component, it is important to acknowledge its other key components such as needs assessment, marketing research, and product development (Kotler, 1980, as cited in Rehse, 2012). Considering that brands define a certain personality to what it represents, there is therefore, an emotional dimension to a brand and organizations that develops and communicates those unique personalities of that particular brand (Sargeant et al., 2008, as cited in Rehse, 2012).

By examining branding techniques currently used in marketing, companies can determine the pros and cons of using those techniques, and apply it to their own strategies in marketing their products as brands to fit contemporary consumer behavior.

II. Research Methodology

This study is considered to fall under the interpretive class with the undertaken research approach being explanatory and the research strategy being done through literature survey. Extensive secondary sourced data were used for this study. International journals and papers are searched through available international and well-recognized data bases such as Emerald, Proquest and Ebscohost. The literature review is arranged in a manner, that it begin with how brand is defined and used in organizations and the marketing world with its relations to consumer behavior. The paper will proceed to the discussion, which talks about whether current branding techniques are effective in reaching its purpose and how this may influence future research.

III. Recall Rate at the Top of the Consumer's Mind

Perception is a psychological process in which the consumers put certain meanings to what they sense through their different sensory organs, and is an

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important aspect in consumer behavior (Majumdar, 2010). Consumer behavior focuses on simplicity and finding the "one thing" that suits them; and this is also focused on in terms of branding. Considering consumers do not intend to spend their time to find what they want, but they usually rely on branding to do the recommendations – of a product – for them (Sullivan, 2008, as cited in Carter, 2010). The consumers' psyche is conditioned through their perception about products or brand ideas over a period of time that leads to the storage of information in the memory of the individual, which later influences how the individual perceives that information. The brand that the individual sees in a popular commercial repeatedly will probably be registered with a high recall rate in the individual's cognition. The individual consumer will be able to recall the certain positive visual images seen in relation to the popular commercial, which will then influence the buying decisions associated with that brand (Majumdar, 2010).

IV. Word of Mouth (WOM)

Marketing of brands through word-of-mouth is one of the common branding techniques that could enhance the brand's characteristics. There are consumers who do not prefer to shop online and would choose to do the physical shopping and checking out the products of interest themselves. This is something to consider when it comes to marketing, as there are different types of shoppers or consumers in the market. The old ways of physical shopping is still here to stay, although Internet or online shopping is becoming increasingly popular these days. Consumers may pass around brand images through word-of-mouth that relates to a number of factors, such as social, emotional, and functional aspects of the product; with the emotional aspect being a main factor for most offline promotion of a brand (Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). This knowledge on word-of-mouth marketing can be useful for brand management and investment in WOM campaigns. Changes in the way people communicate nowadays however should also be considered, especially in these days of social media communication. Even word of mouth through social media should be considered important as it still influences consumers in how they select products and services based on what is promoted and discussed online. It is the consumers who dictate the value of brand equity by what the consumers perceive of the brand itself, not according to the sum of invested money that the company has spent on (Severi, Choon Ling & Nasermoadeli, 2014). This shows how important it is for companies to project the right image of the brand they want to portray to their customers.

V. Advertisements on Social Media

The Internet now puts consumers in the context of luxury, whereby the consumers expect to be looked up to within the virtual environment and that luxury can be positioned online rather more successfully due to several factors. Those factors include, lack of physical contact, global reach of the Internet, clicking on websites all in the comfort of one's home, the product variety, availability, and variability, and the fast and convenient method of going online (Okonkwo, 2009).

Branding is becoming more personalized on social media as its users see brand advertising that are more prevalent on those sites over the years. This is not a relatively new development, as it has been run since the 1990s with the advent of the Internet and more particularly, the social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Burmann, 2010). The appeal that these websites hold to Internet users has a bigger influence that anyone ever imagined as these media sites make use of certain key issues such as economics and culture as part of the content that they try to promote to their users. These social media websites have managed to convince many on how utilizing their use to build up the image of the brands is the way to go in these modern times to market their products (Gehl, 2011; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Novak, 2012). They are interactive and enable social connection on a radically different level than the old media types, enabling the sharing of content across digital networks with greater access to information and instant ability to communicate (Clifton, 2009).

VI. Brand Extension

Companies are now beginning to launch new products under an existing brand name but of a different product category. This can happen due to the value that people put on the brand name, like how Quakers created granola bars made of oatmeal under the existing brand that it holds as a popular oatmeal producer (Investopedia, 2010). Being innovative with their brands can help companies or marketers be different from their competitors (Wong & Merrilees1, 2007), and this is probably one reason why companies do brand extension. Brand extensions, however, may have a negative impact on product brand image, although the negative effect may be lowered if there is clear fit between the parent product and its extension product. Having a higher image of the product may result in further dilution occurring with the extension product (Müge Arslan & Korkut Altuna, 2010). Thus, companies would do well to take account of the risks when extending products to different categories.

VII. Brand Exclusivity

Branding techniques are diverse enough to be able to promote exclusivity of certain products, such as luxury goods – being significant in its market value of about US$130 billion in 2007, and its rapid rate of growth in the past decade compared to other consumer

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growth in the past decade compared to other consumer goods categories (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Marketing luxury goods can be quite complicated nowadays as there is a need to promote the product having an image that has quality, performance, authenticity, as well as the ability to sell the experience that best relate to the consumers' lifestyle constructs. The luxury goods industry involves a way of marketing that differs from most of other industries, making use of experiential economy in attracting its customers (Atwal & Williams, 2009). For instance, think of the experience of having coffee at the Starbucks, with the personal greeting by the staff, the easy-listening music in the background, and the wooden floors and lighting that all together define the Starbucks brand. Experiential marketing makes use of the essence of the product that emphasizes on a combination of tangible and deep, physical experiences that would influence the consumers' purchasing decision.

VIII. Discussion

Branding of product image occurs in a multidimensional world with its complexities that cannot escape the necessity for change. Brand managers cannot guard their brand image with the ability to control every factor especially how development and communication of brands are controlled by the consumers – not by the companies or themselves. The companies and managers have to adapt to the consumers' power of perception of the brand image itself, and therefore have to look at appropriate branding techniques from how customers see the situation (Christodoulides, 2008). From looking at how people view brands, it is interesting to note how consumers make their buying decisions based on symbolic attributes instead of the features of the product itself (Neumeier, 2003, as cited in Carter, 2010). Trends that have surfaced since the past years should take note to see how branding techniques are used to promote certain products that make consumers become interested in the particular product as consumers do not necessarily buy a product due to what it really offers but what it is perceived to offer in terms of value or meaning. People would value brands that give them a personal feeling and they value how they feel towards brands (Brodie, 2009), and how they feel compelled towards purchasing the product, thus brands are marketed more successfully by appealing aesthetics, which require minimal information processing (Carter, 2010).

This perception aspect should also be taken into context of what country the company is in, since there will be inevitable cultural differences in different countries that influence the perception of the consumers of that country; there will be different images in the consumers' minds (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006, as cited in Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008). What people feel about the product will depend on their perception, and that will be influenced by how the company chooses the brand techniques to market their products or services. Consumers perceive brand values from various sources and personal experiences. Advertising definitely influences the consumers' perception from these different sources as they continue to re-evaluate and define what they think and feel about the brands they see and hear of – with the emotion being a significant part of the process (Zambardino & Goodfellow, 2007). Companies should consider every possible factor that might influence this perception that they seek to control, whichever way they can try to control it, as perception is what matters when it comes to branding control. For the small businesses too, they can consider some practical solutions for developing solid brands which involve emphasizing just one or two strong brands, focusing on a couple of major associations, keeping coherent to the branding program, and advertising the brands in a creative manner, to build the image of these brands (Barbu, Ogarca, & Barbu, 2010). Be it big or small, businesses can tap on the image of the brand products they want to promote as long as they emphasize on the main interest within the consumers they are targeting.

Fashion brands are one of the most prevalent examples of brands that exist to give meaning to the products, which were mere garments when they left the factories; but become fashion when they are marketed as brands. Fashion in the luxury goods market is a vast industry that run due to the fact that people put high importance on fashion in society, like how clothes express the way people feel or see themselves and how they wish to be treated by other people (Tungate, 2008). A luxury image is associated with having to maintain a premium, aspirational image, with pleasurable experiences of purchase and consumption and quality of the products and services. The brand elements such as logo, symbol, and packaging would drive for brand equity other than the brand names, carrying with them the prestigious image of the brand (Keller, 2009). This, as mentioned previously, relates to how consumers mostly would be more attracted to products with appealing aesthetics that compete for the short attention span of the consumers, which is very much related to the design of the products as a source of differentiation between the products (Berkowitz, 1987, as cited in Montaña, Guzmán, & Moll, 2007). It is through design that consumers can better understand the identity of the brand, what the brand can provide to satisfy their needs, and which elements of the brand are consistent; in which the consistency can be reached through the design as the defining factor for the brand (Montaña, Guzmán, & Moll, 2007). A more humanized approach is more suitable for companies to take up, to look at the view that everyone will be interested in something that looks good on them and can give them the satisfaction, which continues to be explored in the fashion brands industry.

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Additionally, it would be desirable to have word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, considering the fact that a desirable product would be spoken more of – due to increased interests in the appealing characteristics of that product. However, it is difficult to research and quantify WOM marketing on how it would work better for companies to utilize as their method of brand marketing technique. It is also rather difficult to understand how it actually works on an individual or broad scope (Witzig, Ideen, & Spencer, n.d.). Word-of-mouth has become more modernized in today's world from just being spoken in everyday conversations, to the now evolved interactive social media or the media used to communicate online.

Internet has changed the way branding works in recent times into a more complex and dynamic manner. Modern marketing utilizing new digital media have also evolved to become a more global conversation involving millions of people from all over the world in social networks, online forums, discussion groups, review websites, and blogs, which allow people to leave their own comments regarding a particular brand (Clifton, 2009). For example, Tripadvisor.com provides travel recommendation reviews with an increase of about 115,000 reviews a week since 2007. Although this can be generally considered good development, the negative sides of online marketing also cannot be ignored, such as lack of sensory interaction and fears regarding personal security when people go online for their shopping purposes, as that would influence how consumers view their shopping experiences (Simmons, 2007). Online brand marketing can give positive and negative results for the average user; a certain brand sometimes becomes something that is not what the company initially says it is. Companies can try to manage the information that spreads regarding its brand but they cannot control what people are saying about their brand, which can change drastically. These are the modern days of transparency when companies can hardly try to control, censor, or cancel the things or information they do not want people to hear about their brands. The information that people read online can alter how they feel about some brands and thus their decisions on purchasing the product.

IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, brands are marketed more successfully with techniques that relate more to people's feelings. People value brands that give them a personal feeling and how they feel towards the brands. Brands are perceived differently according to the context or perspective, thus it depends on how they are marketed by the companies to give the brands the personal touch they are supposed to convey to the customers. The emotional dimension to a brand is what makes the brand unique; it is up to the company to decide how it wants to communicate its brand as having its own unique personality and eliciting the certain emotions in the consumer. Therefore knowing the branding techniques that work would be beneficial in order to give this influence to the consumer. People want the branding to do the recommendation of products for them, as they do not want to spend the time to find what suits them due to the need of simplicity. Branding ideas would lead to the information of a product to be stored in the person seeing the brand and developing a certain perception of the brand over time.

Branding techniques have evolved significantly over the past few decades with much appreciation to technology development, which are now simplified to the use of advertising on Internet and social media. The use of mass media in marketing brands has a crucial role in influencing people in how they perceive certain brands. Social media is now the new hype in marketing a brand due to the influence it can create among Internet users and the ease of its use to market and build the image of a product or brand. Luxury goods are one example of products with its own market, promoting itself with an image of quality, performance, authenticity, and also the experience of lifestyle for the consumers. The way luxury goods are promoted as brands influences the consumers' purchasing decision due to the experience it promotes. Branding techniques indeed relate to how a consumer would feel regarding a product, and companies would do well to research on how they can make people feel a certain way when they market their product to influence their purchasing decision.

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References	Complete and correct format, well organized	Beside the point, Incomplete	Wrong format and structuring

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