

Consumer perception as related to quality of the product

ANJU PANWAR

Accepted : July, 2009

Key words : Consumer perception, Product quality

Consumer perception is the the association between themselves and a desirable and appropriate image of them. Individuals act and react on the basis of their perceptions not on the basis of objective reality. For each individual, reality is a totally personal phenomena based on the person's need, values, quality and personal experience.

Quality of the product:

Quality can mean a high degree of excellence. The product quality is a set of features, performance, durability, reliability, style, design and determine its ability to satisfy needs. The quality of a product has been shown to be a strong predictor of brand choice.

Morton(1994) examined 600 brands to determine the relationship between brands and quality. The researcher found that quality was the driving force for sales that increases among the products. The researcher also found that the influence of value perception are quality and price driven. Too low of a price on a product could drive the perceived quality of a product down. Studies indicates that some consumers believe that a positive relationship exists between a product price and quality (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993). Zeithmal(1988) suggest that price is indicator of quality which depends on:

- The availability of the other cues to quality
- The price variation within a class of product
- The product quality variation with a category of the product.

Tellis and Gaeth (1990) suggest that consumers are more price aware than they are quality aware, and price may be used to infer level of quality. Previous literature indicates that consumers may use best value, price-seeking, and price aversion as choice strategies.

Tellis and Gaeth (1990) suggest, however, that consumers may use a combination of strategies to choose a brand. "Best value" strategy, refers to the practice of selecting a brand with the least overall cost in terms of price and expected quality. A "price-seeking" strategy

refers to the selection of the highest priced brand to maximize expected quality. A "price aversion" strategy is choosing the lowest priced brand to minimize immediate costs.

Perceived quality of the product:

Cues that are intrinsic concern physical characteristics of the product itself, such as size, colour, flavour aroma. One study discovered that colour of a powdered fruit drink product is a more important determinant than the label (Lawrence, 2000). Consumer reports found that consumers often cannot differentiate among various cola beverages and that they base their preferences on such extrinsic cues as packaging, pricing, advertising etc. (Michael, 1991). Consumers often judge the quality of a product or services on the basis of a variety of informational cues that they associate with the product (Ricardo, 2008).

Studies have examined demographic factors as predictors of product selection (Berkovec and Rust, 1985) and as a method of segmenting consumers (Alvarez, 1996, Gremillion, 1997 Gupta and Chintagunta, 1994; Kotler, 1997, Meyers-Levy and Sternal 1991, Zeithmal 1988). Factors such as age, education, income, gender, marital status and culture and ethnicity have been found to influence consumer behaviour (Hawkins *et al.*, 1991; Kotler 1997). These factors contribute to the evaluative criteria used and the level of importance of these criteria when selecting a product. In this case, culture is discussed as group integration and its association to the selection of products and product attributes are seen as evaluative criteria for the selection of a product.

Social variables:

Kotler (1997) suggests that consumers can be segmented by demographic factors such as age, gender, education, income, race or ethnicity, or culture. Age has been found to affect a consumer's interests, tastes, and purchasing ability (Hawkins *et al.*, 1991). Research indicates that shopping patterns of consumers tend to change as their age increases. Zeithmal (1988) found that as age increases, the number of shopping trips, amount of shopping time, and the number of supermarkets visited

Correspondence to:

ANJU PANWAR, D.A.V. Institute of Management,
FARIDABAD (HARYANA) INDIA