

Information Processing Of Revitalized FMCG Brands – Role Of Customer Purchase Location

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Abstract

The study is intended to explore the impact of rebranding strategies on customer information processing for five brands of fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment. Rebranding strategy is being widely used to revitalize brands across all product categories. There are few researches in past identifying factors that are driving success or failure of these revitalized brands, specifically from customers' point of view. This study aims to bridge this gap by identifying the factors determining the influence of rebranding strategies on customer information processing. Factors like customer innovativeness, knowledge, and loyalty before rebranding; appropriateness and influence of external sources in facilitating information process among consumers have been discussed from the perspective of Indian consumers. Further an attempt has been made to find the differential effects in these factors across three purchase locations. The academic implications of the study lie in the exploration of the effects of rebranding on customer information processing. Implications for the marketers include inputs and suggestions for the effectively using rebranding strategy according to customer needs based on customer purchase location.

Keywords: Re-branding, consumer innovativeness, customer loyalty, information processing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Business environment today is characterized with factors like dynamism, shorter product life cycles, and increasing competition. Branding initiatives are focused not only on building a strong brand image but sustaining it has become more important as well as challenging. Practitioners are working towards value driven strategies to make a long lasting impression for the consumers. Many brands in customer goods segment are undergoing rebranding to offer the change and value desired by customers. Brands in the fast moving goods segment like Dabur, Horlicks, Dove have repositioned their products to cater to the changing business environment. Dabur for example decided in the year 2013 to change its positioning strategy from umbrella branding to individual branding. Under new positioning it is targeting the young and modern customers so a large initiative to transform Rs 1, 166. 5 crore ayurveda based company into a FMCG giant.

1. 1Branding

Brands have become an important marketing component to manufacturers (Murphy, 1990) and a useful source of information for the consumer. Bates (2005) defined brand as a collection of perceptions in the mind of consumers. Closely related to this definition, McNamara (2005) defined brand as a sum of feelings, thought, recognitions-negative or positive which target group of consumers have toward the company, product or service. Recent research suggests that the concept of brand is less of a tangible asset and more of a notion in the minds of consumers. For example, Keller (2003) defined brand as something that resides in the consumers' mind; an intangible asset to the organization.

1. 2. Rebranding strategies

In the past few decades Rebranding has attracted the attention of both practitioners and researchers. Despite the increase in the popularity of rebranding issues, LaForet and Saunders (1994) and Keller (2002) maintain that no uniform branding strategies can be employed by all firms for all products and services because different firms have different structures and objectives. In the age of ever increasing competition where companies are fighting for shelf space and struggling to make a place in the customers' mind and memory. The question of defining value has become all the more crucial. The present study aims to identify the factors that explain how consumers perceive rebranding strategy for making purchase decisions.

1. 3. Information Processing

Information processing as a main stage of consumer decision making model is the main focus of the study. The need of consumers to satisfy their information needs relating to product knowledge is the primary motivator for consumer information search (Grant et al, 2007). Consumers engage in pre-purchase information seeking have identified a product need and are seeking information that will enable them to make better decisions and increase the probability of satisfaction with purchase outcome (Shaver 2007). According to Blackwell et al. (2001) consumers go through five steps to process information during information search:

Exposure \Rightarrow Attention \Rightarrow Comprehension \Rightarrow
Acceptance \Rightarrow Retention.

From research in cognitive psychology, we know that human information-processing and memory capacities are limited. Without extended processing and memory capacity (paper and pencil, calculator), the consumer has to simplify the choice task. We do not expect that consumers spontaneously engage in very much data transformation or rearrangement in reviewing product or brand information for a choice (Wright, 2003).

Furthermore, a study by Andrews and Kim (2007) suggests that brand images, brand attitudes and brand associations as particular aspects of brand equity, could exhibit positive improvements proven by a successful revitalized brand. Thus, brand perceptions of customers, reflected by brand images, brand associations and brand attitudes, can act as good measurements on rebranding outcome

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research objectives:

Focus of the paper is to investigate the relationship between rebranding and customer information processing. Five brands were selected from Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector to explore how the rebranding strategies adopted by these brands affect their information processing. Responses from three locations of India i. e. Shimla, Chandigarh and Delhi have been included in the study. The objectives are stated as follows:

- i) Identify the factors influencing impact of rebranding strategy on consumer information processing.
- ii) Explore the variation in importance of these factors amongst selected FMCG brands
- iii) Study the differences in importance of identified factors across locations (Shimla, Chandigarh and Delhi).

2.2. Constructs

The main objective of the research was to study the impact of rebranding strategies on customer information processing. Factors of information processing have been identified to ascertain this impact. Following are constructs that have been identified on the basis of the literature review and the requirements of the research.

2.2.1. Customer innovativeness:

The success of rebranding largely depends on the customers adopting them, the innovation process required for creating a strong revitalized brand must be based on understanding consumer needs. The literature of consumer innovativeness has seen a stream of definitions and research interest (Midgley and Dowling, 1978, 1993; Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971) Customer innovativeness (1991) focuses on consumer willingness to try new products in a specific product field or domain. A number of further studies using this domain-specific innovativeness scale are extended to a variety of industries and products (Flynn and Goldsmith, 1992) as well as international context including the USA, Germany and France (e. g. Goldsmith et al., 1998).

2.2.2. Customer knowledge:

According to Jacoby et al (1986) customer knowledge consists of two main components: Familiarity and expertise. In the information search behavior literature, the relationship between internal search (prior knowledge) and the amount of external search conducted has been studied in detail. However, there are different views on the relationship between Knowledge and External Information Search. Mitchell & Dacin (1996) also support this view by explaining that individuals with higher prior knowledge have better understanding of problems that might be related to a purchase or consuming a product therefore more likely to gather information that can lead to solutions or more questions.

2.2.3. Loyalty before rebranding:

Numerous studies have shown that emotional bonds and commitment to the brands is formed between consumers and the selected brands which affect purchase behaviors (Beatty et al., 1988). This psychological attachment can play a critical role for customers to process information and make decisions related to the selected brands. With the influences of the attachment, customers with different brand loyalty can respond differently to the information about the selected brands.

2.2.4. Appropriateness:

There have been several studies that showed the importance of having an appropriate name and logo to a brand. Appropriateness seems to be generally equated with more meaningfulness and this makes stimuli better evaluated. Janiszewski & Meyvis (2001) stated that meaningful stimuli (logos) are expected to improve conceptual fluency which occurs when exposure to a stimulus creates a meaning based representation of a stimulus that facilitates encoding and processing of the stimulus when viewed at a larger time (p, 20) Keller, Hecker and Houston (2001) found that a brand name that indicates or suggest a product benefit leads to a higher recall.

2.2.5. Influence of information sources:

This is a new dimension added by the research. The expectations consumers have regarding a particular product depend upon information gathered from a variety of sources. Past experience, promotional communications of sellers, and personal acquaintances are the most common sources of product information. Many consumers depend largely on one basic information source -the company's promotion mix - in forming their expectations regarding new or untried products. Another important source of information that is significantly affecting the way consumers gather information about brands and process it for making product evaluations is internet it is being used at both extremes impersonal source of general information about brands and highly personalized medium to provide information specific to individual requirements and needs.

2.3. Brands selected for the study:

The above study is conducted on five fast moving consumer goods These include Dove, Dabur, Horlicks, Coca-Cola and Amul. These brands were selected for the study as they were

the most popular brands with wide awareness and acceptance in the three customer locations selected for the study. Another reason for including these brands for the study is that they have gone through makeover of diverse nature from change in the logo to change in entire positioning strategy.

2. 4. Data Collection:

Study is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data is sourced from a diverse set of sources including research journals, papers, news on branding and consumer behavior and various online sources including, blogs, company websites, e-journals etc. 160 survey forms were distributed in Shimla, 240 in Chandigarh and 300 forms were given to Delhi respondents

Primary data is collected from 700 respondents using a self administered questionnaire designed keeping in mind the research objectives. Data was collected in the time period ranging from July 2014 to December, 2014 from Shimla, Chandigarh and Delhi.

2. 5. Research Instrument:

Non disguised questionnaire that was used to collect primary data for the research. Questionnaire was divided into two parts. First part focused on demographic details of the respondents including variables like location, age, gender, qualification, marital status and income. Second part of the questionnaire was structured with the aim to identify the factors that explain how rebranding influence consumer information processing. Respondents were asked to rate the twelve items on five point Likert scale(1 to 5;1-Strongly disagree;5 Strongly Agree).

2. 6. Sampling:

Non probability sampling has been used. Considering the diverse nature of the target group and limitations of time, convenience sampling has been used. Consumers in the age group of 18 – 50years who are aware of if not used these brands and use internet to gather brand/product related information for purchase decision have been included in the sample. Respondents are from three locations i. e. Shimla, Chandigarh and Delhi. A sample of 700 respondents has been selected for the study.

2. 7. Data Analysis:

Data was first entered into excel file and then exported into SPSS21. 0 version. Missing data, outliers and logical checks were performed at first level. Using SPSS, frequencies were evaluated in all the variables of the questionnaire. Besides descriptive statistics, specific techniques used for analysis are factor analysis, Anova, test of reliability etc

3. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Analysis is based on the responses collected from 700 respondents across three different cities in India. Out of these 700 responses 80 were rejected because of incomplete information. Therefore 620 responses have been incorporated for the study.

First part of the analysis is creating detailed socio-demographic profile of the respondents supporting the sample frame selected for the study.

Second part is related to the main research objective i. e. studying the impact of rebranding strategies on customer information processing. First different factors relating rebranding to customer information processing were identified, then importance of these different factors across five selected brands is studied with comparison of mean scores. Further the difference in importance of identified factors is studied first across three purchase locations using one way Anova.

3. 1Demographic analysis:

Majority of respondents (41. 1%) participated from Delhi followed by 33. 2 % from Chandigarh, 25. 6% from Shimla. Of these, 53. 4 percent of the respondents were female and 46. 6 were male. Majority of the respondents (46. 1%) were participated in the age group between 18 and 26 years which is followed by, 27. 1 percent were in the age group 27-35 years, 18. 4 percent were in the age group 36-43 years and finally 8. 4 percent were in the age group 44-50 years. Majority of the respondents (49. 7%) were Single which is followed by, 32. 1 percent married and they have children and finally, 18. 2 percent were married. Majority of the respondents' educational qualification were post graduation followed by, 37. 7 percent of the respondents were graduates, 9. 8 percent of the respondents' education qualification were 10+2 and only 4 percent of the respondents were PhD holders. Among the respondents (40%) were working in private sectors followed by, around 17 percent were working in government sectors, 14. 2 percent of the respondents were students and 11. 1 percent were self employed. Majority of the respondents' (54. 5%) income group was between Rs 6- 9 lacs per annum followed by 27. 1 percent of the respondents' whose income group was 2-6 lacs, 12. 7 percent of the respondents' income group was up to 2 lacs and finally around 3 percent of the respondents' income group were more than 13 lacs.

3. 2. Rebranding and information processing

A number of questions were asked to investigate and study the relationship between rebranding and information processing. Respondents were asked to rate twelve statements on five point Likert scale. First part of analysis involved extracting information processing factors for revitalized brands followed by exploring the differences in the importance of these factors across three purchase locations and five brands.

3. 2. 1Information processing factors

Factor analysis technique using SPSS 22. 0 was applied for determining information processing factors. Before applying factor analysis, it has to be seen that whether factor analysis can be applied to the data or not. Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy tests confirmed the suitability of data for factor analysis. (APPENDIX-Table 1) Principle component analysis with Varimax rotation has been used for extraction of factors. Four to five factors were extracted for each brand to study the impact of rebranding strategies on customer information processing. Consumer innovativeness, Consumer knowledge,

appropriateness, consumer attitude, loyalty before rebranding, perceived quality, and influence of information sources. Rotated component matrix contains the factor loadings for each variable, they are the correlation of each variable and the factor. Loadings indicate the degree of correspondence between the variable and the factor, with higher loadings making the variable representative of the factor. (Hair et. al. 2007). On closely scrutinizing the items which fall under respective factors for different brands, different names have been assigned to them considering their correlation and proximity to that variable. Cronbach alpha of standardized items has been found to be acceptable for extracted factors for all five brands (Appendix;Table 1)

Table 1: Essential criteria for factor analysis for ten brands(*Sig. at. 005)

S. No	Bartlett's test				Variance (Cumulative %)	Cronbach's Alpha (Based on Standardized Items) N=12
	Brands	KMO	Chi squared	Sig		
1	Dove	0.737	827.07	.000*	63%	0.654
2	Dabur	0.774	1143.70	.000*	65%	0.723
3	Horlicks	0.732	855.23	.000*	66%	0.68
4	Coca-Cola	0.772	1361.3	.000*	68%	0.745
5	Amul	0.706	624.874	.000*	69%	0.796

3. 2. 2. Difference in importance of factors for brands

Mean score of each factor was calculated to explore the differences in importance of information processing factors for all brands(Table 2). Following findings are based on the comparison of mean score of extracted factors for the selected five brands:

Table2: Mean score of information processing Factors

	Brand	Factors	Mean score	Std. Dev
1	Dove	Customer Innovativeness	3.84	.77092
		Customer Knowledge	4.08	.82487
		Loyalty before rebranding	4.04	.94781
		Appropriateness	4.20	.64502
		Influence of external sources	3.88	.70373
2	Dabur	Customer Innovativeness	4.07	.73701
		Customer Knowledge	4.04	.78497
		Loyalty before rebranding	2.11	0.8613
		Appropriateness	4.01	.67933
		Influence of external sources	3.70	.69086
3	Horlicks	Customer Knowledge	4.06	.67603
		Loyalty before rebranding	2.14	0.81
		Appropriateness	4.02	.84142
		Influence of external sources	3.62	.83851
4	Coca-Cola	Customer Knowledge	4.12	.91430
		Loyalty before rebranding	3.98	1.07678
		Appropriateness	3.69	1.02571
		Influence of external sources	3.04	.90184
5	Amul	Customer Knowledge	3.9649	.87593
		Loyalty before rebranding	4.1379	.93570
		Appropriateness	4.1833	.84070
		Influence of external sources	3.8339	.69784

1. DOVE

Five factors were extracted for Dove to find the relationship between rebranding strategies and information processing. These factors were: Consumer innovativeness, consumer knowledge, loyalty before rebranding (LBR), appropriateness and influence. Mean score for consumer innovativeness was 4.0 indicating that respondents agreed on the importance of this factor for information processing. Mean score for consumer knowledge was 4.12 showing that it is an important factor for information processing. Mean score for LBR was 4.2 indicating that change in the positioning strategy of this brand affects the loyalty and therefore the way they perceive new or improvised brand. Appropriateness of rebranding strategy of Dove came out as an important factor (4.07) influencing purchase decision making, indicating that the features related to the product utility are perceived important by the respondents for purchase decision making. Consumer influence (3.8) has no importance as a factor for information processing.

2. DABUR

Highest mean score was for consumer innovativeness was rated as 4.07, showing that the curiosity to know new brands can be a reason to try the new brand. Mean score for consumer knowledge was 4.04 indicating the importance of brand reputation, familiarity as an important factor for information processing. For appropriateness it was (4.01). Influence of extrinsic information sources have no importance for information processing in case of this brand.

3. HORLICKS

Out of the four factors extracted for Horlicks, consumer knowledge mean score was 4.06 followed by the mean score of appropriateness (4.02). But mean score of loyalty before rebranding was 2.14 showing that it was not an important factor showing that loyalty of consumers is not affected by the change in the positioning strategy of this brand. There was no significant response to external influence as a factor as a determinant for information processing.

4. COCA-COLA

Like Horlicks four factors were extracted for Coca-Cola. Respondents displayed agreeableness on three factors namely consumer knowledge, loyalty before rebranding and appropriateness. Response was neutral for importance of influence as a determining factor.

5. AMUL

Four factors were extracted for Amul through factor analysis. Mean score for consumer knowledge was 3.96 indicating that the factor is less relevant for information processing. Respondents agreed that positioning strategy affected their perceived loyalty for the new brand. Similarly appropriateness was rated at 4.18 reflecting on the importance of product quality as an important deciding factor for purchase decision making. Mean score for Amul was 3.8 indicating that external sources are not so influential in selecting this brand.

3. 2. 3 Differences in importance of factors across three purchase locations

Findings of the study are based on the responses that were collected from three different cities of North India i. e. Shimla, Chandigarh and Delhi. These three cities are different in terms of their culture, geography and living standards. In this age of enhanced connectivity enabled by internet that has penetrated in all domains of life, companies are promising availability of standardized products and offers through all the four variables of the marketing mix i. e. price, promotion, product and place, it was a subject of curiosity to investigate what differences are there in customer perception in terms of their response to marketing strategies? An attempt was made to answer this question by analyzing the responses. The means scores of the extracted factors for ten brands were compared using one way ANOVA(Appendix-Table 3). Following explanation is based on these results.

Table 3: ANOVA Results of information processing factors for FMCG brands (* Sig >. 05%)

Brand	Factors	Location	Mean score	F	P value
1 Dove	Customer Innovativeness	Shimla	3. 85	13. 708	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 75		
		Delhi	3. 86		
	Customer Knowledge	Shimla	3. 93	33. 503	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 89		
		Delhi	4. 43		
	Loyalty before Rebranding	Shimla	4. 25	3. 207	0. 041*
		Chandigarh	4. 07		
		Delhi	4. 28		
	Appropriateness	Shimla	3. 95	28. 919	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 88		
		Delhi	4. 29		
	Influence of external sources	Shimla	3. 77	4. 112	0. 017*
		Chandigarh	3. 98		
		Delhi	3. 9		
2 Dabur	Customer Knowledge	Shimla	3. 86	11. 881	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 03		
		Delhi	4. 23		
	Loyalty before Rebranding	Shimla	2. 04	0. 605	0. 583
		Chandigarh	2. 11		
		Delhi	2. 14		
	Appropriateness	Shimla	4. 06	3. 427	0. 033*
		Chandigarh	4. 08		
		Delhi	4. 00		
	Influence of external sources	Shimla	3. 6	20. 575	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 53		
		Delhi	3. 91		
	Customer Knowledge	Shimla	4. 13	2. 088	0. 125*
		Chandigarh	4. 09		
		Delhi	4		
	Loyalty before rebranding	Shimla	2. 09	12. 232	. 000*
		Chandigarh	2. 15		
		Delhi	2. 16		

3 Horlicks	Appropriateness	Shimla	3. 68	24. 955	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 18		
		Delhi	4. 22		
	Influence of external sources	Shimla	3. 45	18. 931	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 53		
		Delhi	3. 9		
4 Coca- Cola	Customer Knowledge	Shimla	3. 72	72. 895	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 69		
		Delhi	3. 95		
	Loyalty before Rebranding	Shimla	3. 5	95. 958	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 67		
		Delhi	3. 79		
	Appropriateness	Shimla	3. 69	65. 232	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 7		
		Delhi	3. 88		
	Influence of external sources	Shimla	3. 05	1. 572	0. 208
		Chandigarh	3		
		Delhi	3. 07		
5 Amul	Customer Knowledge	Shimla	3. 39	69. 429	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 38		
		Delhi	3. 99		
	Loyalty before rebranding	Shimla	3. 39	33. 501	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 38		
		Delhi	3. 97		
	Appropriateness	Shimla	3. 83	13. 604	. 000*
		Chandigarh	4. 54		
		Delhi	3. 99		
	Influence of external sources	Shimla	3. 68	10. 72	. 000*
		Chandigarh	3. 76		
		Delhi	3. 98		

1. DOVE:

The analysis revealed significant difference in the importance of all five factors i. e consumer innovativeness, consumer knowledge, loyalty before rebranding, appropriateness and influence of external factors across three purchase locations. This might be due to the difference in perception of consumers in these different locations. Innovativeness is considered important for respondents of Delhi, where as it is not so important for the respondents of Shimla mainly because these new brands are subject to availability and the difference can also be attributed to the difference in timings of availability of products in locations like Shimla the new brands reach through advertisements but are not available on the shelf in retail stores.

2. DABUR:

Significant difference is observed in the difference in importance of three important information processing factors i. e. consumer innovativeness, consumer knowledge and appropriateness.

3. HORLICKS:

Significant difference is observed in the importance of two factors- loyalty before rebranding and appropriateness in all three locations. There is no significant difference for consumer knowledge for this brand in all three purchase locations, mainly because promotion s of the brand has standardized interpretations in all three purchase locations.

4. COCA-COLA:

Consumers across three locations vary in terms of importance of one factor i. e loyalty before rebranding. The difference is attributed to the loyalty towards original classic coke, which many consumers prefer over new version of diet coke

5. AMUL:

Significant difference is observed in the importance of all four factors of information processing. This difference can be attributed to the large magnitude of change in positioning strategies of Amul. Increasing the gap between the original brand and the rebranded products. For all factors mean score for respondents in Shimla is less mainly because of less exposure to these new strategies.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The paper made an attempt to find the attributes that guide customer response to rebranding strategies in case of FMCG brands. Consumer innovativeness, consumer knowledge, loyalty before rebranding and influence of external information sources are the main factors that determine how consumers receive and comprehend the information about revitalized FMCG brands. Customers differ in their perception of importance about these factors for different brands. Rating of these factors differ across three purchase locations referring to the differences that exist in customer response to rebranding strategies for selected FMCG brands in the three cities. Following points detail the main conclusions pertaining to all identified factors.

- Consumer knowledge is the most important factors for DOVE, HORLICKS, COCA-COLA but is not considered important for AMUL. Consumers believe that clear and easily available information about these brands (DOVE, HORLICKS, COCA-COLA) and their repositioning strategies increase the chances of their selection over other brands.
- Consumer innovativeness was the main reason for selection of Dabur. Respondents willingness to know about the 'New' Dabur in terms of its positioning and products was the main driver for positive evaluation.
- Loyalty before rebranding, was considered important for three brands namely Dove, Coca-Cola and Amul i. e. Respondents prefer parent brands over the made up version. This can be attributed to strong brand equity of the parent brand. But for other two brands i. e Horlicks and Coca-Cola it was not cited as an important consideration for purchase and related decision making.
- Appropriateness was considered important for all brand except Coca-Cola mainly because of loyalists association with parent brands and the related products. But for rest of the brands features and quality of the product was rated as the most important criterion for selection.
- Respondents representing three purchase locations differ in importance they attach to these factors in almost all cases. The issue of availability of products is an important consideration for respondents of Shimla making appropriateness an important factor,

where as for respondents of Delhi do not face this problem. Delhi respondents are most innovative probably because they get maximum exposure in terms of the launches of new strategies of brands.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

The paper offers insights for formulating branding strategies that are centered on customer requirements and needs. Differences in customer response to branding strategies are observed for different brands in FMCG sector. Difference in customer opinion is also attributable to geographic differentiation. Customers residing in different purchase location perceive the same branding strategies differently for brands in the same category. The paper highlights these variations as suggestions to customize branding for positive outcomes and increased brand acceptance.

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