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Factors Influencing Consumers' Attitude And Choice Behaviour Of Brand Extension: An Evidence From India

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the effect of advertising effort, distribution support, parent brand attitude and perceived fit on consumer attitude, purchase intention, trial and repeat purchase behavior towards brand extension. Out of 517 housewives who were selected for the study, 425 respondents were in support of the reputed samples. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling was used to measure metric outcomes (attitude and purchase intention) and binary logistic regression was used to measure the binary outcomes (trial and repeat purchase). Consumers' attitude and intention to buy the extension product depends on whether the extension comes from a reputed brand and how similar is the extension product with that of the parent brand. However their role stops when attitude transfers into real purchase behavior. Whereas advertising frequency and availability of the products in the distribution channel determine the trial and repeat purchase of brand extensions. For products already in existence in the market, advertising has got no impact on consumer attitude and purchase intention. However, intensive distribution plays an important role in determining both attitude and choice behavior of brand extensions.

INTRODUCTION

"There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else" says Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart.

To cope with the ever-changing market characteristics, the companies in developing countries adapt new strategies for growth and to sustain the market. A 'Brand' is not just a logo or a design but it is the experience, credibility and emotional connect a customer has towards the business. Many firms leverage this asset through 'Brand Extension' to sustain the risk of failure when new products are introduced. Brand extension is the use of well known brand names for the new product introductions (Aaker & Keller, 1990). According to 2012 Nielson India report, brand extensions are estimated to contribute 30% of revenue from FMCG sector and they have 5 times higher success rates than the new products. On the other hand, the real economic success of extensions depends on the trial and repeated purchase of the extension products. Therefore, it is important for the marketing researchers and brand managers to identify the factors that influence customers' attitude and choice behavior towards extended products.

The present study examines the role of four success drivers viz. advertising effort, retailers support, parent brand attitude and perceived fit on consumer attitude, purchase intention, trial and repeat purchase behavior towards extensions. The importance of choosing the variables for the study includes the following reasons: (i) In this 21st century as marketers are adapting the pull strategy to persuade customers', advertising and retailers simultaneously play a critical role in the success of a product. In the market place, customers' purchase decision

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is sensitive to advertisements and retailer's suggestions act as a tool to product trial and impulse purchase of new products (Kapoor & Heslop, 2009, Klink & Smith, 2001) (ii) The role of distributor's support and advertising is even more vital in FMCG sector because brand switching is common as purchase risk associated with such products are low (iii) A reputed brand name is the root cause of product success in brand extension. An extension from a high quality brand is positively welcomed as it is expected to carry the positive benefits of the core brand (Iyer *et al.*, 2011; Wasib B Latif *et al.*, 2016) (iv) Fit is conceptualized as the perceived similarity between the brand and its extensions in terms of product attributes, usage and image (Hem & Iversen, 2009; Chandrani Nanda Kumari Adikaram *et al.*, 2016). Perceived fit helps the customers to identify the new extension product as a member of the brand family. This association helps the transfer of positive beliefs of the original brand to extended product leading to its success (Völckner & Sattler, 2006; Rodolfo Delgado, 2016).

In addition, real extensions such as Cinthol Talcum powder, Horlicks Masala oats from established brands are used as stimuli in this study as such extensions does not ignore the rich schema associated in consumers' mind about the brands. Contrary to the frequent use of students as sample, the present study includes consumers as respondents to provide a more realistic and external valid context for extension research.

Theoretical Background And Hypothesis:

2.1 Advertising Effort → Consumer Evaluation:

Advertising effort is a signal to overall marketing support (Kirmani & Wright, 1989). High advertising effort in terms of frequency and expenditure significantly influence the consumer evaluation of extension (Lane, 2000, Völckner & Sattler, 2006; S. Munir *et al.*, 2015). High frequency of advertising in the earlier stage, create brand awareness and encourage the consumer to try the new extensions (Lane, 2000). In addition, advertising expenditure is perceived as a signal of high quality and an indicator of manufacturer's confidence in the product. Consumers may feel that the company would not spend so much money for advertising, if it did not believe it had a good product (Kirmani, 1990). When the quality of the product is not directly observable, advertisements act as the cue to attitude formation leading to trial of the new product (Kirmani, 1997). The manufacturer depends on the advertising to persuade attitude and initial trial of the product (Kirmani & Wright, 1989, Mohamedi Abbasi Balozi *et al.*, 2016). Thus in the earlier stage of introduction of a product, marketing support creates awareness and high quality perceptions leading to positive attitude, intention and trial of brand extension. Though repeat purchase of a brand extension depends on the richness of product experience, advertisements ensure the customers that they have made a right choice or decision, hence leading to a repeated purchase. Following these propositions, it is hypothesized that:

H1a: Advertising effort has a positive effect on consumer attitude towards brand extension.

H1b: Advertising effort has a positive effect on purchase intention of brand extension.

H1c: Advertising effort has a positive effect on trial purchase of brand extension.

H1d: Advertising effort has a positive effect on repeat purchase of brand extension.

2.2 Distribution Support → Consumer Evaluation:

Retailers act as gatekeepers by selecting products for display and setting price and merchandising policies (Messinger & Narasimhan, 1995; Shang-Yu Cheng, 2016). Therefore intensive distribution of new products depends on the retailers' support and acceptance for the new introductions. Reddy *et al.* (1994) and Völckner & Sattler (2006) suggest that the availability of extension product in the distribution channel plays a critical role in the success of the product. The more the stocks are in abundance, the more the products or its extensions reach the customer's hands. For frequently purchased products, mere availability and shelf visibility creates awareness among customers (Heeler, 1986; S.M. Sohel Rana *et al.*, 2016). Intensive distribution enhances the product's image and acts as the cue to judgments on product quality (Rao & McLaughlin, 1989; M. Rajeswari, 2015), besides, consumers believe retailers provide more space for better products than lower quality products (Collins-Dodd & Louviere, 1999; VijayAnand, 2016; Roberto de Araújo Nascimento Cunha and Dirceu da Silva, 2015). Therefore, distribution support influences positive attitude and intention to buy the product. However, its impact on trial and repeated purchase is under researched. In the similar line, availability of the products in the retail store increases the chance of trial and repeat purchase, because products that are not displayed lose the chance of being selected by the customers. Based on previous findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2a: Distribution support has a positive effect on consumer attitude towards brand extension.

H2b: Distribution support has a positive effect on purchase intention of brand extension.

H2c: Distribution support has a positive effect on trial purchase of brand extension.

H2d: Distribution support has a positive effect on repeat purchase of brand extension.

2.3 Parent Brand Attitude → Consumer Evaluation:

Brand extensions are affected by the overall strength of the parent brand. In the context of brand extension research, brand strength has been defined in terms of consumers' perception of overall quality of the parent brand (Aaker, 1990, Tran Trung Vinh *et al.*, 2015). A basic premise underlying the use of brand extensions is

that stronger brands yield stronger extensions (Park & Kim, 2001; Isma Suhaila Ismail *et al.*, 2015). Customers may not have tried new extension product, hence it is difficult to make judgments on its quality. In that case, they rely on the known brand name to make inferences about the quality of the new product. Compared to an extension from a low quality brand, extensions from high quality parent brand reduce the perceived risk associated with the product and thereby encourage the consumers to try the new product (Bottomley & Holden, 2001, Klink & Smith, 2001; Gabriel Sperandio Milan, 2015, Hashed Ahmed Mabkhot *et al.*, 2015). This notion is especially true for FMCG products as consumers rely heavily on cues such as brand strength (Völckner & Sattler, 2006, Helenita *et al.*, 2015, Wisnalmawat, 2015). These findings suggest that high brand strength positively affects consumers' attitude, intention and trial of the parent brand. However, repeat purchase is more dependent on the experience with the product and with the core brand strength. Therefore, we postulate:

H3a: Parent brand attitude has a positive effect on consumer attitude towards brand extension.

H3b: Parent brand attitude has a positive effect on purchase intention of brand extension.

H3c: Parent brand attitude has a positive effect on trial purchase of brand extension.

H3d: Parent brand attitude has no effect on repeat purchase of brand extension.

2.4 Perceived Fit → Customer Evaluation:

Several studies report that greater the similarity between original brand and extended category, greater is the transfer of positive associations to the extended brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990, Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994, Prabha Kiran & S. Vasantha, 2016). Categorization theory assumes that people rely on stored information for the evaluation of the new product. When consumers are presented with a new product consistent with the parent brand, the sufficient level of similarity makes the extension products familiar, thus leading to positive attitude formation (Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986, Sungbum Kim, 2015). Likewise, high fit extensions may lead to more willingness to purchase the products (Hem *et al.*, 2003, Völckner & Sattler, 2006, Chowdhury, 2007, Pulidindi Venugopal & Varun Kumar, 2015). Hence, previous studies indicate that perceived fit has a positive influence on consumer attitude and purchase intention of extensions. However, once the extension product is integrated into the brand schema, the effect of perceived fit slowly disappears (Klink & Smith, 2001; Aillen Gay & Loremia Melecio, 2015). Therefore, other product related features become dominant drivers of trial and repeat purchase. Hence, the following is hypothesized:

H4a: Perceived fit has a positive effect on consumer attitude towards brand extension.

H4b: Perceived fit has a positive effect on purchase intention of brand extension.

H4c: Perceived fit has no effect on trial purchase of brand extension.

H4d: Perceived fit has no effect on repeat purchase of brand extension.

Methodology:

3.1 Research Framework:

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework (see fig. 1) was drawn to discuss the effect of advertising effort, distribution support, parent brand attitude and perceived fit on consumers' attitude and choice behavior towards brand extension.

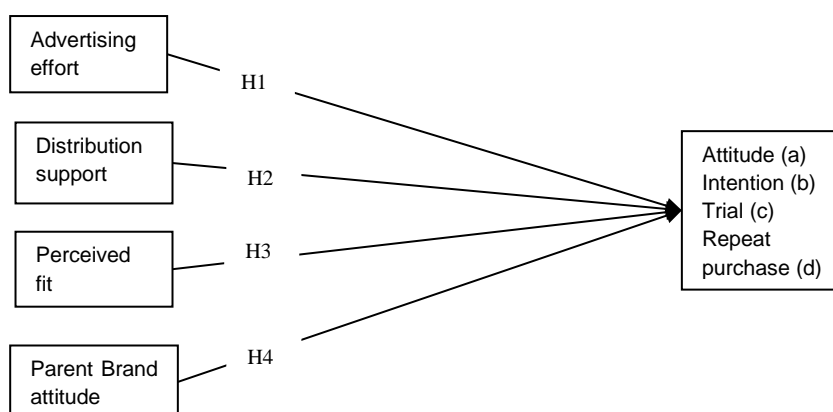


Fig. 1: Research Framework

3.2 Sampling and Data collection:

Pretest was done to select the stimuli for the study. A convenience sample of 50 consumers, evaluated the most trusted parent brands on familiarity, on a 7 point scale (1= not at all familiar to 7 = extremely familiar). Based on the result, 10 parent brands (3 food and 7 non-food categories) were chosen. The parent brand helped in identifying new extension products launched in the market (refer table1).

Table 1: Parent brand and extension products

Parent Brand	Parent Brand's Original Category	Extension Product's Category
Aashirvaad	Aata	Culinary Powder
Cinthol	Bath Soap	Talcum Powder
Colgate	Tooth paste	Mouth Wash
Dettol	Antiseptic Lotion	Dish Wash Gel
Hamam	Bath Soap	Hand Sanitizer
Horlicks	Health Drink	Masala Oats
Lifebuoy	Bath Soap	Hand Sanitizer
Medimix	Bath Soap	Hand Wash
Sunfeast	Biscuits	Noodles
Surf Excel	Washing Powder	Liquid Detergent

A total of 517 housewives in India participated in the study. A systematic sampling method was used by approaching every fifth female purchaser coming out of three chosen department stores. Each of the subjects evaluated one of the 10 extensions. They were first asked to read the brief information about the extension product in the questionnaire. The questionnaire for the current study had screening questions that checked the awareness and purchase interest of the participants in the category, based on which, valid responses were chosen. Out of 517 subjects, 22 were not aware of the product and 70 were not interested in purchase of the category. So 92 responses were removed and the sample (n=425) contained consumers who were aware and interested in the purchase of the extension product category. The total time for completing the entire questionnaire was approximately 10 minutes.

The mean age of the respondents was 36.24 years, their real age ranged from 26 to 57 years. Undergraduates accounted for 43.76%, postgraduates (45.74%) and with other educational qualifications for about 10.58% of the entire sample. The number of household members included, three member family (21.41%), four (52.47%) and more than four family members (23.05%). In terms of decision making, 313 respondents were self-decision makers in the family (73.65%); spouses were the decision makers in 112 families (26.35%).

3.3 Measurement of variables:

The operationalization of the proposed constructs was based on the existing scales from previous brand extension studies. Three items from Broniarczyk & Alba (1994) were used to measure overall attitude towards the extension product (1 = dislike to 7 = like). The sample items include: "Overall, I am positive to X", "What is your attitude towards X?", and "Overall, the evaluation of X, relative to existing brands in extension category is". Single item from Aaker & Keller (1990) was used to measure customer's intention to purchase the extension product. Example: Assuming a purchase was planned in the product class, the likelihood of trying X is ... 1 = will certainly buy a competitor brand to 7 = will certainly buy the extension product. The trial and repeat purchase was measured by asking whether they had purchased the extension product (0 = no trial; 1 = yes) or more than once (0 = no repeat purchase; 1 = yes).

The following items were measured on a seven point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Advertising effort was measured using two items from Völckner and Sattler (2006) and three items from Kirmani & Wright (1989). The five items are as follows: "X is well supported in terms of advertising", "How often did you notice advertising for X in the last month?", "X is intensively advertised", "The advertisements for X powder seem very expensive, compared to advertisements for competing brands" and "The advertisements for X powder are seen frequently". Distribution support was measured using two items from Völckner & Sattler (2006) and three items from Smith & Park (1992). The items are "X is available in many super markets", "On my last shopping trip, X attracted my attention very much", "More stores sell X, as compared to its competing brands", "The number of stores that deal with X is more than that of its competing brands" and "X is distributed through as many stores as possible". Perceived fit was measured using two items from Park *et al.* (2002) and two items from Hem & Iversen (2002). The items are "How similar are the quality levels of X and parent brand?", "How similar are the product characteristics of X and parent brand?", "To what extent would you say that, usage of X is closely connected to you as a person?" and "To what extent would you say that, usage of X is closely connected to an image of the person you would like to be?". Parent brand attitude was measured using three items from Mitchell (1986). The items are parent brand is ... 1 = unlikeable to 7 = very likeable; 1 = very bad to 7 = very good; 1 = displeasing to 7 = very pleasing.

Table 2: Mean, SD and Correlation among constructs

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Advertising effort	4.33	1.03	1.00					
2. Distribution support	4.51	1.05	0.61	1.00				
3. Parent Brand Attitude	5.50	1.02	0.28	0.31	1.00			
4. Perceived fit	4.12	1.04	0.36	0.37	0.40	1.00		
5. Consumer attitude	4.82	1.00	0.31	0.37	0.41	0.38	1.00	
6. Purchase intention	4.71	1.19	0.25	0.29	0.42	0.36	0.49	1.00

Results:

Partial Least Square (PLS), a variance based Structural Equation Modeling technique was used to estimate the research model using the software application Smart PLS 2.0 M3 version (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). A PLS model is analyzed and interpreted in two phases: (1) the assessment of the measurement model (outer model), and (2) the evaluation of the structural model (inner model). The effect of independent variables on binary measures i.e. trial and repeat purchase was measured using binary logistic regression.

4.1 Measurement Model:

The evaluation of the measurement model examines its reliability and validity (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). In this study, all the indicators satisfy individual item reliability except in the case of item AE5 (refer Table 3). This item remains in the study on account of its contribution to content validity (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012).

Table 3: Parameter estimates of measurement model

Constructs and items	Loadings	α	CR	AVE	
Advertising Effort	AE1	0.78**	0.80	0.86	0.56
	AE2	0.82**			
	AE3	0.70**			
	AE4	0.76**			
	AE5	0.65**			
Distribution Support	DS1	0.61**	0.81	0.87	0.58
	DS2	0.71**			
	DS3	0.83**			
	DS4	0.81**			
	DS5	0.82**			
Parent Brand Attitude	PB1	0.89**	0.89	0.93	0.82
	PB2	0.92**			
	PB3	0.90**			
Perceived Fit	PF1	0.76**	0.79	0.86	0.61
	PF2	0.76**			
	PF3	0.82**			
	PF4	0.79**			
Consumer attitude	CA1	0.83**	0.73	0.85	0.65
	CA2	0.78**			
	CA3	0.82**			
Purchase intention	PI4	1.00**	1.00	1.00	1.00

**p < 0.01

The assessment of construct reliability uses composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. For both indices, 0.7 is the cut-off value (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). All the constructs used in this study are reliable (refer Table 3). Construct validity was examined through convergent and discriminant validity. The estimation of standard loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and composite reliability gauges convergent validity. Standard factor loading lied within the range of 0.61 to 0.92 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). AVE of each measure extracted more than 50% of the variance (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The square roots of AVE were greater than the correlation values across the row and column. Hence discriminant validity was warranted according to Fornell & Larcker (1981) criterion.

4.2 Structural Model:

For the structural assessment model, the path coefficients, their significance via bootstrap test and the R^2 values were estimated. The entire model explained 26% of variance for consumer attitude and 24% of variance for purchase intention. In PLS, R^2 results of 0.20 are considered high in a discipline such as consumer behavior (Hair *et al.*, 2011). The results of binary logistic regression provided an adequate fit to data, $-2LL = 515.954$, Cox & Snell $R^2 = 0.13$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.17$ for trial purchase and, $-2LL = 513.583$, Cox & Snell $R^2 = 0.14$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.18$ for repeat purchase model.

The hypothesis testing is summarized in Table 4. The results showed that advertising effort did not have any impact on consumer attitude ($t = 1.05$; Not Sig.) and purchase intention ($t = 0.60$; Not Sig.). However,

positively influenced trial ($p = 0.003$; $p < 0.01$) and repeat purchase ($p = 0.001$; $p < 0.01$) of brand extension. Hence H1a and H1b were not supported while H1c and H1d were supported. As hypothesized distribution support positively influenced attitude ($t = 2.58$; $p < 0.01$), purchase intention ($t = 2.04$; $p < 0.01$), trial ($p = 0.003$; $p < 0.01$) and repeat purchase ($p = 0.002$; $p < 0.01$). Hence H2a, H2b, H2c and H2d were supported. The findings indicated that parent brand attitude positively influence attitude ($t = 5.24$; $p < 0.01$), purchase intention ($t = 6.47$; $p < 0.01$), but showed no effect on trial ($p = 0.51$; Not Sig.) and repeat purchase behavior ($p = 0.15$; Not Sig.). Hence H3a, H3b and H3d were supported but not H3c. As hypothesized, perceived fit has positive effect on attitude ($t = 3.14$; $p < 0.01$) and purchase intention ($t = 3.65$; $p < 0.01$) but did not have any impact on trial ($p = 0.08$; Not Sig.) and repeat purchase ($p = 0.09$; Not Sig.) towards the extension product. Hence H4a, H4b, H4c and H4d were supported.

Table 4: Results of the structural model

Hypothesized Relationship	Attitude (a)	Purchase Intention (b)	Trial (c)	Repeat Purchase (d)
H1: Advertising effort	0.06 ^{NS} Reject	0.03 ^{NS} Reject	0.40** Support	0.45** Support
H2: Distribution Support	0.18** Support	0.11** Support	0.39** Support	0.42** Support
H3: Parent Brand Attitude	0.27** Support	0.40** Support	-0.07 ^{NS} Reject	-0.17 ^{NS} Support
H4: Perceived fit	0.19** Support	0.19** Support	0.20 ^{NS} Support	0.20 ^{NS} Support

** $p < 0.01$; ^{NS}Not Significant

Conclusion And Suggestions:

The theoretical model shows the impact of success drivers on attitude and choice behavior of brand extension. The current study is first among developing countries to understand how consumer attitude, purchase intention, trial and repeat purchase of extension is discretely influenced by market related, brand related and extension related characteristics. By focusing on brand extension research, this study contributes to the extant literature that, the role of parent brand attitude and perceived fit is more pronounced during attitude based evaluation. It also suggests that market related variables are important for purchase behavior of brand extension. Before product trial, a strong brand name, its associated similarities with the extension and intensity of availability helps the extension product to gain a positive attitude and promotes the intention to buy the product. Though advertisements help in creating awareness and quality judgments about the product, their role on consumer attitude and purchase intention is nil for real extensions. The reason is customers are already accustomed and physically interacted with the product in the retail store. However, informative advertising, comparative advertising and advertisements with attractive offers can help in the speedy product trial and repeat purchase among consumers.

Availability of the products in the distribution channel emerges to be the inevitable factor that plays an important role in both consumer attitude and purchase behavior of extension. The most focused variable in past research, the perceived fit and parent brand attitude, loses its effect during purchase behavioral phase i.e. trial and repeat purchase. Though they help in attitude formation and intention to buy the product, advertisements and retailers support play a critical role in converting the attitude into behavior. Therefore brand managers should understand the role of success drivers at different phases of consumers' purchase decision towards brand extension. Accordingly, strategies on 4P's have to be implemented to drive the economic success of brand extension. When proprietor of the brand adds a new product or service to the list of those he already offers, advertising and distribution strategy has to be designed so as to attract existing and new customers, this naturally gives a great dimension to his business.

The current study has few limitations that pave opportunities for future research. The brand extensions used in this study are from well established and highly reputed brands. Future studies can test the similar effects on mediocre or unpopular brand extensions. This research has used cross sectional study to understand the attitude and purchase behavior of consumers. Future research can use a longitudinal study to analyze consumers' attitude vs. behavior towards extensions. The respondents in this study are from a single country (India), and therefore the findings may not apply generally to western countries due to the existing cultural difference.

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