

The Impact of Brand Awareness and Perceived Quality on Purchase Intention: A Case Study of Consumers Choice of Selecting Soft Drink in Swat Region

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Abstract

Organizations today are constantly attempting to interpret changing customer preferences and current trends in customer-centric marketing practices. In line with this, the current study was conducted in the context of Pakistan's beverage sectors in particularly district Swat region. The primary goal of this study was to quantify the effect of perceived quality and brand awareness on customer purchase intentions for beverage goods. Using a cross-sectional design, the data was collected from a sample of 140 correspondence by using an adapted survey methodology. Data interpretation done by statistical analysis, specifically regression analysis using SPSS. According to the findings of the regression analysis, both brand awareness and perceived quality have a positive and statistically significant influence on customer purchase intention. These findings have significant implications for beverage industry practitioners and advertisers, emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts to increase brand awareness and improve customer perceptions of quality.

Keywords: Beverage Industry, Perceived Quality, Purchase Intention, Brand Awareness

Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, consumers have varying tastes and expectations across product categories (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Salman, 2005). This

phenomenon has been heavily influenced by the proliferation of advertising, mass media, and advancements in communication technology, all of which have increased customer knowledge of alternative products and brands (Minazzi, 2015). As a result, businesses are driven to actively construct a favorable view of their products and services (Saarijärvi, 2012). According to Macdonald and Sharp (2000), brand awareness plays a critical role in steering consumers' buying decisions, even when they are already familiar with a product. Brand awareness is strategically important for organizations because it has a discernible impact on purchasing decisions, pushing customers to choose specific brands in various buying circumstances (Grewal, Monroe, & Krishnan, 1998).

Marketers generally agree that a strong brand presence provides a plethora of benefits to businesses, allowing them to grab a larger market share (Aaker, 2012; Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Notably, increased brand equity reduces consumers' concerns about variables such as product quality or concerns (Erdem & Swait, 2001). In essence, customers regard such companies as quality paragons, giving them a significant competitive edge (Aaker, 2009). Furthermore, prestigious brands find it relatively simpler to keep their customer base, owing to the indisputable benefits of customer loyalty over the difficult effort of obtaining new customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Shabbir, Khan, & Khan, 2017).

The purpose of this research is to look into the complex interplay between perceived quality, brand awareness, and purchasing intentions, specifically in the context of Swat's beverage sector. While numerous studies have looked into the customer purchase intentions, marketing literature includes well-established models that take into account a variety of influencing factors such as product quality, promotion, customer preferences, and brand equity (Bian & Moutinho, 2011; Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995; Rana & Paul, 2017). This study, on the other hand, is distinctive in that it focuses on beverages, a product area that has previously sparked scholarly interest. Despite not being a daily requirement, consumer demand for beverages is heavily influenced by lifestyle factors and economic conditions.

Roethenbaugh (2004) underlines emerging countries' untapped beverage market potential, underlining their economic viability as a commercial opportunity for beverage marketers.

Pakistan is an illustrative case in point, where the beverage business contributes significantly to the national economy through increased employment, economic activity, tax income, investment returns, and corporate profits (Ismail et al., 2021; Manan, Shahid, Sultan, & Ahmed, 2017). According to industry experts, the Pakistani beverage business grew by over 20% between 2020 and 2021 (Coca Cola Report, 2021). Global beverage behemoths such as Pepsi Inc., Gourmet Cola, and Coca Cola are among the leading challengers in Pakistan. Despite the international dominance of Pepsi and Coca-Cola, indigenous beverage firms have successfully secured a significant market share within Pakistan. According to the Coca-Cola Company Report (2021), Coca-Cola is the leading brand in Pakistan, followed by Pepsi, Sprite, Fanta, and Rani.

Several studies were undertaken to explore the purchase intentions associated with various brands or commodities, including beverages (Haidry, 2015). In this environment, brand awareness plays a critical role in influencing a product's purchasing intentions (Han, 2015). To encourage repeat purchases, consumers require ongoing reinforcement and communication about a specific brand. The development of brand attitude is the first step in raising brand awareness and, ultimately, influencing purchase intentions (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Finally, quality emerges as an essential notion with a demonstrable impact on both brand awareness and purchase intention (Yee & San, 2011). According to Garretson and Clow (1999), perceived quality represents customers' preconceived assumptions about a certain product, including the anticipated advantages from its use.

The purchase decision process is a complex series of stages that begins with need identification and progresses through information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision-making, and post-purchase evaluation (Thammawimutti & Chaipoopirutana, 2018). In Pakistan's thriving beverage sector,

consumers are confronted with a multitude of product options, creating a complex decision-making environment. Simultaneously, corporations must grapple with the challenging task of building a positive brand image in the eyes of consumers and inspiring them to choose their brand over competitors. Taute, Peterson, and Sierra (2014).

This situation is aggravated by a lack of relevant research, which is mostly focused on Western contexts and fails to effectively address the particular dynamics of the Pakistani market. As a result, the following problem statement motivates this research: Given the complexities of the purchase decision process and the unique issues confronting the Pakistani beverage industry, there is an urgent need to explore and appreciate the impact of brand awareness and perceived quality on customer buy intentions and decisions. Addressing this gap would not only lead to a better knowledge of consumer behaviour, but will also provide vital insights for businesses looking to improve their market position and brand loyalty.

Literature

The beverage industry includes a wide range of enterprises that manufacture a variety of beverages, including alcoholic beverages, for specific markets. This industry is primarily defined on a global basis by the dynamic rivalry between two large competitors, namely PepsiCo and The Coca-Cola Company. Coca-Cola, also known as Coke, is the market leader in several nations, with PepsiCo emerging as a prominent challenger in Pakistan (Reuters, 2023). The huge market share secured by these industry titans highlights the competitive landscape. For example, according to current data, Coca-Cola sold around 4.5 billion cans in the previous year, whereas PepsiCo sold 3.2 billion cans (Statista, 2022).

The absence of other industry participants claiming comparable revenue figures demonstrates these two businesses' enormous dominance. Coca-Cola's annual report, for example, highlights its exceptional proportion of the global canned beverage market, accounting for a significant chunk (The Coca-Cola Company, Annual Report, 2021). While local brands like Gourmet Cola and Meezan

Cola contribute to the Pakistani beverage landscape, the sector is still predominantly dominated by the powerful presence of these two corporate entities. In the meantime, private label brands make their claim, accounting for around 8-10% of total market share and competing for customer attention through competitive price tactics and increased availability (Euromonitor International, 2021).

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality refers to customers' subjective assessment of a brand's product or service in terms of quality, performance, and overall value (Snoj, Korda, & Mumel, 2004; Yang, Dang, & Wu, 2023). It shows the extent to which consumers believe a brand's offerings meet or surpass their expectations and criteria (Walia & Kumar, 2022; Zeithaml, 1988). This perception is influenced by a variety of elements, including prior brand experiences, brand reputation, word-of-mouth recommendations, and marketing communications (Walia & Kumar, 2022)

The concept of perceived quality is an important component of the broader construct of brand equity, which includes numerous characteristics that contribute to the overall value of a brand (Aaker, 1991). Consumer sentiments and buying intentions are directly affected by perceived quality (Zeithaml, 1988). When people sense the quality of a brand's products or services, they are more likely to form positive views towards the brand and become loyal customers (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). Low perceived quality, on the other hand, might lead to unfavorable brand connections and reduce consumer loyalty (Keller, 1993).

Several studies have demonstrated the importance of perceived quality in affecting customer behaviour and brand selection. Dodds et al. (1991), for example, discovered that perceived quality had a considerable influence on customer product evaluations and purchase decisions. Customers prefer brands they believe provide superior quality, especially when making risky or important financial decisions (Zeithaml, 1988). Furthermore, brand trust, contentment, and loyalty have been connected to perceived quality (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

In today's competitive marketplace, brands prioritise building and maintaining a positive perception of quality. Marketing activities, customer feedback, and general brand image can all influence this perception. Brands with a positive perceived quality are those that regularly deliver on their promises and meet or surpass client expectations (Keller, 1993).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a critical concept in marketing that represents the amount to which customers can recognise and recall a certain brand when exposed to its name, logo, or other brand-related stimuli (Keller, 1993). It consists of two key components: brand recognition, in which consumers can recognise a brand from a group of alternatives without actively retrieving it, and brand recall, in which consumers can retrieve a brand from memory when presented with a relevant cue (Aaker, 1991). This notion is based on Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, which contends that brand knowledge structures, including brand awareness and brand image, have a major influence on customer perceptions and behaviors (Keller, 1993 #135). As a result, brand awareness acts as the foundation for other brand associations and customer judgements.

Measuring brand awareness has long been a priority for marketers and scholars. Aided recall tests (Zinkhan, Locander, & Leigh, 1986), in which consumers are given a category signal to prompt brand recollection, and unaided recall tests, which assess spontaneous brand recall without the use of category cues, are two common methodologies. Recognition tests, on the other hand, assess consumers' capacity to select the correct brand from a set of alternatives (Aaker, 1991). In today's digital age, digital brand awareness indicators such as online exposure, social media mentions, search engine rankings, and website traffic have gained relevance (Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015)

Brand awareness is extremely important in driving consumer behaviour. Brand consideration, preference, and loyalty are all connected with high brand awareness (Hoyer & Brown, 1990).It helps to build strong consumer-brand

interactions because customers are more likely to choose and stick with brands that are easy to recognize and recall (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Furthermore, brand awareness influences purchase decisions (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). When faced with a plethora of options, consumers are more likely to choose a brand they are familiar with (Nedungadi, 1990).

The rise of digital media and e-commerce in the modern marketing landscape has broadened the dimensions of brand awareness. Social media platforms have evolved into effective instruments for brand awareness and engagement (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). Brands attempt to boost their online presence through generating organic dialogues, user-generated content, and viral marketing efforts (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012). Consumer engagement with a company's online material, sharing it with their networks, and participation in online communities all contribute to the developing world of digital brand awareness (Hudson et al., 2015).

Purchase Intentions

Purchase intent is an important concept in marketing, with scholars studying it from many perspectives. According to Morrison (1979) purchase intention correlates with other attitude indicators, acting as predictors of actual purchasing behavior. Purchase intention is the intermediary step between a consumer's desire to make a purchase and its ultimate realization. This intention, which is influenced by the specific tastes and demands of consumers, eventually drives their future purchasing decisions Kim, Kim, Park, and Yoo (2021). Consumers often do an information search in order to find products that meet their needs. Notably, this search procedure, which is frequently impacted by advertising, improves the possibility of eliciting purchase intentions significantly (Saadeghvaziri, Dehdashti, & Reza Kheyrikhah Askarabad, 2013)

Perceived Quality and Purchase Intentions

According to Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory of Oliver (1980), consumers build expectations about the quality of a product based on prior experiences, word-of-

mouth, and marketing messages. When actual perceived quality meets or exceeds these expectations, buyers are more likely to generate positive disconfirmation, resulting in stronger purchase intentions. In contrast, a considerable quality deficiency might lead to negative disconfirmation and reduced buying intentions. Hence, considering this theoretical underpinning, it is propose that there is positive relationship between perceived quality and purchased intensions.

Brand Awareness and Purchase Intension

According to the Dual Process Theory of Information Processing (Chaiken, 1980) consumers participate in two distinct cognitive processes: central and peripheral. In the context of brand awareness and purchase intents, central processing include careful analysis of product attributes, quality, and other pertinent information. Peripheral processing, on the other hand, is based on heuristics and cues such as brand identification. High brand awareness operates as a peripheral cue, influencing consumers' purchase intentions without considerable consideration (Petty, Cacioppo, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1986). Therefore, based on this theory it is stated that brand awareness has a significant positive impact on purchase intensions.

Methodology

The research design includes the strategy for data collecting and analysis, employing a cross-sectional approach and quantitative technique via surveys distributed among soft drink consumers at Swat's restaurants. Responses to questions were assess using a Likert scale and supplemented with demographic information. The population consisted of approximately 2,000 restaurant customers, and a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was used to determine a sample size of 140 respondents using the Raosoft sample size calculator, ensuring efficient and representative dataset collection from the targeted population of 2,000 customers.

The research techniques used to assess Perceived Quality (PQ), Brand Awareness (BA), and Purchase Intentions (PI) were drawn from a Chi (2009) study. Cronbach's alpha was used to assure reliability. The obtained values revealed strong reliability

across all scales, with alpha coefficients of .87 for Perceived Quality, .90 for Brand Awareness, and .88 for Purchase Intentions.

Analysis

Correlation is a descriptive strategy used to examine the relationship between two distinct variables. Table 1 contains detailed correlation information for the variables used in the present study.

Table1: Pearson Correlation Analysis

	Brand Awareness	Perceived Quality	Purchase Intension
Brand Awareness	1		
Perceived Quality	.666	1	
Purchase Intension	.790	.604	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
N	140	140	140

The empirical findings show convincing evidence of positive and statistically significant relationships between important factors. The table 2 provides critical insights into the statistical evaluation of the model. The R-value denotes the correlation between the dependent and independent variables. The relationship between PQ and PI shown in Model 1, while relationship between BA and PI shown in Model 2. R-values of 0.679 and 0.678 indicating acceptability for further research. The R-square value, which denotes the proportion of dependent variable variance explained by the independent variables, surpasses 0.604 for model 1 and 0.459 for model 2, suggesting the model's success in illuminating the R = .365 for model 1 and 0.459 for model 2.

Furthermore, the Adjusted R-square, which assesses the model's generalization from sample to population, closely coincides with R-square at 0.360 and 0.452 for model 1 and 2 respectively, further verifying each model's trustworthiness.. The P-value calculated at a 5% significance level, shown here

as.000, considerably below the threshold, indicating that the results are statistically significant. The F-ratio, which measures model improvement by accounting for model inaccuracies, is greater than one for both Model 1 and Model 2, registering at 79.303 and 52.228 respectively, suggesting that both model 1 and 2 are efficient.

Brand awareness, in particular, shows a strong association with purchase intention ($r=.790$, $p.05$), emphasizing the importance of brand awareness in influencing consumers' willingness to make a purchase. Similarly, perceived product quality shows a significant positive association with purchase intention ($r=.666$, $p.05$), indicating that perceived quality has a significant impact on consumers' willingness to engage in purchasing behavior. This convergence of findings implies that all of the independent factors addressed in this study—brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention have a significant individual influence as well as a collective influence on consumers' purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the independent factors exhibit a positive correlation, indicating the possibility of synergistic effects. For example, the found positive and statistically significant relationship between brand awareness and perceived quality ($r=.666$, $p.05$) highlights the potential reciprocal reinforcement between two key components in consumer decision-making processes. These findings highlight the multifaceted and interdependent character of consumer perceptions and intentions, giving significant insights for strategic marketing initiatives and brand management practices.

Table 2: Regression Outcomes

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	F	t	Sig.
1. PQ and PI	.604 ^a	.365	.360	.604	79.303	8.905	.000
2. BA and PI	.678 ^b	.459	.452	.502	58.228	4.895	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), PI, PQ, BA

Discussion

When compared to the current literature, our study's findings consistently confirm a positive relationship between perceived product quality and purchase intentions, strengthening the dependability of this association. Notably, Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf, and Ahmed (2015) discovered comparable results in their analysis of consumer views in information technology industry, as did (Pan and Chen, 2019) in eco-tourism industry.

Our findings confirm the significant positive influence of brand awareness on customer purchase intentions, validating the long-held belief that consumers are more inclined to pick items or services from companies with which they are familiar (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). This alignment with earlier studies emphasizes the robustness and consistency of the connection, emphasizing the lasting relevance of brand awareness as a driver of consumer behavior.

Implications

Our findings have ramifications for both academia and the beverage sector. Academically, our study adds to the body of knowledge by empirically validating the positive effect of brand awareness and perceived quality on purchase intentions in the context of the Swat region's beverage business. This contributes to a better knowledge of customer behaviour and the dynamics of brand management in a variety of marketplaces. Our findings provide actionable insights for the beverage industry, emphasising the crucial relevance of deliberately developing brand recognition and improving perceived product quality to boost purchase intentions. This knowledge may be used by businesses in this industry to guide marketing strategies and brand management practises, thereby improving their market position, client loyalty, and competitiveness in an increasingly congested environment.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations of the Study:

While this study provides significant insights, it is critical to recognise its limitations. Firstly, the study was done within the specific context of the Swat region's beverage business, which may limit the findings' generalizability to other geographical regions or other industries. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data from surveys, which could include response bias and social desirability bias. A broader range of data sources and approaches, such as observational studies or experimental designs, could assist future research. Thirdly, the cross-sectional character of the study limits the establishment of causation, necessitating additional longitudinal research to investigate the temporal dynamics of the investigated associations. Furthermore, the study focused on a specific set of variables, and there may be other unknown aspects that may influence purchasing intentions in the beverage business. Finally, external factors such as economic situations or marketing efforts that could influence customer behaviour were not considered. Addressing these constraints in future study can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Future Research Recommendations:

Future research in this area looks promising. To begin, longitudinal studies may be conducted to study how the links between brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention evolve over time, providing insights into their long-term implications on consumer behavior. Comparative research across multiple beverage categories (e.g., carbonated soft drinks, juices, bottled water) could reveal variations in the strength of these correlations, revealing product-specific nuances. Exploring the moderating impacts of demographic characteristics such as age, income, and gender could provide a better understanding of how these variables influence the observed connections. Furthermore, qualitative research methodologies such as in-depth interviews and focus groups could reveal the underlying motivations and emotions that drive consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions in this market. Given the growing importance of digital marketing and e-commerce, future study might look into the influence of online brand awareness tactics on purchase intentions, taking into account the shifting digital landscape and its effects on

consumer behavior. Addressing these research avenues can help us learn more about consumer behavior in the beverage business.

Conclusion

Finally, our research looked into the complex dynamics of brand recognition, perceived quality, and purchase intent in the context of the Swat region's beverage business. The empirical findings supported past studies in a variety of industries by emphasizing the large and favorable impact of both brand awareness and perceived quality on consumer purchase intentions. Brand awareness appeared as a critical element, highlighting its long-term value in molding consumer behavior and decision, even in a competitive market setting. Furthermore, perceived product quality was important, demonstrating its impact on consumers' propensity to engage in purchase behavior. Our study also highlighted the interrelation of these elements, implying that they influence customers' purchase decisions collectively. The regression analysis validated the strength of these correlations by emphasizing their statistical significance and efficiency.

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