

BRAND LOYALTY BEHAVIOUR OF COLOUR TELEVISION OWNERS: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

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Maintenance and growth of the market share of brand loyal consumers is the goal of every marketing manager. This brief paper presents the brand loyalty behaviour of 470 colour television owners in the State of Orissa, in terms of repeat purchase and recommendation to others. While as much as 93% consumers expressed satisfaction with their purchase, only 40% were willing to buy the same brand again. In contrast, 71% of them were willing to recommend the brand to others. Apparently, it is due to 'cognitive dissonance reduction behaviour' rather than an indicator of 'brand loyalty' of the sample. The findings have far reaching implications for development of suitable strategy for marketing of televisions and other consumer durables.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer decisions do not end with the act of purchase but continues as the consumer uses the product and evaluates his or her purchase decision. There are three possible outcomes of these evaluations; (i) actual performances matches expectations leading to a neutral feeling; (ii) performance exceeds expectations, causing what is known as positive disconfirmation (which leads to satisfaction); and (iii) performance is below expectations, causing negative disconfirmation and dissatisfaction. For each of these three outcomes, consumers' expectations and satisfaction are closely linked that is, consumers tend to judge their experience against their expectations when performing a post-purchase evaluation. The two go hand in hand.

In the post purchase situation, consumers always engage themselves in an evaluation of purchase decision. Satisfaction is an important element in such an evaluation

process. Satisfaction refers to the buyer's state of being adequately rewarded in a buying situation for the sacrifice he has made. Adequacy of satisfaction is a result of matching actual post purchase and consumption experience with the expected reward from the brand/product in terms of its anticipated potential to satisfy the consumer's motives.

Satisfaction is a post-consumption evaluation that the chosen alternative is consistent with the prior beliefs and expectations with respect to that alternative. Dissatisfaction, of course, is the outcome when this confirmation does not take place.

The result of satisfaction to the consumer from the purchase of a product or service is that more favourable post-purchase attitudes, higher purchase intentions, and brand loyalty are likely to be exhibited. That is, the same behaviour is likely to be exhibited in a similar purchasing situation. Thus, as long as positive reinforcement

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takes place, the consumer will tend to continue to purchase the same brand and recommend the same brand to others as a natural corollary. In other words, if the experience with a product or service at the post-consumption level is found rewarding, the consumer response is most likely to result in a testimonial to others as well as a possible repurchase, in case the need for the same arises. Highly satisfied customers, even in case of durables, thus, opt for the same brand in repeat purchase situations and become advocate of the brand in their conversation with peers, friends, relatives, neighbours, etc. Consumer satisfaction with regards to the performance of a product or brand provides a good base for repeat purchase and sets the stage for favourable word-of-mouth to potential buyers, as a part of positive disconfirmation. Such a behaviour at the post-purchase level is often termed as brand allegiance.

THE STUDY

Against such a backdrop, the present paper intends to examine the brand loyalty behaviour of colour television owners in the State of Orissa. The present study forms a part of an empirical research on consumer behaviour based on the data collected through the administration of a pre-tested

questionnaire. The sample includes 470 respondents whose brand allegiance behaviour is analysed through consumer satisfaction vis-a-vis hypothetical 'repeat purchases' and recommendation to others' attitudes. The main objective is to assess how for the post purchase sequential pattern of favourable post purchase experience, high purchase intentions, brand loyalty, repeat purchases and recommendation to potential buyers, in that order, hold good in the Indian marketing environment.

MEASUREMENT OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION

At the post-purchase stage, consumers usually evaluate the product performance against the expectations and experience satisfaction or otherwise. The criteria consumers use to evaluate the purchase usually are expressed in terms of important product attributes. In view of the same, the sample have been asked to express their experience with regard to the important attributes of their television sets in qualitative terms.

As can be evinced from the above Table, a majority of the respondents are satisfied with their television sets at the post purchase

Table 1 : Post Purchase Experience

Attributes	Excellent	Satisfactory	Pobr
Picture Quality	148	308	14
Length of Warranty	144	316	10
Size of Screen	122	286	62
Audio System	134	308	28
Colour	121	302	47
After-Sales Service	43	380	47

level. Their overall satisfaction hovers around the different attributes of television such as picture quality, length of warranty, size of the screen, audio system, colour, and after sales-service. A closer examination of these attributes reveal that the respondents satisfaction emanates mostly out of length of warranty and picture quality followed by audio system, colour, size of the screen, after sales-service, in that order. Only a tiny minority of the sample have expressed their dissatisfaction about the various attributes of their television sets, leading to negative disconfirmation as a part of post purchase behaviour. More than 25 per cent of the respondents experienced excellent level satisfaction whereas more than 67 per cent expressed overall satisfaction about different attributes of their television sets. When the expressions of 'excellent' and 'satisfactory' are taken together, on an average, they comprise as high as 93 per cent, indicating that indeed the product performances have lived up to their expectations. Since the post purchase behaviour of the sample is overwhelmingly positive indicating a high level of brand loyalty, they are most likely to exhibit a higher probability of purchasing the product again and advocating the product to others.

REPEAT PURCHASE AS AN INDICATOR OF BRAND LOYALTY

With a view to examine the level of brand loyalty prevalent with the sample, they were asked whether in a case of a purchase option for another television set in-near future, would they opt for the repeat purchase of the existing brand or like to switch over to another brand. Surprisingly, only about 40 per cent of the respondents opined that they would like to opt for the same brand in case another television purchase situation arises, thereby evincing their loyalty towards their existing colour

television brand. Interestingly, the majority (More than sixty per cent) expressed in favour of switching over to another

Table 2: Repeat Purchase Behaviour

Behaviour	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Brand Repetition	186	38.57
Brand Switching	284	60.43

brand instead of repeating the existing one. This is quite an interesting revelation when viewed in the light of post purchase experience of as high as 93 per cent of the sample expressing their overall satisfaction regarding the various attributes of television sets, they possess at present. Such a high degree of post-purchase satisfaction normally results in repeat purchases and recommendation to the potential consumer. However, contrary to such expectations, brand switching willingness is observed with a majority indicating the presence of 'not so positive reinforcement' at the post-purchase level. Besides, it also emanates all the features of 'spurious brand loyal behaviour' where sticking to a brand arises chiefly due to non-availability of alternatives. In other words, repetition of a brand purchase arises because it is the only one available or best available brand in the market. Further, consumers sometimes do not follow the established pattern of favourable post-purchase attitudes, higher purchase intentions, brand loyalty and repeat purchase, in that order. Rather, they buy a different brand simply for the sake of novelty or acquire a new brand with improvised features that constantly appear in the marketplace.

RECOMMENDATION TO OTHERS AS AN INDICATOR OF BRAND LOYALTY

As pointed out earlier, highly satisfied

consumers of a specific brand are most likely to recommend the same to the potential buyers as a natural corollary, which plays a decisive role in the shaping up the consumer buying pattern. In order to measure the level of brand loyalty expressed in terms of recommending their existing brands to others, the sample were asked to opine whether they would like to recommend their owned brand of television to others. As can be seen as high as more than 71 per cent of the sample expressed their willingness to recommend their existing brand of television to potential buyers. This clearly depicts the strong brand allegiance pattern of the sample. In other words, since the respondents are personally satisfied with the overall performance of their television sets and have developed a positive attitude about product attributes, they are automatically tempted to recommend the same to others, as a part of positive disconfirmation.

Table 3 : Recommendation to Others' Behaviour

	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	1334	71.06
No	136	28.94

However, such a precise conclusion in the matter may be fallacious. Most often, as a part of post purchase evaluation, the consumer try to reduce the uncertainty or doubt regarding the product/brand selection, referred as post-purchase cognitive dissonance. Out of the few strategies to reduce post purchase cognitive dissonance, attempt to persuade peers, friends, neighbours to buy the same brand (and thus confirm their own choice), is one. When the responses of the sample are examined against such a theoretical

assertations, it can be inferred that 'willingness to recommend their existing brand to others' is simply a part of 'cognitive dissonance reduction behaviour' of the sample. It therefore, cannot be considered precisely as an indicator of 'brand loyalty' of the sample.

STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

The brand loyalty behaviour analysis of colour television owners can be summed up as follows. Consumer satisfaction with regard to the important product attributes is overwhelmingly positive indicating greater coherence of 'expectation level' and 'experience level' of the sample in the post-purchase stage. Such a high level of satisfaction at the post-purchase stage however, is not able to inculcate strong brand loyalty with the sample as evinced through the 'repeat purchase' and 'recommendation to others' behaviour. In case of the former, brand switching willingness, in search of 'better quality and higher performance' is observed. In an era of fast changing technology, a durable product like television is subject to numerous developments and feature upgradations which considerably influence the potential buying behaviour. With the entry of global consumer electronic majors, there also has been tremendous increase in sales promotion deals by competing companies to outflank competition. In a highly competitive market, consumers who are loyal to a particular brand constitute prime prospect for others. All these developments alongwith few others have led to the hotting up of the market and many of the television brands are finding themselves caught in the welter of competition and furiously jockeying for a position in the market place. Under such circumstances, repeat purchase of the existing television brand is seldom a perfect replacement at par with contemporary tastes and needs. The high

level of 'recommendation to others' behaviour can hardly be taken as an indicator of brand loyalty. Rather, it constitutes a part of cognitive dissonance reduction behaviour of the sample.

Developing a highly consistent market share of brand-loyal consumers is the ultimate goal of every marketing strategy. Contrarily, the brand loyalty behaviour of television owners are hardly deep rooted and all pervasive. In view of the same, television marketers in India need to constantly upgrade their brands incorporating contemporary features and offering wider product range in order to sell well in the highly competitive market. High level of consumer satisfaction at the post purchase stage should not lead the television marketers to any degree complacency since it does not invoke strong brand loyalty with the consumers leading to repeat purchases. Aggressive sales promotion devices like special price deals, point of purchase display, exchange offer and mega ad-spents are the key marketing strategies in the intense competitive television market in India.

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