

1 The Case of Bangladesh Government Banning Japanese Manga
2 Cartoon Show Doraemon: The Antecedents of Consumers'
3 Avoidance

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7

8 **Abstract**

9 The purpose of this paper is to find the antecedents of consumers' avoidance towards the
10 Hindi-dubbed Japanese manga cartoon TV show ?Doraemon? in Bangladesh. Being the 5th
11 densely populated country in the world, Bangladesh has exposed its inhabitants towards the
12 wide international culture of the whole world. However, the major adoption of foreign culture
13 takes place largely in the city areas. Due to the ease of availability, lack of alternatives and
14 mass appeal, Bangladeshi kids got enormous exposure towards this Japanese manga (animates
15 cartoon character) cartoon show ?Doraemon? (Quddusi, 2012). Due to over exposure and the
16 perceived negative impact of this show by the parents and guardians on the kids of
17 Bangladesh, recently Bangladeshi government banned the telecast of Doraemon Cartoon Show
18 in Bangladesh. Through in depth interviews and grounding theory, this paper came up with
19 three major themes or antecedents for parents' avoidance towards this particular cartoon
20 show. In generic words, this case analysis answers what motivated the parents to express
21 against this show which eventually required Bangladesh government to ban this TV show from
22 the satellite TV channels.

23

24 **Index terms**— brand avoidance, japanese manga cartoon, consumer behavior

25 **1 Introduction**

26 manga or Japanese animated cartoon characters were inspired by the American comic culture and originated
27 specifically during earlier 19th century ??Fusanosuko, 2003). Up until 1980, it did not earn its vast popularity
28 throughout the world. In 1991, STAR TV (Satellite Broadcasting for Asian Countries) launched programming
29 service and this boomed the anime industry followed by immense popularity and demand for manga cartoon
30 shows throughout the world. Shiraishi (1995) claimed that Japanese popular culture is becoming the popular
31 culture in Asia.

32 Among many popular manga characters, quite a few became true international figures capturing audiences and
33 fan followers from both Southern and Eastern part of Asia. One of this very popular Japanese manga cartoon
34 characters is Doraemon, created by manga artist Fujiko F Fujio in the year 1973. Doraemon symbolizes a robotic
35 cat that travels back in time from the 22nd century to help a pre-teen boy, Nobita through its wonder gadgets.
36 Because of its worldwide growing popularity, Tokyo's foreign ministry selected Doraemon as its first "anime
37 ambassador" in 2008 so that foreign interest gets inclined towards Japanese culture ??National, February 2013)
38 With the growing popularity and frequent TV shows broadcasted through different satellite channels, children
39 got exposed to this manga cartoon show in Bangladesh. Lack of entertainment, scarcity of alternatives leveraged
40 this TV cartoon show to get massive viewer's exposure particularly from this country (Quddusi, 2012). However,
41 recently Bangladesh Government has banned the broadcast of this cartoon show which was being aired in a Hindi

3 METHODOLOGY

42 dubbed version. (AFP, National, bdnews ??4.com, 2013). As information minister Hasanul Haque Inu explained
43 to the media that Bangladesh government does not want children's education atmosphere to be hampered by
44 Doraemon. While, kids were hooking over the TV for his Hindi dubbed widely showcased cartoon show, a lot
45 of them were hurdling with learning their native Bengali language. Being inspired by their favorite cartoon
46 character Doraemon, kids comfortably were adapting Hindi as a mode of interpersonal interaction ??Quddusi,
47 2012).

48 This situation created massive awareness among public and private media and a lot of local dailies reported
49 about the negative impact of overexposure of this Hindi-dubbed cartoon show on the kids (bdnews24.com).
50 Hence, parents and family members started restricting the kids of their family from watching Doraemon cartoon
51 show. The purpose of this paper is to carefully focus on the case 'Doraemon Cartoon Show' by scanning through
52 the brand elements in order to find out parents' perception about the brand. This paper also aims to find out
53 that the triggers of parents' dissatisfaction which lead Bangladeshi government to ban this cartoon show from
54 the satellite television network. This paper will be able to conceptualize the unanticipated or foreseen dimensions
55 of brands which can potentially prove to be hazardous for the brand equity development. Hence producers and
56 managers will be able to better develop the brand According to the recent report published about the sales level
57 of Japanese manga cartoon show, Fusanosuke (2003) reported that the gross sales from manga publishing were
58 2.3 trillion yen. Other sources of manga cartoon proliferated after 1980s when this form of entertainment started
59 receiving popularity from all around the world. Fusanosuke (2004) reported that the globalization of Japanese
60 manga can be broadly categorized into two major regional areas, Asia, and Europe and the United States of
61 America. Doraemon was a classic manga in Eastern Asia particularly in Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, Hongkong
62 and China. Though Doraemon was being aired in some areas of Europe, the level of popularity was not as high
63 as it was in East Asia. To add on, some Western TV stations restricted the broadcasting of this show as they
64 grew concern about whether the western viewers will feel the cultural resemblance with this unique show or not
65 (Fusanosuke, 2004).

66 However, despite this concern, Doraemon got its popularity all over the world through its Chinese made
67 merchandise. Allison (2002) reported that Doraemon has been one of the most popular sign or symbol for
68 Japanese population and both kids and adults use Doraemon imprinted merchandise. Many stores, carnival
69 stalls, shopping malls, restaurants, airlines, schools, and neighborhood meeting venues are using the phenomena
70 of the brand Doraemon for developing the exterior or interior decoration. Doraemon face imprinted merchandise
71 like cell phone accessories, notebook covers, other stationeries, fashion apparel have become a significant hype
72 in the market which has quite an important impact on the economy (Allison, 2002). This cultural hype is not
73 only bound within the geographical territory of Japan, rather it went beyond and covered almost all part of Asia
74 and some part of European and American market. Particularly in East Asia and South-East Asia, Doraemon
75 is the new big thing among kids and young youths. This global hyperbole of the brand Doraemon actually
76 justifies the Tokyo government's decision to declare Doraemon as the anime ambassador for Japan (National,
77 February 2013) b) Consumer brand avoidance Olivia et al (1992) first explained the term brand avoidance as a
78 mean for consumers' brand switching. Later on Lee, Motion and Conroy (2009) referred the concept of brand
79 avoidance as a deliberate purposeful rejection of a particular brand by the consumers. Lee (2009) explained three
80 different kinds of brand avoidance namely-experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance
81 and moral avoidance. First hand negative experience with a particular brand leads to experiential avoidance.
82 Identity. Avoidance can be explained through psychological construct of self-concept and consumer culture theory
83 ??Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Sirgy (1982) also supported this concept that consumers buy those products
84 more, which has image congruity with consumers' self-concept. Sometimes consumers avoid purchase of certain
85 brands because certain reference groups with whom they have negative association are using these brands. Hence
86 to avoid using brands, which these group members use, they avoid these brands (White and Dahl, 2006 and Englis
87 and ??oloman, 1995).

88 Brand avoidance is necessarily not similar to anti-consumption (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006). Hence,
89 understanding the different aspects of lessening the consumption is important too. Brand avoidance leads to
90 declined purchase rate of specific brands where strong motivational factors works.

91 2 III.

92 3 Methodology

93 In order to retrieve some descriptive statistical information on the level of exposure and felt association with the
94 brand 'Doraemon' from parents' perception, a questionnaire was developed. 200 questionnaires were distributed
95 towards the parents of both Bengali medium and English medium school going kids. Convenient probabilistic
96 sampling method (Malhotra, 2008) allowed free flow of data collection and also attracted interested respondent
97 with relevant responses. Total number of respondents for this study, N=200. Among 200 filled questionnaires
98 185 were usable for data collection. There was an option given in the end of the questionnaire to allow the
99 researcher to contact with the respondents for further information regarding this research. 40 persons from the
100 total respondents showed their interest about further contribution to this research. 20 respondents were carefully
101 chosen based on their responses, which were closely relevant to the study context. A grounded theory methodology
102 (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was utilized for this study in order to gather and utilize

103 qualitative data. The chosen respondents were invited to join indepth interviews. 5 concerned respondents
104 came over and expressed their apprehension against the household exposure of Doraemon. Table 1 shows the
105 demography of the participants. Each interview lasted for an hour and the primary language of discussion was
106 Bengali, which was transcribed and translated by two experts with careful consideration. While identifying the
107 emergent themes, the coded incidents and categories were being compared frequently (both within and across
108 participants), to ensure data fit. As advised by Spiggle (1994), very similar themes were distorted together into
109 higher arrayed themes. To ensure the credibility, two expert judges reviewed the process which finally gave
110 birth to this conceptual theory of why parents decide on restricting children from certain brand usage which are
111 generally developed and positioned for the kids.

112 IV.

113 **4 Findings and discussion**

114 This descriptive qualitative study came up with three alarming behavior of this Doraemon brand which is
115 particularly aimed towards the kids. Table 2 displays the three main categorical reasons of brand avoidance
116 by the parents for the kids.

117 **5 Language invasion**

118 **6 Message quality**

119 In the first category (exaggeration of brand character), participants reported avoiding tendency due to massive
120 usage of central brand character which parents believe creates negative impact on the kids. The second category
121 (brand character personality incongruence) motivates brand avoidance when participants avoid certain cartoon
122 show which contains characters carrying personality incompatibility with the ideal personality portfolio that the
123 parents want their child to have. Third category (brand content quality deterioration) motivates the participants
124 to avoid brands which contain content with perceived lower quality.

125 Content quality and content messages here would determine the perception of content itself.

126 Through the questionnaire, parents were asked about the information regarding their kids' exposure towards
127 satellite television channels. As Thompson and Zerbinose (1997) explained that kids from the age of 18 months
128 till 9 years prefer cartoon to other TV programs, exclusion was made for the respondents who were Reasons for
129 brand avoidance parents of children over 9 years old. Also, based on available exposure towards TV, parents of
130 non-exposed household were excluded from the sampling process.

131 An alarming situation was noted when 100% of the respondents reported that, there was no control over the
132 television viewing in their household and children choose what they want to watch. 130 respondents expressed
133 their failure to control their children's choice of TV programs and 80 contributor confirmed that their children
134 communicate with each other using Doraemon inspired phrases and dialogues. From the questionnaire responses
135 a comparative chart can be graphically represented explaining the choice patterns of the average Dhaka city
136 children's choice of TV shows:

137 From the in-depth interview sessions, the participants were asked to explain all about what they are concerned
138 of in context of the Hindi-dubbed version of Doraemon cartoon show. All the interviewee reported that they
139 have seen few episodes of this cartoon show along with their kids and all of them had something negative in their
140 mind about this cartoon show. Some of them did not like the theme of the show, some of them think that this
141 cartoon show is good for the kids as long as it is dubbed in English or local Bengali language. a) Exaggeration
142 of the brand character Majority of the participants expressed concern about their felt exaggeration of the brand
143 character Doraemon. Parents urged that the core magnetism of the cartoon show is the wonder gadget pocket
144 owned by the main character Doraemon. They think, the concept of a wonder gadget pocket can enable the
145 children to be creative in problem solving, to be helpful to others, to nurture the notion of converting impossible
146 things into possible stuff. However, the peril is they might start believing in shortcuts and start looking for
147 imaginary impossible solutions to real problems. Aakar and Fournier (1995), identified brand character as an
148 important element of brand personality which enhances the brand value. This is why reasonable and responsible
149 positioning of brand characters can add to the brand value and a hyperbole can rapidly be pulled out by the
150 stakeholders to expose the discrepancy (Miles and Covin, 2000). However, Polonsky and Jevons (2006) claimed
151 that it is not very easy for any brand to be responsibly positioned from every front and thus complexity in careful
152 maintenance is inevitable.

153 In this case, Doraemon cartoon show depicts a central character of a robotic cat which carries repulsive
154 personality for the children. This show inspires the kids to believe in this exaggerated tech-savvy brand character
155 'Doraemon' and Parents expressed their sheer concern regarding this:

156 "The other day, my son came to me and articulated that he can fix the electricity power cut problem using
157 the Doraemon gadget pocket. When I asked him that where he would find this pocket, (he replied) definitely
158 in market?you can buy everything of Doraemon in the market" (Romel) "I think this is incredible that how
159 children live in absolute world of fantasy, but everything has a limit. It does not make my child ingenious when
160 he wants to use his imaginary gadget pocket to do his next morning school homework on his behalf. It rather
161 creates lunacy which can be extended to have greater impact further (in his future life)" (Salim) "My 9 years
162 old totally believe that a gadget pocket (of Doraemon) can be bought from overseas countries and whenever I

8 CONCLUSION

163 am up for a business meeting (overseas), she asks me to bring a wonder gadget pocket. Definitely, I disappoint
164 her each time. I wish this 'Doraemon' did not happen to her, I probably could be able to bring her a (real
165 incongruence. Concerned parents explained that they wanted the children to avoid this cartoon show totally as
166 they believed the characters of this cartoon show carry association. Hence, parents want to limit the exposure
167 of this show towards their kids to avoid adopting those personality traits. As explained by Lee et al (??009),
168 Identity avoidance leads to brand avoidance. This means, consumers avoid those brands, which has association
169 with negative reference groups (Englis and Solomon, 1995). To avoid a specific negative identity, consumers tend
170 to build self-concept (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2001), which refers to the adoption of role expectations of the ideal
171 self. Bhattacharya and Elsbach (2002) argue that consumers often develop self-concept to maintain originality
172 of a genuine reference group's role expectations by disassociating themselves with negative reference groups.

173 Participants in the group widely reported their personal commitment against negative reference group
174 association. They expressed their opposition to these cartoon characters as in:

175 "?Doraemon often lies to provide shelter to Nobita?I know this is a lie for good but I do not want my children
176 to learn the concept of learning lie from cartoons!" (Ruma, 40)

177 "Main rivalry to Nobita (Friend of Doraemon) comes from Suneo, the spoilt kid. Suneo often blackmails
178 Nobita. Suneo also shows off his parents' money, uses the power in negative ways. I think my baby is too young
179 to face this kind of negative influence of social strata. So, I really want him not watch this cartoon show."(Romel,
180 33) " I have seen some episodes and have already identified the characters of the show lying to each other, taking
181 advantage of the less strong pupils, making each other feel low, doing crazy things like entering into washroom
182 while someone is taking a bath and so on. I think, a kid aged less than 9 should not be exposed to reality or the
183 adult shows as in cartoon characters. This is ridiculous and also dangerous how they are writing the story of the
184 cartoons for the kids! (Amira, 32) Here all of them talked about brand character personality with which they
185 have negative association. Mode, nature and quality of interpersonal interaction between the show characters
186 was Amira's main concern. She wants her child not to grow with the identity of that group of child who fight, lie,
187 devalue emotion and behave like Doraemon cartoon show. On the other hand Salim believes that Doraemon is
188 influencing his son to go with the flow and he does not want his son to be typical. He wants his son's personality
189 to develop in such way that as he grows old, he should keep on thinking different and that is why he would like
190 his son not to watch the Doraemon cartoon show. Hence, it can be said that both of them want to disidentify
191 their children from certain negative reference group and thus they want their children to avoid Doraemon cartoon
192 show. c) Brand content quality deterioration Content quality is an important determinant factor for the brand
193 association and equity development of any TV show. Participants widely reported against the hegemonic effect of
194 the generalized typical concept usage while developing program content. Stratsburger, Wilson and Jordan (2007)
195 explained the importance of television program content quality in the growth of children's overall psychology
196 and personality. Lee et al (2009) explained about moral avoidance where consumers avoid brands with which
197 they have ideological incompatibility. This refers to brands which are using such elements in creating brand
198 association that does not have ideological support from the primary target market of this product.

199 In this particular case, parents expressed extreme antagonism with the use of Hindi language as a primary
200 mode of content delivery of this cartoon show. Television network channels which telecasted Doraemon cartoon
201 show used to show it throughout the day. Hence the number of episodes which were being exposed to the kids
202 was naturally higher. This left a great impact in shaping the kids' behavioral pattern and this also influenced
203 their interpersonal communication style. Participants expressed their agony against issues related to the content
204 of the cartoon show: "I would not mind if my babies would learn a new language from any TV show or any
205 interactive program..but I mind it when I see three of them talk to each other using Hindi language?.it is like,
206 they prefer Hindi over Bengali language. This is not at all acceptable by me or my other family member." (Ruma,
207 40)

208 "This Doraemon and his friends use contemptible shallow dialogues which are catchy and can be easily picked
209 up by the kids. It pisses me off when I hear my little kid is using Doraemon inspired phrases, words, dialogues
210 with his teachers, friends and also to his family members. (Salim, 33)

211 V.

7 Limitation and Scope

212 This study has got few limitations of its own as it is a case based study, generalization of study finds can bring
213 biased insight about the consumer brand avoidance antecedents of television shows particularly aimed towards
214 kids. Hence, it is very important to find that whether these antecedents of Doraemon cartoon avoidance leverages
215 avoidance for other similar TV shows or not. Future conceptual framework can be developed to quantify the
216 impact of each identified antecedents on more generalized TV shows made for the kids. This study also fails to
217 understand the overall picture of the country due to lack of willing participant on such perceived trivial issue.
218 Again, a cross cultural

8 Conclusion

221 Parents, all over the world want their kids to have all that they want. No parent wants to disappoint their loved
222 offspring to the most possible limit. However, there are things that can be flashy and appealing things which

223 kids love to enjoy but do not have positive impact on their growth and development potential. Parents definitely
 224 would not want their kids to use or be in touch with those products or services. Hence, parents might keep
 225 their kids apart from such influential things. Regardless, this avoidance cannot be done without a reason and a
 226 purpose. Parents must understand why they do not want their babies to buy, use or get habituated with certain
 227 products or service. Particularly, almost everyone tends to generalize that cartoon shows are meant for the kids
 228 but as being educated parents, couples must realize the long term impact of such cartoon shows. This study finds
 229 can help the managers of Doraemon cartoon show to rethink their brand associations which they have created
 230 in the minds of the viewers. Also they can recreate the South Asian version of the show by incorporating local
 cultural elements more with the show characters to reduce the cultural invasion concern of the guardians. ^{1 2}



Figure 1:

1

Name	Age	Location	Occupation	Kids	Relation
Amira	31	Dhaka	Engineer	1 (5yrs)	Mother
Romel	33	Dhaka	Engineer	1 (4 yrs)	Father
Salim	32	Dhaka	Business Manager School	1 (4 yrs)	Father
Ruma	40	Dhaka	Teacher CEO of own company	3(9yrs,8yrs,2yrs)	Mother
Iqbal	45	Dhaka		1 (9 yrs)	Father

Figure 2: Table 1 :

231

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². Thompson, T. and Zerbinose, E. 1997, Television Cartoons: Do Children Notice it's a Boy's World?", Sex Roles, 37(5-6), 415-32.

2

Main Categories	Themes	Sub-themes
Exaggeration of Brand	Over usage	Dominance of fantasy over logic
Character	Excessive exposure	Negative personality
Brand Character Personality	Undesired personality	preacher
Incongruence	Content delivery mode	
Brand Content Quality		
Deterioration	Content details	

Figure 3: Table 2 :

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