JIBE

Journal of International Business and Economy

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMOTIONAL BRANDING FOR BUILDING A POSITIVE BRAND PERCEPTION FOR THE SOFT DRINK BRANDS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY WITH A FOCUS ON USERS IN PUNE CITY

ABSTRACT

Present-day consumers judge brands based on their feelings and identities, two of their most distinctive qualities. Social Media and Digital Marketing have taken a significant leap in connecting with consumers and developing a personalized & emotional association with the Brand. According to this, modern businesses attempt to strengthen the emotional bond between consumers and brands, known as emotional Branding. This study aimed to ascertain the efficacy of emotional Branding for creating a favourable brand perception focusing on Pune City's soft drink beverage market. The study is quantitative in its design and examines the link between emotional Branding and positive brand perception. We collected data from 200 respondents using a Likert-based questionnaire. The study's findings concluded that emotional Branding positively correlates with brand perception and Brand building. The results of this study also offer critical understanding and insightful suggestions to local brands to improve their Brand equity.

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INTRODUCTION

The industrial economy's primary sector was product manufacturing for a long time. However, as more and more producers flood the market, oversaturation, recession, and the waning of some of the world's most influential producers follow. "Emotional Branding" refers to the romantic relationship between a company brand and its consumers. It is based on the idea that people frequently make decisions about brands based on feelings rather than logic. Through the creation of solid brand relationships, emotional content builds and communicates brand values. As a component of branding strategy, companies should prioritize cultivating emotional connections between brands and customers who engage with the Brand.

The notions of brand personality have drawn much scholarly attention for many years. However, Emotional Branding is still a relatively new concept, and it depends on conventional models proposed by Gobé (2009). A proposed process model of Emotional Branding is developed and suitable for the retail environment to support brand personality creation in consumers' minds to clarify the relationship between the two ideas.

Consumer research insights have traditionally guided administrative decisions in various marketing domains, including advertising, pricing, and channel strategies. Emotional Branding offers products and services with the advantages of building a powerful brand. (for example, increased customer loyalty, higher prices, etc.). Proficient managers must comprehensively understand the concepts, theories, and recommendations derived from consumer research to uphold their role as brand stewards effectively. This results from the advancement of emotional Branding as a key focus in management.

Establishing a brand identity is the first step in the process because it serves as the Brand's compass for all activities. In step two, clarifying the intended consumer relationship entails identifying the target market and carefully examining its members' characteristics and preferences. All operational decisions relating to the products, logotype, hiring of people, sensory Branding, retail concept, and advertising, to name a few, are included in the brand design process. In conclusion, emotional Branding is unquestionably essential for developing a brand's identity, even though, depending on the situation, some of its elements may appear to have a more significant influence.

The soft drink beverage sector is currently experiencing significant difficulties in motivating and keeping its customers in the current competitive and complex marketing environments in the beverages industry. Customers will frequently transfer to competitors

in today's digital age if they don't become familiar with the Brand and develop a strong brand relationship, making the decision very subjective and challenging. In this paper, we discuss emotional Branding and all the elements required to build a brand perception that customers will identify with emotionally. The article's conclusion contains the study's findings on customers' emotional connections to brands.

Some of the most successful soft drink companies have recently started using emotional Branding in their ads to connect with customers on a deeper level and keep them coming back. For example, Pepsi's "Max Taste with Zero Sugar" ad combines health and taste, showing how the Brand is trying to connect with health-conscious customers on an emotional level. Coca-Cola's "Khud Ko Jaga, Ek Thanda Laga" campaign is meant to make people feel fresh and inspired. It builds on the Brand's past success with the Open Happiness Campaign, which people liked. The Sprite "Thand Rakh" ad campaign uses humour to stress the Brand's image as a summertime drink that is cool and delicious. The goal of this effort is to make people who are looking for a break feel good. Coca-Cola bought Limca, now promoted as the best drink for quenching your thirst, focusing on physical and emotional rejuvenation. With its "Har Haath Toofan" campaign, Thums Up is honouring India's 75th year of freedom. This campaign aims to make people feel patriotic through animated stories. By looking at these ads and thinking about how emotional Branding affects these results, this study aims to discover how emotional Branding helps soft drink companies stand out and build lasting emotional links with customers in Pune City.

In the realm of marketing soft drinks and beverages, the significance of emotional Branding is gaining recognition as an indispensable means to cultivate affinity and brand identification among consumers. The soft drink industry, confronted with the challenges of customer retention and sustained interest in an intensely competitive and ever-evolving market, grapples with the reality that customers can quickly shift brands owing to the dynamic nature of the markets. This underscores the critical importance of forging emotional connections to create brand loyalty. The central premise of this strategy is rooted in the understanding that constructing a strong brand identity and fostering emotional connections are imperative for not only retaining customers but also enticing them back, encouraging continued patronage, and eliciting intangible brand associations, including a distinct brand personality, values, feel, and social image.

Furthermore, the investigation probes into key aspects such as the effectiveness of emotional Branding in cultivating a positive brand perception, its role in differentiating a

soft drink brand amid competition, and an exploration of the emotional branding factors influencing the creation of brand perceptions. The study offers enhanced insights into the subject matter by researching these facets. A pivotal question guiding this exploration is, "Does the emotional bond between the consumer and the brand contribute to developing a positive brand perception and complement the broader brand-building process?" This inquiry holds significance for researchers and soft drink companies, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into the dynamics of emotional Branding and its impact on consumer relationships within the soft drink industry.

Marketers are forced to deal with challenging questions about Branding and their brands in this complex marketing environment. What are the best and most efficient ways to develop a powerful brand? What are the appropriate responsibilities for well-known marketing strategies like one-to-one, buzz, permission, and experiential marketing? How can you quantify a brand's power and worth? Consumer research insights have traditionally guided administrative decisions in various marketing domains, including advertising, pricing, and channel strategies. Emotional Branding offers products and services with the advantages of building a powerful brand. (for example, increased customer loyalty, higher prices, etc.). Proficient managers must comprehensively understand the concepts, theories, and recommendations derived from consumer research to uphold their role as brand stewards effectively. This results from the advancement of emotional Branding as a key focus in management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scientists made significant advancements in the reproduction of naturally carbonated mineral water in the late 18th century. When Joseph Priestly, an Englishman from Leeds, England, suspended a bowl of distilled water over a beer vat at a nearby brewery in 1767, he made the first known discovery of a technique for adding carbon dioxide to water to create carbonated water. Most soft drinks now use his discovery of carbonated water, sometimes called soda water.

This study covers two primary areas, namely brand perception and emotional Branding. The primary goal of this literature review is to evaluate emotional Branding's efficacy in creating a favourable brand perception among the consumers of the soft drink industry. Our emotions require just as much education as our minds. Having the ability to experience, respond, and embrace life to develop essential life skills. The design research

literature extensively discusses the advantages of emotionally appealing design and the importance of emotions in human-product interactions (Crilly, Moultrie, and Clarkson, 2004; Desmet and Hekkert, 2007). Hassenzahl, Eckoldt, Diefenbach, Laschke, Lenz, and Kim (2013) posited six fundamental psychological prerequisites that serve as origins of an enjoyable product experience. These frameworks enhance designers' comprehension of emotional experiences by elucidating the development of emotions during interactions between individuals and goods and the potential impact of design on users' emotions.

However, as they mostly focus on general positive or negative emotions, such as good experiences against uncomfortable or unpleasant ones, they do not substantially contribute to the designers' ability to capture and represent a wide range of specific emotions. In our view, it is beneficial to help designers think about and express emotions in more detail, as product and brand emotions are more intricate than what can be effectively described by a simple positive-negative scale. Desmet (2012) demonstrates that in the context of human-product interactions, individuals are capable of experiencing a minimum of 25 distinct positive emotions, encompassing a wide range of feelings such as pride, humour, hope, and love. Even though all of these emotions are pleasant, they vary in terms of how they feel, what triggers them, and how they affect behaviour and thought (Frijda, 2007; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 2005).

For example, a pleasant surprise makes a person pay attention to a product, which increases recognition and recall of the product (Ludden, Hekkert, and Schiffer, 2008). According to Desmet (2008), a product that inspires people can stimulate new ideas and facilitate a shift in their perspective. Curiosity motivates users to actively explore the features and capabilities of a product, resulting in increased usage duration and a deeper comprehension of the product (Yoon, Desmet, and van der Helm, 2012).

Pourazad and Pare (2014) investigated the development of emotional brand attachment in consumer-brand interaction. Even though it has high worth, high contribution, and high risk, it has traditionally been understudied concerning luxury brands. The study has developed a conceptual framework for classifying luxury goods that captures the causes and effects of an emotional brand connection. This method will evaluate the efficacy of the advice for creating a customer's emotional attachment to luxury goods, which plays a crucial role in the self-expressive relationship. Results will provide directors with guidelines to develop practical and effective advertising processes to enhance understanding of the relationship between Brand and client, which will encourage. Only

when a customer's characteristics match those of the Brand will there be a high likelihood that they will remember it (Madhumita and Rajini, 2016)

According to Bishnoi and Singh (2023), Fashion and luxury brands face challenges in standing out amidst indifferent consumers. This study explores the dominance of emotions over objective analysis in consumer brand selection. Conducting a literature review it identifies emotional associations in advertising, marketing, and psychology literature. The findings highlight the significance of emotional Branding in the volatile fashion and luxury market. Understanding emotional needs can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, guiding brands and consumers toward more informed decisions in a competitive landscape.

In their study on the influence of emotional advertising messages on customer behaviour, Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2020) asserted that emotional consumer-brand interactions are crucial for brand managers who aim to establish fervent brands. The study investigated the determinants of young consumers' inclination to pay a higher price for a brand, encompassing their brand encounter, brand prestige, brand visibility, and brand reliance. The results indicated that emotional understanding of a brand, awareness of the Brand, and trust in the Brand, which are essential prerequisites, positively and significantly influenced the Brand's energy.

Furthermore, brand fame does not affect strong brand emotion. Finally, the Brand's enthusiasm impacts favourable word of mouth and willingness to spend more for the Brand.

Research gap

As mentioned above, Arash Vahdat, Hanieh Hafezniya, Younis Jabarzadeh and Park Thaichon (2020) have studied aspects like attitudinal loyalty, commitment, and customer satisfaction in relation to emotional Branding. Also, a study by Poojaa Gokarna (January – 2021) focuses on the forces behind emotional Branding and how they impact consumer engagement. As advocated by Manaswini Acharya (2019), the emotional connectivity with brands is far beyond brand loyalty and advocacy. Developing the Emotional connection is very important for the products in the B2C segment to achieve the desired brand demand and value. The field of Branding, with its multifaceted dimensions, has been a subject of rigorous academic inquiry spanning numerous years. Despite the burgeoning interest in delving into the emotional aspects of Branding and the well-established concept of brand personality, a noticeable gap exists in the extant literature concerning the intricate

relationship between emotional Branding and positive brand perception. The existing body of research has made significant strides in unravelling various facets of branding strategy; however, a comprehensive understanding of how emotional Branding contributes specifically to fostering positive perceptions remains conspicuously underexplored.

Branding and its various facets have been studied and explored in literature for years. Although there is increasing interest in studying the emotional dimension of Branding and the established concept of brand personality, there is a significant amount of knowledge to be gained in these fields. As a component of branding strategy, businesses should prioritize fostering emotional connections between brands and consumers who have personal experiences and memories associated with the Brand. The literature review reveals a research gap in understanding the connection between emotional Branding and brand perception. This study examines how emotional Branding plays a role in creating positive brand perception. A brand is a perception with a basis, but it also goes beyond that by reflecting its target audience's attitudes and perhaps even eccentricities.

Table 1. Summary of literature on the effectiveness of emotional branding

No.	Focus	Author and Reference
1	Both researchers studied that in the clutter of many well-known brands, it is essential to know the consumers' attitudes, intentions, perceived quality viewpoint, etc., to achieve a competitive advantage. The Soft Drink Industry has experienced many changes that have influenced the nature of competition.	Devendra and Tharuka Perera (2018)
2	Brand image is the prime driver and most valuable asset for consumers when selecting a particular brand, other than facilitating them to differentiate between the company and its offers. The brand image is the consumers' reason or means of choice to create the emotional bond and behaviour.	Fortes, Milan, Eberle, and De Toni (2019)
3	The researcher found that emotional connectivity with brands is far beyond brand loyalty and advocacy. Developing the Emotional connection is very important for the products in the B2C segment to achieve the desired brand demand and value.	Manaswini Acharya (2019)
4	The study investigated the impact of emotional brand perception on attitudinal loyalty, commitment, and consumer happiness. Furthermore, it correlates favourably with attitudinal loyalty, commitment, and customer satisfaction. Emotional Branding exerts a more favourable and substantial influence on attitudinal loyalty.	Arash Vahdat, Hanieh Hafezniya , Jabarzadeh and Thaichon (2020)
5	According to the Author, although traditionally, Soft Drink consumers share commonalities in preferences, tastes, etc., their	Arash Vahdat, Hanieh

	cultural and socio-demographic differences challenge the advertising and promotion strategies in achieving the effectiveness of the campaigns.	Hafezniya, Jabarzadeh and Thaichon (2020)
6	In this research work, emotional Branding is seen as a crucial component of marketing strategies that aid in developing a solid emotional bond between a brand and its customers and is designed to maximize brand resonance. Relationships between brands and customers are built on emotional preferences and decisions. Customers' emotional responses are triggered by strong bonds between them and the brands they use because they become linked with them, imitate their coherence, and copy them. By incorporating sensory sensations and fantasy into branding activities, marketers may captivate customers' emotional attention.	Deshpande (2020)
7	The PhD. Scholars concluded that the emotional Branding process should address and use the concepts of "Product Qualities" and "Emotional Benefits," resulting in consumers' benefits. Emotional benefits are experiential feelings consumers experience while buying and using the products.	Vartanova and Korol (2020)
8	This qualitative study aims to comprehend the forces behind emotional Branding and how they impact consumer engagement. She developed several structures that gave rise to engagement with the Brand and subsequent brand loyalty. The Indian setting was depicted in a "Study of Customer Engagement through Emotional Branding." paper.	Gokarna (2021)
9	Consumers have Brand perception-related expectations from various sources like word of mouth, advertising, social media, experience, etc. Consumers feel satisfied whenever their expertise meets or exceeds expectations, establishing positive emotional bonds with a brand.	Briliana and Widayatib (2021)
10	The researcher concluded that with Emotional Branding, it is possible to relate brands at a new level with its consumers to develop positive feelings and emotions about the Brand, resulting in brand trust and loyalty. Emotion is the prime factor that delivers the complete experience to the consumers.	Pavlina (2021)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an empirical and descriptive research approach to investigate the efficacy of emotional Branding in the soft drink beverage business for cultivating favorable brand impressions. A scientific methodology was employed to collect relevant data, focusing on soft drink users in Pune City, India. A 7-point Likert Scale-based questionnaire served as the primary method for data collection. The acquired data underwent analysis and interpretation utilizing various statistical techniques and methods.

Primary data was obtained through convenience sampling, with 200 respondents voluntarily participating in the scientific study. The sample size, accounting for age, gender, and drinking habits, aimed to represent a diverse cross-section of soft drink users in Pune. This approach facilitated testing for internal informational consistency, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing across various study components.

Predictors and hypothesis

The study seeks to address a research gap by exploring the impact of emotional Branding on shaping positive brand perceptions. It aims to contribute to existing knowledge by elucidating how emotional Branding influences consumers' perceptions and affective evaluations of a brand, thus advancing our understanding of contemporary branding strategies.

The following hypothesis was formulated based on the literature review and identified research gap:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between emotional branding and brand perception in India's soft drink beverage industry with a focus on users of Pune city.

This hypothesis serves as the foundation for the empirical investigation, allowing for a thorough examination of the interplay between emotional Branding and brand perception within the specific context of the soft drink market in Pune.

Emotional factors, encompassing Emotional relationships, Emotional Attachment, Emotional Communication, and Emotional Preferences, are independent variables influencing Positive Brand Perception as a dependent variable. These elements are crucial in cultivating consumers' emotional bonds with a brand, shaping their overall perception and fostering brand loyalty. The subsequent discussion delves into the nuanced significance of these emotional factors in the context of brand perception.

Emotional relationship:

Establishing an emotional relationship between a brand and consumers involves creating a connection beyond functional attributes. Brands that evoke positive emotions, such as trust, joy, or a sense of belonging, tend to forge stronger bonds with their audience. Consumers

are more likely to develop a preference for a brand that resonates with their values and emotions, leading to a positive perception.

Emotional attachment:

Emotional attachment refers to individuals' deep and personal connection towards a brand. When consumers form emotional attachments, they become more than just customers; they become brand advocates. Brands that successfully cultivate emotional attachment benefit from increased customer loyalty and advocacy. Positive emotions associated with a brand contribute significantly to the overall favourable perception in the minds of consumers.

Emotional communication:

Effective emotional communication involves conveying a brand's values, personality, and story in a way that resonates with consumers' emotions. Brands that engage in emotionally resonant communication create memorable experiences that contribute to positive brand perception. Emotional communication helps to humanize the Brand, making it relatable and fostering a sense of authenticity that consumers appreciate.

Emotional preferences:

Understanding and catering to the emotional preferences of consumers are crucial for brand success. Emotional responses to brand attributes, such as design, messaging, and overall brand experience, often guide consumer choices. Brands that align with consumers' emotional preferences are more likely to be perceived positively and remembered favourably.

Emotional factors set brands apart in a crowded market. Consumers' positive emotional associations create a unique and differentiated brand perception. Emotional connections contribute to repeat business, as consumers are more likely to choose a brand that resonates with their emotions over time. Cultivating emotional relationships, fostering attachment, employing emotionally resonant communication, and understanding and aligning with emotional preferences are integral elements for creating a positive brand perception. Brands that successfully integrate these emotional factors into their strategies can establish lasting connections with consumers, fostering loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

Sample data demographics:

The demographic distribution of survey participants is outlined in Table 1, showcasing a diverse representation across various parameters. Regarding gender, the survey engaged 52% female and 48% male respondents. Educational backgrounds revealed that 53% of participants held postgraduate degrees, while 41% were graduates. A marginal 2% possessed diplomas or alternative credentials. Age distribution illustrated that 55% and 10% of respondents fell within the 18 to 35 age bracket, while 32% were aged beyond 46.

A substantial segment of the participants, constituting 54%, categorized themselves as students, representing a significant consumer demographic for soft drinks. Professions other than studenthood included 17% of the participants; 19% were employed in the private sector, and a minor 4% identified as businessmen. Family size among participants varied, with the majority (63%) having three to five family members, while a minimal 3% reported seven or more family members. These demographic details provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse participant profile, laying the foundation for a nuanced analysis of the research findings within distinct demographic segments.

Table 2. Survey participants' demographic

Demographic categories.	No.of Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	104.	52%
Female	96	48%
Qualification		
Postgraduate	105	53%
Graduate	82	41%
Undergraduate	9	4%
Other	4	2%
Age Group		
Below 18	1	1%
18-25	111	55%
26-35	20	10%
36-45	4	2%
45 Above	63	32%
Occupation		
Businessmen	9	4%
Private Employee	39	19%
Govt Employee	10	5%

Students	108	54%
Others	35	17%
Family Size (No. of Family members)		
00-03	47	24%
03-05	125	63%
05-07	22	11%
07 & Above	6	3%

STATISTICAL METHODS AND RESULTS

Regression analysis is a statistical method used to model the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The goal is to understand the nature and strength of these relationships, make predictions, and assess the significance of the model. In simple linear regression, there's only one independent variable, while multiple regression involves more than one.

Variables

The considered independent variables are Emotional Relationship (ER), Emotional Attachment (EA), Emotional Communication (EC), and Emotional Preferences (EP) to test the impact on the Dependent Variable (DV) - Brand Perception (BP). The regression analysis model is defined as follows:

$$BP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times ER + \beta_2 \times EA + \beta_3 \times EC + \beta_4 \times EP + \epsilon$$

Here, β_0 represents the intercept, and β_1 to β_4 denote the respective coefficients for Emotional Branding, Emotional Attachment, Emotional Communication, and Emotional Preferences. The error term ϵ captures unobserved factors affecting Brand Perception. Independent Variables (IDV) collectively assess the influence of emotional factors on the overall perception of a brand. This model facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the intricate relationships between emotional dimensions and how they shape consumers' perceptions of a brand.

Hypothesis testing

Multiple Regression Analysis examined the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and assessed the study hypothesis. The study's findings revealed an advantageous connection between Emotional Relationship, Emotional Attachment,

Emotional Communication and Emotional Preferences (an independent variable) and Brand Perception (a dependent Variable).

The outcomes for the regression model are as follows:

The formula to calculate the standard error of the estimate (SE) in a multiple regression model is given by:

$$SE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{(n-k)}}$$

Where y_i is the observed value of the dependent variable, $\hat{y}_i$ is the predicted value of the dependent variable, N is the number of observations, and p is the number of predictors in the model.

Table 3. Regression coefficients

The t-value for regression coefficients is calculated using the formula:

t = Coefficient Estimate/Standard Error of the Coefficient Estimate

| Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	1.579	0.162		9.755	0.000
Emotional Relationship	0.29	0.311	0.312	4.29	0.000
Emotional Attachment	0.253	0.262	0.386	2.921	0.000
Emotional Communication	0.198	0.213	0.212	4.453	0.000
Emotional Preference	0.237	0.24	0.333	3.551	0.005
R^2	0.788				

The regression coefficients for a model that evaluates the influence of affective factors on a given outcome variable are displayed in the table. Unstandardized coefficients indicate the magnitude of the dependent variable's response to a one-unit modification in the predictor variables. The positive coefficients for Emotional Relationship, Emotional Attachment,

Emotional Communication, and Emotional Preference indicate that these factors favourably impact the dependent variable. The standardized coefficients (Beta) indicate which predictors are of varying relative relevance. The R-squared value of 0.788 signifies that the model accounts for 78.8% of the variance in the dependent variable. The t-values, determined by dividing the estimated coefficient by its standard error, are utilized to evaluate the importance of each predictor. All affective variables exhibit statistically significant impacts, as supported by the corresponding p-values of 0.000 and t-values (9.755, -4.290, -2.921, -4.453). This suggests that emotional factors play a substantial role in the variability observed in the outcome variable, underscoring their significance within the framework.

Descriptive statistic of key questions

### Figure 1. Influence of soft drink ads on choices

Belief that a soft drink's advertising message influences choosing a particular brand decision consciously or subconsciously

- Almost every time   - Never   - Not really   - Sometimes
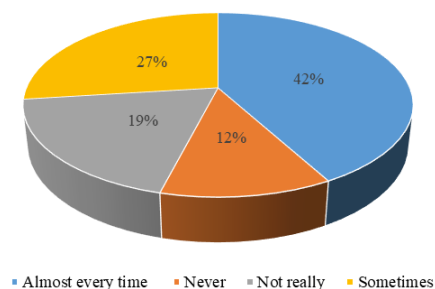
Individuals' beliefs concerning the influence of an advertising message for a soft drink on their brand preferences are depicted in the table. A considerable proportion, 42%, holds the firm conviction that advertising consistently impacts their conscious or subliminal choices. Conversely, 12% of respondents claim that advertising never influences brand preferences. A significant proportion of respondents (19%) adopt an apprehensive position, asserting that advertising has little to no impact on their purchasing choices. In contrast, 27% of respondents admit that advertising occasionally impacts their brand preferences, indicating a more nuanced viewpoint. In general, the data illustrates a range of perspectives regarding the perceived impact of soft drink advertising messages on consumers' brand decision-making processes.
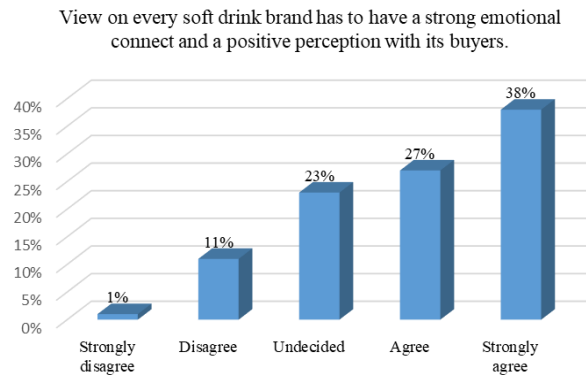
Figure 2. Emotional connection to soft drink brands

Connection with a particular soft drink brand emotionally due
to the brand advertising message, story or because of the actors
promoting it.

■ Almost every time   ■ Never   ■ Not really   ■ Sometimes
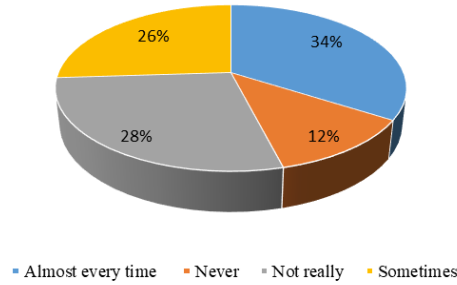
Variable degrees of emotional attachment to a particular soft drink brand are illustrated in the table using advertising components. A notable 34% of respondents indicate a sustained emotive connection, which implies that the Brand's messaging or narratives are relatable. In contrast, twelve per cent of respondents imply an absolute absence of emotional connection, highlighting potential marketing challenges. A significant proportion of respondents, 54%, indicate a tenuous affiliation, as 28% contend that it lacks intensity and 26% encounter intermittent emotional resonance. This nuanced reply suggests that although a significant proportion of the audience may resonate with the Brand's advertising endeavours, a substantial segment remains unaltered or merely sporadically involved.

Figure 3. Essential: Emotional bonds in soft drink brands

View on every soft drink brand has to have a strong emotional connect and a positive perception with its buyers.

The respondents' opinions regarding the criticality of a solid emotional connection and favourable perception of each soft drink brand are presented in the table. A notable proportion, precisely 38%, believes that establishing such a connection is vital, underscoring the significance of favourable perceptions and emotive bonds in fostering brand loyalty. In addition, 27% concur, contributing to most respondents reaching a consensus. Conversely, a proportion of 12% collectively indicates dissent (11% disagree and 1% firmly disagree), whereas 23% maintain a state of indecision. The data suggests a widespread conviction regarding the importance of cultivating emotional bonds and favourable perceptions of soft drink brands. A significant portion of respondents strongly endorse this perspective.

Figure 4. Factors shaping positive soft drink brand perception

A positive brand perception of a soft drink brand is created through.
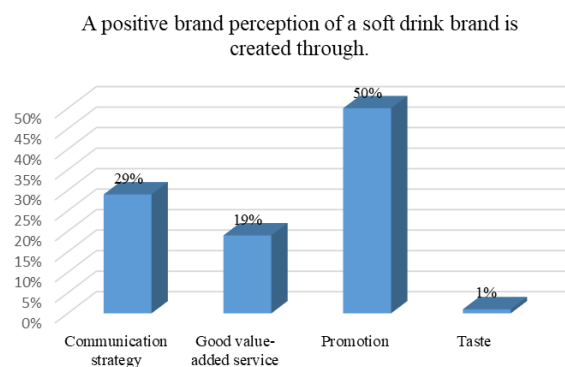
The table presents the elements contributing to a favourable brand perception for a particular soft drink brand, denoted by percentages representing their degrees of influence.

Promotion is the most influential factor, accounting for fifty per cent of the overall positive perception. This highlights the importance of proficient marketing strategies in influencing consumer perspectives. With a close second at 29%, communication strategy underscores the significance of effective and captivating brand communication. A value-added service that provides additional services or benefits enhances brand favorability and accounts for 19% of the total contribution. Unexpectedly, the influence of flavour is negligible at 1%, suggesting that although taste is significant, alternative factors, including promotion and communication, exert a more substantive impact on moulding favourable perceptions of the soft drink brand.

Figure 5. Reasons for preference of a soft drink brand

Reason for preferring particular soft drink brand
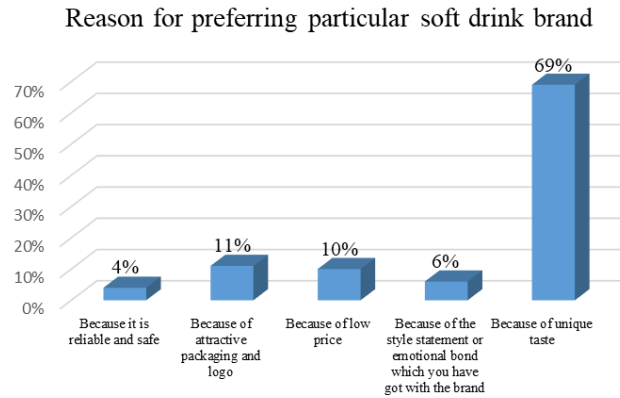
The table details the rationales behind consumers' brand preferences for specific soft drinks. A considerable 69% of individuals base their decision on an emotive connection with the Brand or a fashion statement, highlighting the Brand's capacity to foster personal connection or lifestyle expression. 11% of respondents find reliability and safety to be of the utmost importance, underscoring the significance of brand trust. 10% of preferences are influenced by appealing packaging and logos, attesting to the significance of aesthetics. A minority, specifically 6%, chooses to pay low prices, underscoring the significance of affordability. A mere 4% are attracted to distinctive flavours, indicating that sensory experience does not significantly but distinctively influence consumer brand preference.

Figure 6. The importance of soft drink brands being environmentally friendly
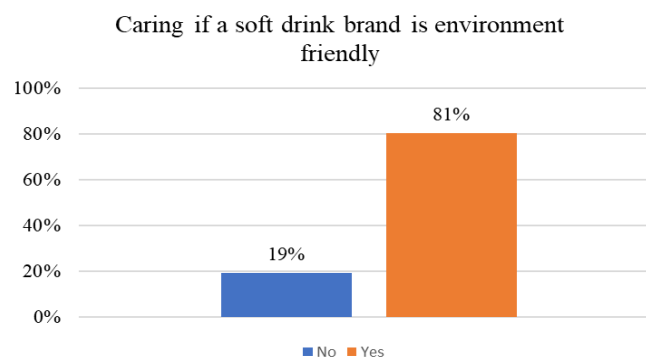

Caring if a soft drink brand is environment friendly

Figure 6 demonstrates that 81% of respondents are concerned about whether a soft drink brand is environmentally friendly, whereas only 19% are not concerned about whether a soft drink brand is environmentally friendly.

DISCUSSION

The conducted survey in Pune city is situated within a unique urban landscape that has evolved into a dynamic, friendly, and multicultural hub, catering to a diverse demographic of single individuals, families, and adults nationwide. Pune's cosmopolitan character provides a suitable setting to capture a diverse range of perspectives from users of soft drinks, reflecting a balanced and comprehensive viewpoint. In contemporary marketing paradigms, there has been a notable shift towards emphasizing the emotional dimension, recognizing its significance in crafting brand perceptions that resonate with consumers on various levels.

Delving into the philosophy and psychology of consumers through extensive research endeavours allows businesses to uncover latent needs and preferences, fostering a deeper, emotional connection with their target audience. Establishing and nurturing this emotional connection is a protracted process that demands sustained engagement from businesses and marketing specialists.

The findings of this study, rooted in a similar theoretical foundation, are both illuminating and pivotal for the soft drink industry. The regression results unequivocally underscore the formidable impact of Emotional Branding in cultivating a devoted customer base, elevating Brand Perception, and fortifying a robust brand image. This substantiates

the assertion that strategies informed by emotional Branding significantly contribute to consumer loyalty and positive brand associations in soft drinks.

Also, the regression analysis reveals a statistically significant relationship between emotional branding initiatives and creating a loyal customer base. When emotionally engaged with a brand, consumers tend to exhibit higher levels of loyalty, as the emotional resonance forms a foundation for sustained brand preference. This phenomenon aligns with the contemporary understanding of consumer behaviour, emphasizing the intricate interplay between emotions and brand choices.

Positive emotional associations fostered through branding initiatives contribute to a favourable brand image, positioning the product as more than a mere commodity but an experience infused with emotive resonance. Consequently, marketers in the soft drink industry should allocate particular attention to activities that amplify emotional Branding, recognizing its pivotal role in influencing consumer decisions and shaping brand perceptions.

In conclusion, the analytical insights derived from this study underscore the imperative for soft drink marketers to prioritize and invest in emotional branding strategies. By doing so, businesses can harness the profound impact of emotional connections with consumers, cultivating brand loyalty, fostering positive brand perceptions, and establishing a resilient brand image in the competitive marketplace.

CONCLUSION

The significance of businesses engaging with consumers in new ways has increased to a new level in today's fast-paced, consumption-driven digital economy. As it adds value for the customer and generates several competitive advantages, emotional Branding is an effective way to achieve success. Only successful brands outlive their competitors by appealing to consumers' emotional needs, wants, and desires as purchasing decisions become more and more focused on these factors. Thus, brands should be able to humanize themselves to appeal emotionally to their customers and leverage their overall competitiveness through many gained benefits. This study aimed to examine the role that emotional Branding plays in creating a favourable brand perception in the context of Pune's soft drink sector. The research's primary goals were to understand what influences customers' emotional Branding and how emotional Branding works to differentiate brands from rivals in the soft drink sector.

This study concentrated on a few elements that affect brand personality, brand trust, brand passion, and brand connection emotional Branding and the consequences through structural equation modelling that assessed its effect on brand perception. It is discovered that these variables are positively related, demonstrating a genuine affection for brands.

Managerial Implications

Consumers form deep emotional bonds with a particular brand when encountering exceptional quality at a reasonable price. They believe that the Brand represents their individuality and social status; thus, they experience inner fulfilment while using branded goods. Consumers keep a close relationship with the brands after making purchases, and occasionally, new brands enter the market. Brands that appeal to consumers in the retail market and emotionally impact them. One may contend that consumers play a role in shaping a brand's values and maintaining a relationship with it. Multiple methods exist to achieve this, including utilizing the trademark, attractive packaging, physical store presence, etc. These principles facilitate consumers in developing a sense of familiarity with the companies and a strong excitement for associated brands. These circumstances are ideal for clients to develop opinions about brands they have utilized or are currently utilizing. Consumer trust significantly enhances brand loyalty, substantially impacting consumer influence. If a brand is deemed trustworthy, people will fervently seek it out in every conceivable manner due to their strong enthusiasm for it. Trust is built upon a brand's popularity and superior quality, as seen by high rates of brand purchases. Additionally, brand companies need to be truthful when claiming the quality of their branded products and concentrate on their promises based on trust.

Therefore, it has been demonstrated that to succeed in this cutthroat environment, using emotional branding tactics to create a favourable brand perception is essential. Companies should focus on some of the suggestions given below to improve consumers' impressions about their brands:

➢ Emotional appeal in advertising through storytelling and digital media aids in making a lasting impression and assists in capturing the users' attention. Companies can reap the benefits of positive word of mouth.

➢ For the soft drink sector, using emotional appeal in various marketing elements, including packaging, brand slogans, commercial tunes, social media connections**,** and sales promotional activities, is a perfect way to establish brand identity and preferences.

➢ Soft drinks companies should create advertising campaigns based on emotional appeals, conduct polls of customer preferences, and collect customer feedback from various social media platforms to refine their marketing and promotion strategies.

The Brand will be represented as a unique style mirrored in designs since it synthesizes customer values, inspiration, and taste. Brands must update their collections, methods, ranges, and quality in response to shifting consumer expectations and preferences to draw customers in through emotional appeal.

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