



Masstige Marketing and the Perceived Brand Equity of Mobile Phone Brands In India

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Introduction

Masstige is a marketing term meaning downward brand extension. The word is combination of the words mass and prestige and has been described as "prestige for the masses". (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Masstige marketing implies brand positioning in terms of creating mass prestige, aiming at brand love and attachment similar to downscale extension as discussed by Riley, Pina and Bravo (2013). The concept of masstige marketing is very important because of the common usage by industry practitioners, who often employ brand positioning and marketing strategies in an effort to increase market share and profits, particularly in the case of luxury and premium goods. Masstige marketing helps in the effort to build better brand for premium products, create mass prestige and brand equity in long run. Consumers no longer just respond to status, or as it has often referred to prestige— nowadays, consumer gain relevancy and cultural edge through masstige. Masstige is not only defined as any product which provides its owner with a level of prestige but also mass-marketed value of product. However, this topic has been hardly researched (Shukla & Purani, 2012; Paul, 2015), and coined in the recent years. This study is about the mobile phones which have brought in a revolution in a huge way in every person's life. As people can see that middle market customers are willing to pay the premium price for their ego satisfaction for esteemed products, customers are also aware about the quality of products and service and they are always ready to trade up. Customers are more prosperous than before and are willing to treat themselves with expensive items. Even the masstige strategy has fine tuning with products in the market (Paul, 2015). The emergence of masstige brand has settled the customary separation among luxury and non-luxury brands. Masstige is the key term for market entrance for premium brands. Masstige brands focus on making symbolic advantages and glory. The mass prestige-based brand equity is made up of brand symbolism, which is made up, in part, by the brand's prestige in the eye of the consumer (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). The prestige of the brand increases the likelihood of purchase (Steenkamp et al., 2003; Baek et al., 2010). The leveraging of this prestige and brand equity can significantly reduce costs for the incumbent firm, which can now save on costs associated with marketing the new brand.

Objectives of the study

The major objectives of this research are to measure and compare the perceived brand equity of mobile phone brands in India.

Research methodology

The study was based on exploratory and descriptive research design, using primary data. Current and prospective mobile phone owners were taken as the population. The actual sample size was estimated at 1000 respondents, however around 21.9% (219) questionnaires were incomplete; the remaining 78.1% (781) questionnaires were complete and used for the study. The "Mass Mean Score Scale (MMSS)," developed by

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Paul, J. (2015), was used as a scale-based research instrument, which measure the impact of mass-prestige value on brand equity with “Masstige Mean Index (MMI)” of brands. On the basis on MMSS and MMI, the authors have created our new score scale called MSluse having three range. High range means high prestige value and strong brand equity and vice-a-versa.

Findings

The brand equity dimensions like brand knowledge & prestige, brand excitement & status, perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness taken for the study are significantly related to the MSluse that jointly affect MSluse and all dimensions have effect on each other too. All the dimensions are correlated to each other and change in one would make the variations in other too. This research explored the positive relationships between dimensions of brand equity and overall brand equity based on MSluse and found them to be positively related with the brand equity. Since the authors saw that brand equity is rooted in these six dimensions, brand marketers and managers should capitalize on the current strength of these dimensions and create their marketing strategies following these dimensions. In the mobile phone market, brand equity of gender of customers did not influence the variables/dimensions of brand equity whereas age of customers, family income of customers and the country of origin on mobile phone brand significantly influenced the variables/dimensions of brand equity. It was also observed that the American brands (Apple, Google) have more prestige value associated in comparison to Asian brands (Samsung, OnePlus, etc) based on their masstige value. On the basis of MSluse in the present analysis, it was found that Apple as a mobile phone brand has succeeded in the strong brand building in the Indian market with high range of MSluse over 6 and Apple has achieved top of mind brand equity.

Conclusion

Apple mobile phone brand is the most prestigious brand in terms of MSluse and the marketing strategies of Apple mobile phone brand have centred on high quality based on its masstige value. Customers are willing to pay the premium price for this brand.

Keywords: masstige, mass prestige, brand equity, mobile phone, brand perception.

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