

Customer Preference for Branded Computers with Special Reference to Post Graduate Students

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Abstract

Purchase decision making is a complex amalgam of needs and desires. It is influenced by factors such as consumer's societal role, social and cultural environment, aspiration and inhibitions. In this article, the researchers try to find out the customer's preference for branded computers. Exploratory research has been made with postgraduate students of various disciplines in leading institutions in Chennai to find out the most important factors influencing the purchase of branded computers. After the influencing factors are identified, a self-structured questionnaire has been developed with 5 point scale. It was circulated to the postgraduate students of Arts, Science and Professional courses. Factor analysis and ANOVA have been employed to establish the important influencing factors on the purchase of branded computers and differences of opinion among the students. According to this study, Quality, Specification / Configuration, Reasonable price, Credit, Service, Experience person, Offers, Style, Guarantee, Warrantee and Product availability are the inducing factors for the purchase of branded computers among post graduate students of Chennai.

Key Words: *preference, student segment, branded computers and values*

JEL Classification: *M31*

Introduction

In today's tough competitive world every thing can be easily done by means of computers. Nowadays, this powerful tool can be properly utilized by the students. The future digital world is in the hands of the student community. The use of computers in education started in the 1960s. With the advent of the convenient micro computers in the 1970s, computer use in schools has become widespread from primary education to the university level.

Especially the post graduate students in various disciplines like arts, science and professionals can make use of computers for doing their research works, studies, searching information, sending as well as recording information, presentation purpose and also for entertainment. For the purpose of fulfilling the basic needs and wants, students are ready to purchase computers; based on their preference and taste, they purchase branded computers.

Purchase decision making pattern is a complex amalgam of needs and desires, and is influenced by factors such as consumer's, societal role, social and cultural environment and norms and aspiration and inhibitions. Brand is a mark, name, logo or trademark that identifies a product or

service or organization and distinguishes it from its competitors. The art of creating and maintaining a brand is called brand management.

In computer market the various brands are: Acer, Compaq, Dell, Hp, Sony, Toshiba, Lenovo, Asus, Philips, Apple, IBM, Samsung, HCL, Wipro, LG, Hitachi, Gigabyte, Panasonic, Sharp, Averatec, Everex, Mac, Advent, Mesh, Parkard bell, Gateway, The rest, MDG, Zepto, Trigem, G7 etc. Among these, the leading brands of computers in the markets are: Sony, Hp and Compaq, Lenovo, Acer, Dell, Asus, Toshiba, HCL, IBM and LG.

The basic factors which influence the students to buy branded computers are as follows: Good quality, Reasonable price, Specification / Configuration, Guarantee, Warrantee, Additional Warrantee, Regular service, Originality, Components and Products availability, Experienced sales and service person, Demos, On- line purchasing, Customer care centers, Attractive styles, Perfect finishing, Different models, Website information, Genuine offers, Attractive advertisement, Celebrities in advertisement, Credit facilities, Safety, Security, Supportiveness, Ranges of price, Lesser risk, Door delivery, Updating of product, Brand image etc.

Objective

The main objective of the research is to identify the preference among the student's segment while purchasing branded computers.

Methodology

The researcher had an in-depth discussion with the student community to explore the various factors on preference for the purchase of the branded computers.

From this discussion the researcher has identified 30 dominating factors in the post graduate students segment for the purchase of branded computers. This research paper is exploratory in nature. Then the researcher developed a questionnaire which included all the 30 factors in the 5 point scale. 5 stands for "strongly agree" and 1 stands for "strongly disagree". In Chennai, one college was selected for this study. From this college Arts, Science and Professional students were selected for conducting the survey. In each discipline, 30 post graduate students were selected with the random sampling method. Then the questionnaire was circulated to 90 post graduate students in these disciplines.

The primary data thus collected was coded and then entered in the SPSS 15 version. Furthermore, Factor analysis has been applied to group the relevant factors. One way ANOVA was also applied to find out the variance of opinion among the students towards various factors.

Results and Discussion

In the case of branded computers, customer's Preference has been identified with the help of factor analysis. It has been extracted through the Eigen (e) value, greater than one. The 30 factors are loaded under the heading of 6 factors. The 6 factors represent 65.8% of variance of the attributes considered for the study as pointed out in Table 1 below.

From the principle component analysis-varimax extraction, the attributes with high factor loading are: Quality, Specification / Configuration, Originality, Models, Safety & Security and Perfect finishing. These are the factors contributing to the first factor and their factor loading is as follows: 0.78, 0.76, 0.72, 0.69, 0.67 and 0.62. These attributes determine the product values. Therefore they have been grouped under the heading of a First factor, named "PRODUCT VALUE".

Table 1. Factor analysis of preference for branded computer

S.NO	Factors	Product value	Money value	Service value	Promotion value	Brand value	Time value
1.	Quality	0.784					
	Specification/ configuration	0.760					
	Originality	0.720					
	Models	0.690					
	Safety & security	0.670					
	Finishing	0.620					
2.	Reasonable price		0.73				
	Credit		0.69				
	Various Ranges		0.52				
	Up gradation		0.43				
3.	Service			0.81			
	Experience person			0.80			
	Care center			0.78			
	Delivery			0.72			
	Demo's			0.62			
4.	Offers				0.76		
	Style				0.69		
	Advertisement				0.63		
	Celebrities				0.59		
	Free Accessories				0.55		
	Web sites information				0.52		
5.	Guarantee					0.77	
	Warrantee					0.55	
	Additional Warrantee					0.53	
	Risk less					0.51	
6.	Product Availability						0.68
	components Availability						0.52

Source: Primary data computed; Principle component analysis with varimax Rotation.

Reasonable price, credit facilities, various range of price and future up gradation of product are the factors loaded into the second category. The factor loading of these attributes is: 0.73, 0.69, 0.52, and 0.43. These groups have been included under the heading "MONEY VALUE". Reasonable price and credit facilities are the contributing factors for money value.

The third factor has been constituted by taking into account the attributes of after sales and service, experienced sales & services person, customer care centers, proper delivery and demo with the factor loading of 0.81, 0.80, 0.78, 0.72 and 0.62. These attributes have been named "SERVICE VALUE". The attributes after sales and service and experienced service person are found to make a greater contribution than demo to this service value.

The fourth factor is supported by attributes such as: genuine offers, attractive styles, attractive advertisement, celebrities in advertisement, free accessories and information in the website. These attributes are grouped under "PROMOTION VALUE". The factor loading of these attributes are 0.76, 0.69, 0.63, 0.59, 0.55 and 0.52. Genuine offers and attractive style are the factors that contribute to this promotion value.

The fifth factor is supported by the guarantee with high factor loading of 0.77. Warrantee, additional Warrantee, and risk less with the factor loading of 0.55, 0.53 and 0.51. These attributes are also named "BRAND VALUE".

Availability of products in the computers and availability of the components are the factors loaded into sixth category with the factor loading of 0.68 and 0.52 and grouped under the heading "TIME VALUE". Thus factor analysis indicated that students' preference for branded computers depends upon major attributes such as: Product value, Money value, Service value, Promotion value, Brand value and Time value.

Furthermore, one way ANOVA (Table 2) has been applied to find out the variance of preference among the students among various factors such as: Product value, Money value, Service value, Promotion value, Brand value and Time value.

Table 2. Students' purchase preference for branded computers

S.NO	FACTORS	STUDENTS SEGMENTATION	N	MEAN	SD	ANOVA RESULT		
						F	P VALUE	BONFERRO NI TEST VALUE
1.	Product Value	Arts(A)	30	3.82	1.29	5.531	0.026**	P,S vs A
		Science(S)	30	4.09	0.28			
		Professional(P)	30	4.68	0.19			
2.	Money Value	Arts(A)	30	4.23	0.38	5.320	0.028**	A,S vs P
		Science(S)	30	4.12	0.18			
		Professional(P)	30	3.58	1.08			
3.	Service value	Arts(A)	30	4.02	1.19	1.770	0.211 (NS)	-----
		Science(S)	30	4.32	1.89			
		Professional(P)	30	4.19	0.98			
4.	Promotion value	Arts(A)	30	4.28	0.38	5.378	0.020**	A vs S,P
		Science(S)	30	3.92	1.02			
		Professional(P)	30	3.34	0.98			
5.	Brand value	Arts(A)	30	3.29	0.90	5.300	0.050**	P,S vs A
		Science(S)	30	4.41	0.42			
		Professional(P)	30	4.42	0.43			
6.	Time value	Arts(A)	30	4.35	1.28	5.780	0.058 (NS)	-----
		Science(S)	30	4.58	0.92			
		Professional(P)	30	4.72	0.78			

Source: Primary data computed.

** : Significant at 5% level.

NS: Not Significant.

In the case of Product value, professional and science degree holders have high level of preference on purchase of branded computers. While reading the p-value, students' perceptions vary significantly depending on their discipline of specialisation. Bonferroni test value also indicates that professional and science degree holders are having similar opinions, but they differed from Arts student.

With regard to Money value, arts students are more consciously followed by science and professional degree holder. While observing the p-value, student's perception significantly varied. Bonferroni test value indicates that arts and science students have similar opinions on Money value. The higher usage of computers may decrease the opportunity cost of money in the case of professional students and hence may assign lower importance to money value. For Arts and science students, the opportunity cost of money may be higher and thus it may attach higher importance to money value and hence may prefer installment purchase. This may be the reason for the difference in opinion on Money value among students segments.

As regards service value, all the segments of students are in the same category. All the degree holders purely need the common one that is service. This is yet to be confirmed by the p- value as well as Bonferroni test value, all the category of students have similar opinion when coming to the service value. The computer is a product that can only be used with proper service for both software and hardware and this is proved by the opinion of professional, Arts and science students on service value.

Promotion plays a vital role in the arts segment. Offers may be the influencing factor for the arts segments. While purchasing the branded computer, Arts students may prefer the offers, whereas the remaining factors such as styles, influence of celebrities may influence the science and professional students. In the case of professional segment, necessity and usage and also the present trend of being supplied a computer by the institute itself reduce the importance of promotion.

But in the case of science and Arts segment, the basic buying intuition starts with the promotion. Hence, celebrity promotion plays a role here. They varied significantly based on their discipline and this was observed by p-value. Science and Professional students also have a similar idea about promotion and this was obvious from the Bonferroni test value.

While considering the factors under Brand value heading, professionals followed by the arts students attach importance to the purchase of branded computers. Arts students may play the least role when compared to the others. Guarantee, Warrantee and Additional Warrantee may highly influence the professional as well as the science segment. This is confirmed by the p-value which significantly varied depending on the disciplines. Professionals and science students have a similar idea about the Brand value and this is noticed in the Bonferroni test value. Most of the students in professional and science segment believe in the guarantee, warrantee of the branded computers. Anyway, guarantee and warrantee may play the realistic role in the professional and science segment.

Time value is preferred by all segments of the students. Product availability and components availability of their brand influence all categories of students in attaching importance to time value. The reading the p-value as well as Bonferroni test value indicates that all categories of students have similar opinions on time value.

Implications of the Study

Arts and science students are price conscious while compared to the professional students. Reasonable prices as well as credit facilities are the factors to determine the arts and science students to purchase branded computers. So, if companies can properly and favorably concentrate on this segment, sales volume of the product can increase. Consumers can thus benefit from a reasonable price. All categories of students expect after sales and service. Being offered proper and prompt service, the customers really feel the value of branded computers. They are satisfied with their brand and they also turn to be opinion leaders.

Arts students are impressed with promotional value such as offers, styles etc. Promotional strategy is a tool for promoting the branded computers. It can serve to stimulate learning. The

marketer can provide cash discount, free gift, components and free accessories without raising the actual price. Cues serve to direct customer drives when they are consistent with consumer expectations. Marketers must be careful to provide cues that fail to meet those expectations. Cues are to serve as the stimuli that guide customer actions in the direction desired by the marketer. In the market-place, price, styling, packaging, advertising, and store displays all serve as cues to help customer fulfill their needs in product-specific ways.

This research shows that student segments require quality as well as service; these factors will promote the branded computers. If the marketer wants to defeat the competition, they should provide qualitative and original products. When the customers enjoy the value of the product, and start using the branded computers they become surrogate buyers.

Professional and science students are happy with guarantee and warranty of the product. The marketer can give guarantee and warranty as per buyer's expectation. If any physical damage, short circuit happens, the marketer can fulfill the needs and wants of the customers. The marketer can exploit this belief and turn his product into customer delight.

Availability of components and products at the right time ensures time value for customers. In case of non-availability of the product, if the customers are made to wait for a longer time, they will turn out to be mercenary customers. If the marketer overcomes the non-availability, then it is possible to convert all the enquiry seekers into customers.

Limitations

The study was conducted among the post graduate students of a college at Chennai. So the outcome of the study could be generalized. The study was conducted during the period of college reopening (1st week of June 2009). So the preference for the purchase of a branded computer among the students community varied according to their college, time as well as college location.

Conclusion

The research has shown that branded computers play a prestigious role in the students segment. Due to the computer world everything is in the hands of the students. Nowadays students are ready to shape up the sharpest future of the competitive world by means of computers. Everything in the world seems to be digital. The future growth of the country will be decided by the students themselves. Everyone needs a computer to drive a smooth and fast race. Especially, branded computers will try to safeguard the competitive race. So, these various factors discussed may definitely determine the student to purchase branded computers.

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Preferința clienților pentru computerele de marcă – studiu de caz privind opinia absolvenților de colegiu

Rezumat

Decizia de cumpărare reprezintă un amalgam complex de nevoi și dorințe. Aceasta este influențată de factori precum: rolul consumatorului în societate, mediul social și cultural, aspirații și inhibiții. În acest articol, cercetătorii încearcă să descopere preferințele clienților pentru computerele de marcă. Cercetarea exploratorie a fost efectuată pe un grup de absolvenți specializați în diferite discipline în cadrul unor instituții cunoscute din Chennai pentru a identifica cei mai importanți factori care influențează achiziția de computere de marcă. După stabilirea factorilor, a fost proiectat un chestionar structurat pe o scală de 5 puncte. Acesta a fost administrat absolvenților specializărilor: arte, științe și cursuri profesionale. Analiza factorială și ANOVA au fost utilizate pentru a descoperi factorii importanți care influențează achiziția computerelor de marcă și variațiile de opinie printre studenți. Conform acestui studiu, calitatea, configurarea, prețul rezonabil, creditul, serviciile, experiența persoanei, ofertele, stilul, garanția, disponibilitatea produsului constituie factorii care determină achiziția de computere de marcă printre absolvenții din Chennai.