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Measuring e-tailers' brand equity in India - a CBBE approach

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Abstract: The aim of this paper was to measure the brand equity of e-tailers in India using consumer based brand equity scale suggested by Aaker and Keller. Brand equity of e-tailers was measured from shoppers' perspectives on four dimensions viz., brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. A total of 348 filled questionnaires were obtained from the respondents by applying convenient sampling method. Data have been analyzed by employing descriptive statistics, and weighted average method to calculate the brand equity scores of e-tailers. Results of the study reveal that Amazon.in occupied first position with the highest brand equity score followed by Flipkart, Snapdeal, and Shopclues. It could be due to massively discounted sales offered by Amazon.in frequently. The findings of this study will be helpful to the e-tailers to get aware of their brand equity in the marketplace and will act accordingly to tap the target market.

Keywords: Brand equity; e-tailers, brand awareness; brand associations; perceived quality; brand loyalty; amazon.in; Flipkart.com.

I. INTRODUCTION

E-Tailing is the process of selling retail goods using the internet. With the growing popularity of the internet, more and more business owners have started using the domain for promoting their products and/or services. Nowadays, a huge population of retailers in India has started opting for the internet for selling their goods and services. There are two types of e-tailers. The first type is a pure play e-tailer while the second type is the brick and mortar e-tailer. The former type is the one in which the retailer uses the internet as the primary means of retailing while the latter one is the retailer who apart from using the internet also has the traditional physical storefront available for the customers. E-tailers have become quite popular in India and all over the world. Retailers all over India have become quite comfortable with the idea of retailing using the internet. The convenience attached with e-tailing has made the concept even more popular in different countries of the world. The customers can easily surf through a wide array of e-tailers who are there offering high-end products and services at extremely reasonable prices. Using the internet for retailing has become one of the most convenient means for the retailers who found it tough to spot clients who are willing to pay the amount desired by the respective retailer. With the right e-tailing approach, retailers across the globe can benefit to the fullest and find high paying clients from different parts of the world.

E-tailing has emerged as the sunrise industry in India. It has helped in bringing a consistent hike in the economy of the country. E-Tailing or E-Retailing market has become a booming market in India, and a huge population of business professionals has started entering into the e-tailing domain with an enormous amount of excitement. E-tailing is not only restricted to the e-commerce websites but even auction sites that sell groceries, apparel, books, electronic items, CD's etc. Some of the most popular E-Tailers in India include Flipkart.com, Snapdeal.com, Amazon.in, Shopclues.com, indiamart.com and so on. Since many years from now, these websites have been able to retain their position due to their innovative business strategies and supply chain model. E-tailers are investing heavily on a different portfolio of business channels to reach target customers. However, e-shoppers are preferring few e-tailers who fulfill their buying requirements. In this context, it is indeed for e-tailers to know their brand equity in the market space. Thus, this study was aimed to measure brand equity of e-tailers in India.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are various studies available for measuring brand equity in the existing literature. However, most of them used different scales and parameters to measure brand equity. However, customer-based brand equity (CBBE) approach gained a much attention of most of the brand equity researchers. This study also adopts it and measured brand equity of e-tailers in India. The CBBE approach comprises four major dimension, which includes; e-tailer awareness, e-tailer associations, perceived e-tailer quality and e-tailer loyalty.

A. E-tailer Awareness

Among the four brand equity dimensions, e-tailer awareness occupies the first and foremost place in measuring brand equity. The prominent studies (Aaker,1991; Keller,1993) in brand equity research pointed out that brand awareness plays a pivotal role in consumers' intention to purchase since they prefer to buy the products from well-known brand.. The other studies (Keller, 1993; Macdonald, E. K., & Sharp, B. M., 2000) agreed that brand equity is nothing without a brand awareness. When the brand holds a good amount of brand awareness will certainly have a greater amount of market share and a superior brand image (Grewal, et al., 1998) and it will be the same instance with retailer brand. Hence, it was assumed that an e-tailer with a higher brand awareness will create a greater brand equity.

B. E-tailer Associations

E-tailer associations are another important component of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, v 1993; R. Bhukya, 2015) and a core part of Consumer Based Brand Equity (Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel, 2011). Aaker (1991) recommended that brand associations create positive attitudes and feelings among consumers and could provide them value by providing the reasons for why consumers should buy the product or service of the particular brand. Brand associations are a critical element in brand equity formation and management (Rio et al., 2001), and high brand equity implies that consumers have strong positive associations with the brand (Atilgan et al., 2005). According to Tong, & Hawley, (2009), customer-based brand equity takes place only when consumers are well-aware of a brand and carrying the positive, unique brand associations in their memories. Thus, it was assumed that an e-tailer with strong brand associations will get the higher brand equity.

C. Perceived e-tailer quality

Perceived retailer quality is considered as an another important dimension of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; R. Bhukya, 2015) and it was a central aspect of customer based brand equity frameworks (Farquhar, 1989; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996; Dyson et al., 1996; Netemeyer et al., 2004). Zeithaml, (1988, p. 3) stated that the perceived quality is in fact, not the actual quality of the product; it is the subjective evaluation by consumers for the product. Perceived means that the customers decide upon the level of quality, not the company (Ogenyi Omar, 2009). According to the Burmann et al., (2009), for the establishment of a powerful brand, firms should measure the buyer's positive or negative perception of a brand. Knowing how to perceive quality by consumers can provide significant advantages for businesses. Thus, it was assumed that an e-tailer with a strong perceived quality will get the higher brand equity.

D. E-tailer loyalty

Among the four elements of brand equity, brand loyalty is considered as the most critical and significant dimension (Aaker, 1991; R. Bhukya, 2015), and it directs consumers' intention to purchase the products repeatedly (David, A. Aaker., 1991; Jung, J., & Sung, E., 2008). Brand loyalty is further consist of two sub-dimensions: one is an affective loyalty, and the other one is an action loyalty. Affective loyalty gets formed out of an accumulative satisfaction gained from previous usage experiences. However, it just represents that the future purchase intention. Aaker (1991) emphasizes that brand loyalty complements substantial value to a brand/firm and thus it helps in attracting and retaining the repeated and as well new buyers in longer duration. Thus, it was assumed an e-tailer with a strong brand loyalty will get a higher brand equity.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data source and selection of variables

Primary data have been collected from shoppers who visited e-tailing websites and purchased products online. A total of 4 major e-tailers were considered for the study which includes; Flipkart.com, Snapdeal.com, Amazon.in and Shopclues.com.

B. Universe and Sample Selection

Shoppers who visit e-tailing websites and buy products online are the universe for this study and each shopper who shops at e-tailing sites considered as the sample for this study. Shoppers were approached by purposive sampling method, and each of them was asked to fill the questionnaires comprising questions related to four factors. Responses were recorded on 5 point scale. A total of 348 valid questionnaires were obtained from e-shoppers and considered for data analysis.

C. Data analysis tools and techniques

Data have been analyzed by using SPSS 21 version. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Weightage average method was used to measure brand equity score by assigning weight to the responses ranging from -2 to +2. The factor scores were calculated by applying following formula.

$$\text{Factor Score} = \sum \left(\frac{\text{Total responses no of items}}{\text{Sample Size}} \right)$$

$$\text{Overall Brand Equity score} = \sum \left(\frac{\text{Total factor scores}}{\text{No.of Factors}} \right)$$

IV. RESULTS

A. Demographical Characteristics of Responde

Among the total of 348 respondents, 57 percent were male, 69 percent were between 36-45 years of age group, 71 percent were graduates, 76 percent were in monthly income group of above ₹ 10000 and 71 percent shop more than twice a month. Thus, this study has an excellent composition of the sample which represents the target market for e-tailers. Detailed demographical characteristics of respondents were shown in Table I.

Table I: Demographical Characteristics of Respondents

Percent (%)	57	43	15	48	21	16	14	15	53	18	24	52	24	29	48	23
Frequency (n)	198	150	53	168	73	54	47	52	186	63	82	182	84	102	165	81
Category	Male	Female	Below 25 years	26yr - 35yrs	36 yr -45yr	Above 46 years	High School	Intermediate	Graduation	Post-Graduation	Below ₹ 10000	₹ 10001 to ₹ 30000	₹ 30001 and above	At least once	2- 4 times	5 times and above
Characteristic	Gender		Age Group			Education				Income Group			Shopping Frequency			

B. Flipkart.com

The brand equity score of Flipkart was measured on four dimensions. It was found that a score of 0.647 points on a maximum of 2 points for brand awareness, a score of 0.667 for brand associations, a score of 0.437 for perceived quality and a score of 0.336 for brand loyalty (see Table II). Then the overall brand equity score of Flipkart was calculated by using following formula and was found a score of 0.521 on a maximum of 2.0 points.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Brand Equity Score}_{(\text{Flipkart})} &= \Sigma \left(\frac{\text{BAw score} + \text{BAss score} + \text{PQ score} + \text{BL score}}{4} \right) \\ &= \frac{0.647 + 0.667 + 0.437 + 0.336}{4} \\ &= 0.521 \end{aligned}$$

Though it was not a bad score, still Flipkart needs to be improved brand equity by assuring quality products and good post-sales services.

C. Sanpdeal.com

A score of 0.561 was found for brand awareness of Snapdeal on a maximum of 2 points and found a score of 0.597 was for brand associations, a score of 0.211 was for perceived quality and a score of 0.077 was for brand loyalty (see Table III). Then the overall brand equity score of Sanpdeal was calculated by using following formula and was found a score of 0.361 on a maximum of 2.0 points.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Brand Equity Score}_{(\text{Snapdeal})} &= \Sigma \left(\frac{\text{BAw score} + \text{BAss score} + \text{PQ score} + \text{BL score}}{4} \right) \\ &= \frac{0.561 + 0.597 + 0.211 + 0.077}{4} \\ &= 0.361 \end{aligned}$$

It indicates that Snapdeal should put a great effort on these brand equity elements specifically on quality assurance and brand loyalty further to increase brand equity in e-tailing market space.

D. Amazon.in

The brand awareness score of Amazon.in was found 0.924 points on a maximum of 2 points, a score of 0.604 was for brand associations, a score of 0.446 was for perceived quality and a score of 0.306 was for brand loyalty (see Table IV). Then the overall brand equity score of Amazon.in was calculated by using following formula and was found a score of 0.570 on a maximum of 2.0 points.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Brand Equity Score}_{(\text{Amzon.in})} &= \Sigma \left(\frac{\text{BAw score} + \text{BAss score} + \text{PQ score} + \text{BL score}}{4} \right) \\ &= \frac{0.924 + 0.604 + 0.446 + 0.306}{4} \\ &= 0.570 \end{aligned}$$

It indicates that the majority of e-shoppers were aware of Amazon.in and were associated with it. However, it scores low for brand loyalty and quality assurance. Hence, it should focus on these two elements to improve brand equity score to a further extent.

E. Shopclues.com

A score of 0.442 points was found for brand awareness of Shopclues. Similarly, it was found a score of 0.431 was for brand associations, a score of 0.161 was for perceived quality and a score of 0.051 was for brand loyalty (see Table V). Then the overall brand equity score of Shopclues was calculated by using following formula and was found a score of 0.271 on a maximum of 2.0 points.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Overall Brand Equity Score}_{(\text{Shopclues})} &= \left(\frac{\text{Baw score} + \text{Bass score} + \text{PQ score} + \text{BL score}}{4} \right) \\ &= \frac{0.442 + 0.431 + 0.161 + 0.051}{4} \\ &= 0.27 \end{aligned}$$

It indicates that Shopclues scored low regarding overall brand equity score due to low scores on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Hence, it should put more efforts on these four elements to increase brand equity.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

According to the brand equity scores of respective e-tailing brands obtained from the responses given by e-shoppers, Amazon.in was placed in a first place with a score of 0.570 brand equity. Flipkart, Snapdeal, and Shopclues occupied second, third and fourth positions with the scores of 0.521, 0.361 and 0.272 respectively. It shows that a majority of the e-shoppers are interested towards Amazon.in and Flipkart in India for e-shopping. Massive discounts and frequent offers could be the reasons for occupying top positions in e-tailing business. Snapdeal and Shopclues are trying to grab the market by following Amazon.in and Flipkart in the form discounts and offers. Since a fierce competition is prevailing in e-tailing business, e-tailers should focus on post-sales services because e-shoppers are preferring the e-tailer which provides post-sales services like accepting defects products returns and providing e-shoppers with new ones. It could win e-shoppers and make them loyal. Amazon.in and Flipkart were able to succeed in doing so to some extent. Providing discount coupons, gift vouchers at various shoppers' touch points e-retailer could make aware of and associate with their brands. By assuring e-shoppers with the quality products, offering post-sales services and the well delivery mechanism will satisfy e-shoppers and in turn, it could lead to brand loyalty and ultimately brand equity. Thus, e-tailers by focusing on improvement in these four elements of brand equity could increase their brand equity in e-tailing market space.

Table II: Brand Equity Score of Flipkart

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Awareness					
1. I am aware of Brand Flipkart .	26	68	54	108	92
2. Some characteristics of Flipkart come to my mind quickly.	13	25	35	172	103
3. I can recognize Flipkart quickly among other competing brands.	27	28	65	138	90
4. I am familiar with Flipkart brand.	40	54	48	112	94
BA Score	106 (-2) = 212	175 (-1) = 175	202 (0) = 0	530 (1) = 530	379 (2) = 758
	0.647				
Brand Associations					
5. Flipkart has a unique brand image, compared to competing brands	30	34	37	146	101
6. I like and trust the products, which are sold on Flipkart .	36	44	20	144	104
7. I like the brand image of Flipkart .	33	48	41	131	95
BAS Score	99 (-2) = -198	126 (-) = -126	98 (0) = 0	421 (1) = 421	300 (2) = 600
	0.667				

Perceived Quality						
8.	Products from Flipkart would be of excellent quality	27	65	43	111	102
9.	Products from Flipkart offer excellent features.	35	51	72	102	88
10.	I trust the quality of products from Flipkart	48	66	44	114	76
	PQ Score	110 (-2) = -220	182 (-1) = -182	159 (0) = 0	327 (1) = 327	266 (2) = 532
		0.437				
Brand Loyalty						
11.	I consider myself to be loyal to Flipkart	49	67	46	102	84
12.	I am still willing to buy Flipkart even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors.	44	54	66	88	96
13.	I will keep on buying Flipkart as long as it provides me satisfied products.	35	58	67	103	85
14.	When buying groceries, Flipkart would be my first choice.	48	69	60	96	75
	BL Score	176 (-2) = -352	248 (-1) = -248	239 (0) = 0	389 (1) = 389	340 (2) = 680
		0.336				
Overall Brand Equity Score		0.521				

Table III: Brand Equity Score of Snapdeal

Statements		1	2	3	4	5
Brand Awareness						
1.	I am aware of Brand Snapdeal .	28	73	61	102	84
2.	Some characteristics of Snapdeal come to my mind quickly.	18	20	48	167	95
3.	I can recognize Snapdeal quickly among other competing brands.	31	33	63	140	81
4.	I am familiar with Snapdeal brand.	43	61	52	104	88
		120 (-2) = -240	187 (-1) = -187	224 (0) = 0	513 (1) = 513	348 (2) = 696
BA Score		0.561				
Brand Associations						
5.	Snapdeal has a unique brand image, compared to competing brands	34	30	32	179	73
6.	I like and trust the products, which are sold on Snapdeal .	48	36	23	142	99
7.	I like the brand image of Snapdeal .	33	51	42	138	84
	BAS Score	115 (-2) = 230	117 (-1) = -117	97 (0) = 0	459 (1) = 459	256 (2) = 512
		0.597				
Perceived Quality						
8.	Products from Snapdeal would be of excellent quality	40	52	52	107	97
9.	Products from Snapdeal offer excellent features.	58	56	72	98	64
10.	I trust the quality of products from Snapdeal .	69	66	63	98	52
	PQ Score	167 (-2) = -334	174 (-1) = -174	187 (0) = 0	303 (1) = 303	213 (2) = 426
		0.211				
Brand Loyalty						
11.	I consider myself to be loyal to Snapdeal .	68	62	68	96	54
12.	I am still willing to buy Snapdeal even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors.	57	84	75	64	68
13.	I will keep on buying Snapdeal as long as it provides me satisfied products.	49	72	82	81	64
14.	When buying groceries, Snapdeal would be my first choice.	54	72	63	77	82
	BL Score	228 (-2) = -456	290 (-1) = -290	288 (0) = 0	318 (1) = 318	268 (2) = 536
		0.077				
Overall Brand Equity Score		0.361				

Table IV: Brand Equity Score of Amazon

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Awareness					
1. I am aware of Brand Amazon .	12	13	30	198	95
2. Some characteristics of Amazon come to my mind quickly.	8	18	41	184	97
3. I can recognize Amazon quickly among other competing brands.	14	40	47	142	105
4. I am familiar with Amazon brand.	19	26	33	169	101
	53 (-2) = -106	97 (-1) = -97	151 (0) = 0	693 (1) = 693	398(2) =796
BA Score	0.924				
Brand Associations					
5. Amazon has a unique brand image, compared to competing brands	20	35	23	185	85
6. I like and trust the products, which are sold on Amazon .	44	50	34	136	84
7. I like the brand image of Amazon	41	33	52	144	78
	105 (-2) = -210	118(-1) = -118	109(0) = 0	465(1) = 465	247(2) = 494
BAS Score	0.604				
Perceived Quality					
8. Products from Amazon would be of excellent quality	35	48	42	127	96
9. Products from Amazon offer excellent features.	37	51	63	116	81
10. I trust the quality of products from Amazon .	58	44	48	124	74
	130 (-2) = -260	143 (-1) = -143	153 (0) = 0	367 (1) = 367	251 (2) = 502
PQ Score	0.446				
Brand Loyalty					
11. I consider myself to be loyal to Amazon .	44	42	85	101	76
12. I am still willing to buy Amazon even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors.	48	66	73	76	85
13. I will keep on buying Amazon as long as it provides me satisfied products.	35	45	88	106	74
14. When buying groceries, Amazon would be my first choice.	44	62	78	98	66
	171(-2) = -342	215(-1) = -215	324 (0) = 0	381(1) = 381	301(2) = 602
BL Score	0.306				
Overall Brand Equity Score	0.570				

Table V: Brand Equity Score of Shopclues

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Awareness					
1. I am aware of Brand Shopclues .	31	84	67	91	75
2. Some characteristics of Shopclues come to my mind quickly.	21	18	41	184	84
3. I can recognize Shopclues quickly among other competing brands.	32	48	75	121	72
4. I am familiar with Shopclues brand.	47	65	69	99	68
	131(-2) = -262	215 (-1) = -215	252 (0) = 0	495 (1) = 495	299 (2) = 598
BA Score	0.442				
Brand Associations					
5. Shopclues has unique brand image, compared to competing brands	38	53	41	165	51
6. I like and trust the products, which are sold on Shopclues	44	50	34	136	84
7. I like the brand image of Shopclues	54	33	52	131	78

	BAS Score	136 (-2) = -272	136 (-1) = -136	127 (0) = 0	432 (1) = 432	213 (2) = 426
		0.431				
Perceived Quality						
8.	Products from Shopclues would be of excellent quality	52	52	56	103	85
9.	Products from Shopclues offer excellent features.	58	56	72	98	64
10.	I trust the quality of products from Shopclues .	69	66	63	98	52
	PQ Score	179 (-2) = -358	174 (-1) = -174	191(0) = 0	299 (1) = 299	201 (2) = 402
		0.161				
Brand Loyalty						
11.	I consider myself to be loyal to Shopclues .	64	55	77	94	58
12.	I am still willing to buy Shopclues even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors.	64	75	84	51	74
13.	I will keep on buying Shopclues as long as it provides me satisfied products.	62	63	95	75	53
14.	When buying groceries, Shopclues would be my first choice.	52	74	64	84	74
	BL Score	242 (-2) = -484	267 (-1) = -267	320 (0) = 0	304 (1) = 304	259 (2) = 518
		0.051				
Overall Brand Equity Score		0.272				

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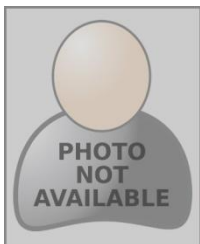
Web Sources

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2. www.snapdeal.com
3. www.e-tailers.in
4. www.amazon.in
5. www.shopclues.com

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