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INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES ON BUYING INTENTION OF CONSUMERS IN SPORTSWEAR MARKET

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ABSTRACT

India is one of the largest market for sports products. There has been a rising trend of sports and sportswear in daily life of people. Thus it becomes important to study the perceptiveness of Indian people about what product attribute attracts them while purchasing the sports products. This study offers and validates a comprehensive approach to explain influence of product attributes on consumer buying process in sportswear market. In order for this the survey was conducted of 90 people and also of 4 sports retailer of Nike, Adidas, Puma, and Fila to analyse and understand what attributes attracts them to buy particular sports brand. It was found that Comfort, Quality were most rated attributes after looks, design, Brand goodwill, and Promotional tools. Price was rated at average which means it was not so much important attribute when people go to these top brands outlets. Consumer desired shoes with high quality and comfort followed by looks and design.

KEYWORDS - Purchase intention, Product attributes, Sports brand, Sportswear, consumer buying process.

INTRODUCTION

Sports and Physical activities are now the most important element of human life. In the fast growing and stressful world health and fitness are the main concern of everyone and the international brands like Nike, Adidas, and Puma etc. are the market leaders in the sports market. They have the high level of customer's base.

There are many reasons why these sports brands are doing good in the market but one of the major factors is the match of Product attributes with the expectations of the target consumers. Product attributes play a vital role in consumer decision making process. In order to choose a particular sports brand, consumer can assess the product on attributes like Quality, Design, and Looks etc. The brands that consumers prefer are Nike, Adidas and Puma as they are supposed to offer them good product attributes like Comfort, Quality, and better looks etc.

As sports and sportswear market is emerging as a growing industry in India it is imperative to study the factors that influence of Product Attributes on buying Intention of Consumers in sportswear market.

Indian consumers may have different perceptions and the researchers wants to assess the Indian context of the sports market.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumer decision making process consists of a number of steps that begin before the actual purchase and continues even beyond the buying act. Marketers need to study various influences on buyers to develop an understanding of how consumers actually make their buying decisions. (Ukessays, 2016). The present study tries to identify consumer-brand relationships in sports products based by exploring the effects of perceived satisfaction, investment, and to examine consumers repurchase intention towards branded sports products. Purchase intention studies the reason to buy a particular brand by consumer (Shah, 2015). Once a consumer develops a relationship with a brand, it is essential for him or her to perceive the relationship as gratifying in order to commit to continuing the relationship (Chiu, Won, & Chiu, Consumer-brand relationships in sports products and repurchase intention An application of the investment model, 2015). Consumers tend to have a higher level of psychological attachment to a brand if they continuously receive a hedonic or symbolic fulfilling value from the brand. That is, if the chosen brand continues to offer superior benefits that lead to satisfaction with the relationship, the consumer will commit to sustaining the relationship with the brand. Purchase intention usually is related to the behaviour, perceptions and attitudes of consumers. Purchase behaviour is a key point for consumers to access and evaluate the specific product (Younus, Younus, & Rasheed, 2015). Sports consumers, particularly sports participants, may have a unique relationship with branded sports products as they exercise frequently with the products they purchase. It was been suggested that consumers who follow some kind of fitness regime, have preferences for specific sports brands (Chiu, Consumer-brand relationships in sports products and repurchase intention, 2016).

SPORTS BRANDS

A brand is the way in which a company, organization, or individual is perceived by those who experience it (LISCHER). Brand is intangible but though it is successful in influencing consumer decision making process. Over the centuries, sports events have evolved into billions of dollar industries through large investments and equally large revenue generation.

Sport continues to be an integral part of entertainment and exercise for the masses since the ancient Greek and Roman introduced it to the rest of the world. Consumers looked at a sport as an escape from their everyday problems (Catalin & Razvan, 2018). The brands like Nike, Adidas, Puma, Wild craft, Super dry, Fila etc. are the known brands in the sports market. Nike is the greatest American brand that manufactures high quality sportswear for men and women. Valued at \$65 billion in 2019, Nike is the most valuable brand among sports industries (Forbes, 2019). Adidas is a German multinational company that designs and manufactures shoes, clothing and sports accessories. It is largest sportswear manufacturer in Europe and the second largest in the world Rudolf Dassler, brother of Adolf Dazzler founded Puma in 1948. The two brothers later agreed to split the company into two separate entities, Adidas and Puma in 1948. Since then, both the companies are headquartered in Herzogenaurach, Germany.

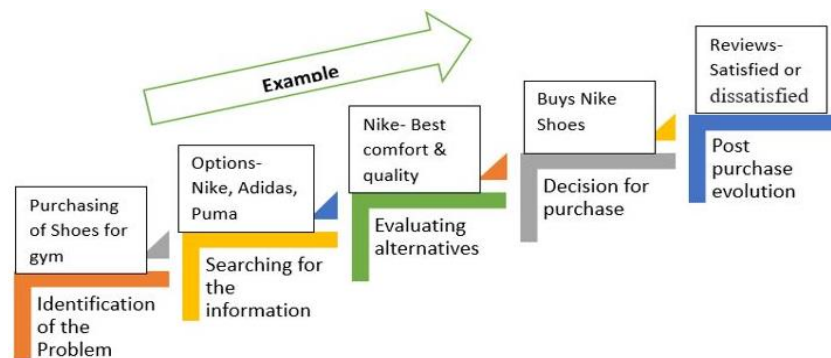
Nike supersedes all the other sports brands existing. in the market. Nike holds 1st position in the sports with the net worth revenue of US\$36.397 (Wikipedia, 2018) billion in the market followed by Adidas at 2nd position with income of US\$26 billion (Forbes, 2019) and followed by Puma at 3rd Position with income of US\$5.2 billion (networthbuzz, 2019). These differences may be because of their different product range, attributes, and strategies. The range of the products is also one of the significant

differentiator of these brands. Nike covers all type of sports products no matter if it is shoes or footballs. Puma have the less range of products thus it is difficult for Puma to surpass Nike and Adidas both.

CONSUMER BUYING PROCESS

The customer buying process (also called a buying decision process) describes the journey the customer takes before they buy a specific brand product. The experts of Consumer behaviour extensively study the external and internal factors to know how consumers make purchase decisions and how they may use and dispose of the purchased goods or services (Johnston, 2016).

First step of decision making is 'Identifying the Problem' which in simple terms means why an individual buy the product or what prompts an individual to buy a product; whether there is a need or the want created by the external agencies. The next step is 'Searching for the information' which describe how a consumer may go online to get reviews and also look for the various alternatives existing in the market. They search the products which can fulfil their needs and can solve their problem. Then consumer 'Evaluate the alternatives' in which he analyses the products on the basis of its product attributes. The consumer finally buys the product that he thinks well. The consumers also do a 'Post purchase evaluation' in which they may judge the usage, quality and price for the future purchase. Here feedback also forms a major role wherein the consumers give reviews about the product, which may influence the decision making of other consumers.



PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

The term intention is defined as the antecedents that stimulate and drive consumers' purchases of products and services (Hawkins, 2010). One of the most common approaches undertaken by marketers in gaining an understanding about consumers' actual behavior is through studying their intentions. (Blackwell, 2006)

Product attributes is one of the major parts that consumer analyze while taking decision to purchase any product. "A product attribute is a characteristic that defines a particular product and will affect a consumer's purchase decision. Product attributes can be tangible (or physical in nature) or intangible (or not physical in nature)" (Grimsley, 2018). Let us discuss the above example where the consumers want to buy shoes for himself and thus, he goes to Nike Brand outlet and analyze few very important attributes that is necessary for his satisfaction, it can be Comfort, Look, Design, Price and Quality. So, these may be the attributes that consumers look for while buying a shoe. The consumer may later choose for shoes which is comfortable for him to wear in gym.

The attributes are of 2 types that is Tangible and Intangible attributes. "A tangible product is a physical object that can be perceived by touch such as a building, vehicle, or gadget. Most goods are tangible products and an intangible product is a product that can only be perceived indirectly such as an insurance policy" (lumen). For example, if the consumers want to buy the jersey to wear in a tournament, the consumer may choose jersey with best size and best cloth quality which do not get tattered while playing. Here Quality is an intangible attribute and size is tangible attribute. Product

attributes is very important to analyse while making any decision. Thus, it plays a vital role in Consumer buying process.

The present research focuses on a comparative study of sports brands Nike, Adidas, and examines the impact of Brand Personality on Indian Consumer

LITERATURE GAP

There is limited research with respect to Indian Sports Markets and how Indian Consumers may choose any Branded sports product. Very few researches have discussed the influence of product attributes on purchase intention of consumers in sports market. The researchers were able to get researches related to countries like Iraq, USA, and South Africa etc. in this respect. Thus, it was important to study Indian market and which product attribute attracts the most to the Indian consumers that affects their buying intentions and process.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Sports and sportswear are an emerging industry in India. It is therefore crucial to garner insights into drivers of consumer buying behaviour of Indians to help marketers and business to align strategies to consumer expectations.

OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the influence of factors of consumer buying behaviour of Indians in Sportswear Market.
2. To examine the relation between independent variables and Consumer buying intention.

HYPOTHESES

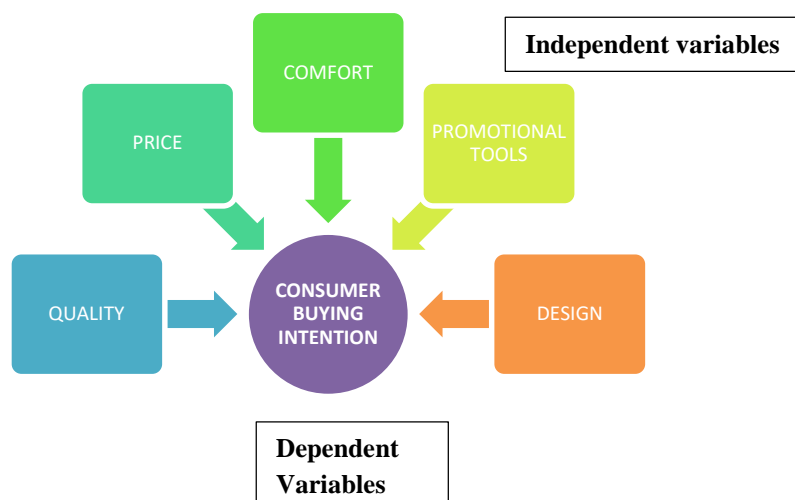
H1: A significant positive relationship exists between Purchase Intention of consumer and Design of the Sportswear.

H2: A significant positive relationship exists between Purchase Intention of consumer and Price of the Sportswear.

H3: A significant positive relationship exists between Purchase Intention of consumer and the Quality of the Sportswear.

H4: A significant positive relationship exists between Purchase Intention of consumer and the Promotional tools of the Sportswear.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



DATA INTERPRETATION of PRIMARY SURVEY

The primary survey was conducted online through google survey and the link was shared through social media. The survey was further snowballed by the existing respondents to their friends and family. The period of data collection was approximately six months.

It was observed that the market for the sports products is mostly catered to Adults (19-24). It was found that the youngsters between 18-24 years buy more sports products than other age groups.

TABLE 1 : How often do you go to sports retail store or purchase sports products?

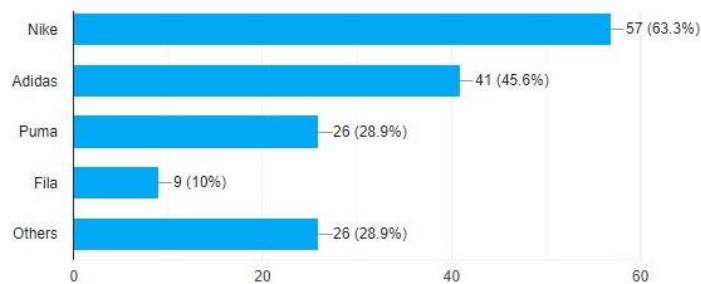
	Monthly	Quarterly	Half yearly	Yearly
Male	13	25	13	12
Female	5	4	9	9
Total	18	29	22	21

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

From the above table it can be observed that Male have the highest percentage of purchase of sports products and Females comparatively buy less sports products than Males. 63 Males out of 90 respondents prefer to purchase sports brands. Quarterly purchaser (Male-25, Female - 4) of the sports brands are more than comparative to half yearly, Monthly and Yearly purchasers also out of which Males have the highest purchase rate in Quarterly basis. It can also be inferred that Females most buy the sports products in Half Yearly (9) and Yearly period (9). Males are most likely to spend their income on sports products in Quarterly period. Females on the other hand have less purchase rate than Males.

Fig c. Preferred Brands



Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

From the graph it can be observed that 63.3% of the people prefer Nike Brand, 45.6% prefer Adidas Brand, 28.9% prefer Puma, 10% prefer Fila and rest 28.9% prefer different local sports Brands in the Market. It can clearly be observed that Nike is the most preferred brand by the consumers and that may be because of the policies and strategies adopted by Nike as we studied above. Adidas is a good competitor of but because of better innovation and good business model Nike Superseeds Adidas and Puma. On the other hand Puma is also a Global competitor but not so beloved brand in India. It can be interpreted that Puma and Fila are not so preferred brands by Indian customers in the sports Market.

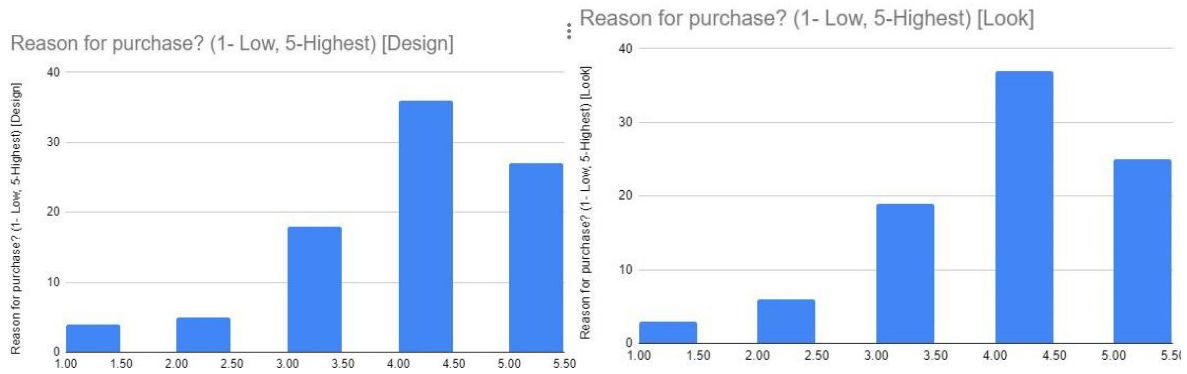


Fig 1. Reasons for purchase (1- Low, 5-Highest)

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation

From the above graph it can be interpreted that people pay more than average attention to looks and designs of the sports products. The people have rated ‘4’ the most that means the customers are concerned about looks and designs. Consumers will prefer Shoes that have a good design and look well according to their outfit or consumers will prefer a jersey that matches his outfit and looks good in every aspect that it reflects his standard. Thus, it can be interpreted that consumers pay attention to Looks and design of the sports products thus it becomes very necessary for the companies like Nike, Adidas and Puma to make innovations in their products and present something different with new looks and design for their customers.

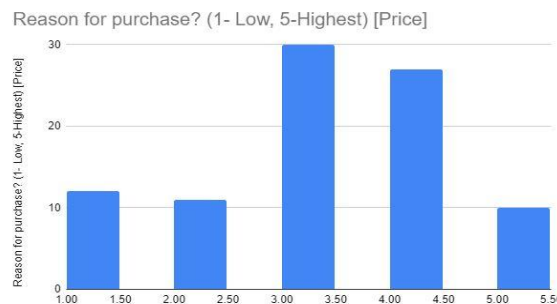


Fig 2. Reasons for purchase (Price)

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation

From the above graph it can be interpreted that Indian people are not so price conscious as it was expected. The data shows that people have rated ‘3’ the most and then came rating ‘4’. It can be inferred from the data that people are price conscious but not too much. The reason behind this is that if the customers are going to Nike, Adidas or Puma showroom it is implied that they have pocket to buy their sports products. Thus, it can be inferred that people are more concerned about other parameters other than Price of the products. As the meter of ‘5’ is low thus it can be clearly observed that ‘Price’ is not a very important parameter for the consumers.

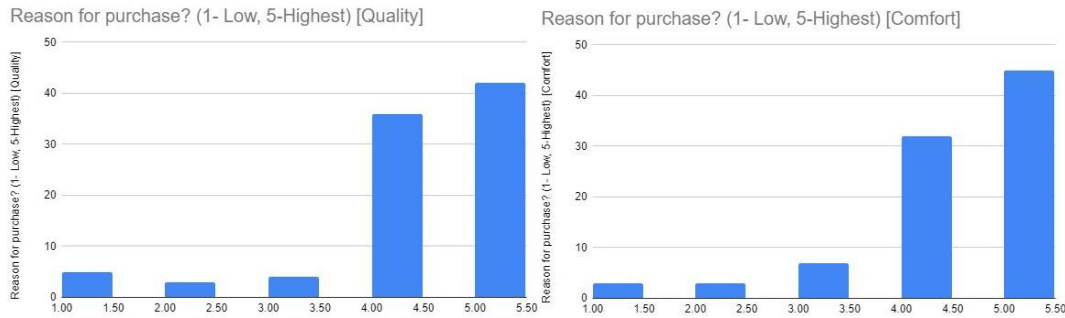


Fig 3. Reasons for purchase (Quality & Comfort)

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation

From the above graph it can be interpreted that Indian people are concerned about Quality and comfort more rather than price and looks as interpreted in 'Fig 1 & 2'. In the graph people have rated '4 & 5' for the comfort and Quality both the parameters. It can be inferred that an Indian consumer of Sports products pays attention to that if the product is comfortable or not and if it is of the best quality. Thus, if we compare interpretation of 'Fig 2' and 'Fig 3' it can be observed that people are less price conscious but are more quality and comfort conscious. Thus, interpretation made in Fig 2 is correct and subsisting.

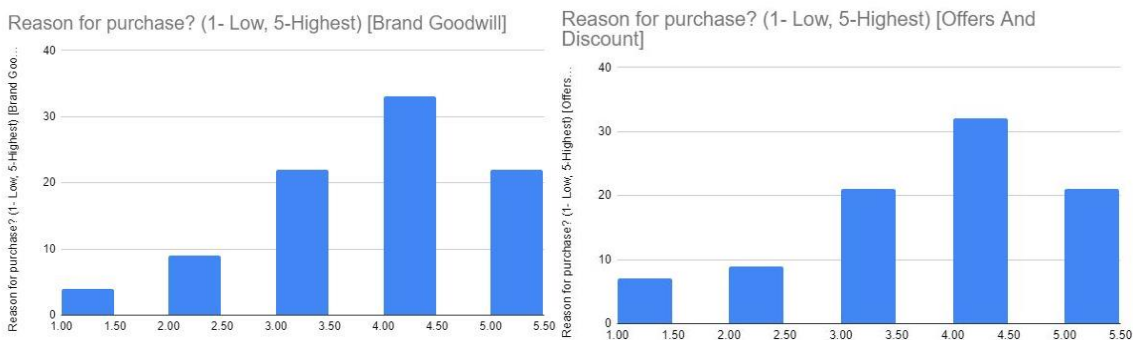


Fig 4. Reasons for purchase (Goodwill and Offers)

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation

From the above graph it can be interpreted that Indian people are concerned about Goodwill of the Brand in the market and the Offers & Discounts offered by the company as more than 35 people out of 90 have rated both the parameters '4' and more than 20 people have rated it '5' that means total 55 people out of 90 people are concerned about the Offers and Discounts and also about the Goodwill of the company. Thus, it can be inferred that along with Comfort, Looks, Quality the Offers discounts and Brand Goodwill of the company is also a very important parameter for the Indian customers.

CONSUMER BUYING INTENTION OF INDIANS - RETAIL SELLERS VIEW

The Customers buying intention related to the attributes of the product mentioned. Quality and Comfort played a major role in influencing the purchase intention of the Consumers. They are influenced by the attributes of products in a positive manner. Nike has been shown as the preferred brand because of its related product attributes and greater fulfilment of the consumer needs.

CONCLUSION

- Following Data and figures satisfies Hypothesis 1,3and 4 and partially satisfies 2.

From the above discussion it can be inferred that there is a positive relation of Promotional tools, Brand goodwill, Quality, comfort with the Buying Intention. It is because people are conscious and very particular about specific sports need even the price is higher. The factor that is partially satisfied was 'Price' because according to the survey 'Price' was rated on average attribute for purchase decision. The rating for all the aspects was given around '4' and '5' which means that consumers point of view of buying a sports product includes the given points. The responses of the consumers matches with the responses given by the retail seller for Nike, Adidas, Puma and others. Thus to conclude it shows that even if there is increase in Quality, Comfort, Price etc. still the Indian people will continue to purchase the products. The only matter which should be noted is that Price is an important factor which should be in its range as raising price

FINDINGS

Consumers gets attracted towards product attributes like Quality, Comfort and design etc. It influence their buying decision and pattern which is evidence by the facts that 63.3% of the people prefer Nike Brand, 45.6% prefer Adidas Brand, 28.9% prefer Puma, 10% prefer Fila and rest prefer 28.9% . Now this is because Nike offers consumers with wide range of the products and also according to Puma retailers view too Nike offer the products with good looks and design whereas Puma lacks behind in these attributes thus preferred by less people.

Consumers tend to get influenced by all the attributes no matter if it is Price or Quality. According to the retailers view also consumers searches for all the attributes discussed above. It was also bought up by the retailer that 75% of the consumers of the sportswear are Males and rest 25% are Females. The survey of the respondents also reveals that 70% of the consumers of the sportswear are Males and 30% are Females. It was also inferred that 47.8% of the consumers like to switch to other sports brands if they feel dissatisfied by the product and only 7.8% never switches their brand. 15.6% of the respondents 'Rarely' switches their brand. Thus it can be inferred that the person who never or Rarely switches their Brands are Loyal to the Brand and these consumers relates brands to themselves. It also to be observed that Price was been mostly rated at '3' which tells that it is an averagely important attribute that people see while going in a showroom of such top brands. Rest other attributes were found significant for influencing consumer buying intention.

The source of purchase was also one of the aspects which reveals that Brand Outlets surpass Online source as the source of purchase. The consumers in Sportswear market do not often buy the sports products rather they buy it on a Quarterly and Half yearly basis which is evidenced by the fact that out of 90 respondents 29 buys the product quarterly and 22 buys the product Half Yearly.

The study also reveals that how customers associate brands to themselves and their Personality. For example, we saw in Brand prism in the above research that how Sports Brands develop a relationship with its consumers and later how consumers relate brand to themselves. The consumers of Nike feel a pride to wear a top branded product which defines their standard. According to the retailers' view given by Puma and Fila, they don't have wide range of products like Nike and Adidas also it was revealed that they have a smaller number of design and look options compared to Nike and Adidas. Thus if the other local sports brands need to achieve a high growth they need to focus on these product attributes and the range of designs and products.

CONCLUSION

Study reveals that as the consumers have a significant relationship with product attributes. It can be inferred that product attributes plays an important role in consumer buying process and purchase intention like Comfort and Quality are the most important product attribute that affects purchase intention of the consumers. Other attributes like look, design, promotional tools etc. also played an important role in influencing consumers. This is also one of the differentiating factors in

Nike, Adidas and Puma that tells that why their positions differ. Hence in a growing industry such as sportswear brands should focus on these components while strategizing to achieve market leadership.

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