



Mediating role of consumer perception in sales promotion towards apparel brands

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Abstract

Doctor's job seem more skewed towards their profession rather than more social. Its general belief that they spend their maximum time to hospital, teaching, practicing or clinics. They hardly spare time towards sales promotion or advertisement or apparel brands. In connection with this, this study aims to investigate the impact of sales promotions on brand image with a mediating effect of consumer perception of Doctors. The study adds in previous literature where the impact of price deals and perceived quality was noted on brand equity in relation to brand knowledge and brand associations for general consumers. A survey questionnaire was distributed among doctors who are working in four different Medical Universities of Sindh. SPSS-21 employed to tests the hypotheses. The findings supported the fact that sales promotions have positive impact on brand image whereas the consumer perception found a significant positive mediator. The study can be beneficial for marketing managers of relevant products.

Keywords: Promotions, brand image, consumer perception.

Introduction

This study discusses various sales promotional types which influenced the purchasing behavior of potential consumers. As indicated by Alvarez and Casielles Promotion can be separated into two categories, monetary and non-monetary. Monetary promotions are considered to promote the short-term sales of a company whereas non-monetary promotions boost long term sales¹. These include loyalty programs and contests which focus more towards increasing brand image to the customers. Moreover, this increased brand strengthening which leads to long term sales that help the organization.

Furthermore, because of constant introduction to many discounted offers and independent preferences, every purchaser makes a distinctive perception towards sales promotion¹. Purchasing conduct of people is frequently unwittingly influenced by customer recognition it assumes a vital part in the choice of purchasing certain items, including the most delicate items, for example attire. In addition, customers may not know their own particular more profound inward inspiration or they may respond to influencing factors in the last minute and basically alter their opinion². On the other hand, marketers should think about their customers' requirements, suggestions and purchasing behaviors³. Consumer perception plays a key role in success and failure of a brand⁴. Despite the fact that a purchaser's observation about a product to some degree is said to be founded on his or her involvement got from the experience of particular products, it is likewise, all things considered,

impacted by range of different factors e.g. price, quality, and reputation of the maker, branding and packaging⁵.

Moreover, brand image is also playing a vital role in consumer perception and consumer buying behavior because it is essential factor which influence the purchasing of a product¹. According to Keller brand image is vital factor in buying of apparel product because it affects the consumer's choice of a product and purchase intention additionally their paying ability of an additional price as well as recommend the brand to others⁶. In this way, when buyers hold a strong and valuable brand image, they will presumably evaluate the attire item passionately, paying slight respect to price¹. The essential point to note is that when consumer preference of particular promotion what goes to his mind for that particular promotion³.

Background: As indicated by Kahle and Kim, competition is enormous in today's competitive world; consumer has to make a call weather go for brand A or brand B that contrasts little in its cost or function. They contend that in such circumstances, their official conclusion relies upon the picture they relate with different brands. Furthermore, the author state that the brand image has expanded status as the emotions and image related with brand and a notable and acknowledged brand image is a standout amongst the most vital resources a firm has⁷. Therefore, this research has nonstop discussion on the consumer's perception and how it mediates between sales promotion and brand image. As well as this study also discuss

how the sales promotion can optimistically or pessimistically affects the observation of consumers and brand image.

Justification: Mostly the studies are conducted in general public as consumers. The field of Doctor's profession is considered skewed and diverted towards profession rather to on social. Hence, this study attempts to emphasize on doctors and nurses as consumers. This study would help to find out that consumers become dependent on sales and discount or that they lose trust in the promotions because of the amount of the sales in our country. And also, it would help our industry to understand both positive and negative effects of constant sales promotions have on their brands. Furthermore, this research aims to examine the first choice of customers lying on various discount patterns. In this way brands are familiar with about the purchaser's conduct to practice the privilege and best strategy to draw in customers.

Problem of Statement: With the passage of time increased sales promotions activities effecting the consumer perception and consequently brand image of apparel industry of Pakistan. Companies desire to impact consumer perception with this regards they initiate strong sales promotion campaigns or reduce the price. In any case, they are not generally fit for accomplishing their objective, in view of the fact that they may achieve their target for the short term but in long term they lose trust among the customers due to increased sales promotion.

Objective of Research: i. To find the impact of Sales promotion on consumer perception. ii. How consumer perception mediates between Sales promotion and Brand Image. iii. To find the impact of consumer perception on Brand Image. iv. To find the impact of Sales promotion on brand Image.

Research Questions: i. What is the impact of Sales promotion on consumer perception? ii. What is the mediating role of consumer perception between Sales promotion and brand image? iii. What is the impact of consumer perception on Brand Image? iv. What is the impact of Sales promotion on Brand Image?.

Operational Definitions: Marketers require tools to help them achieve their required target sales, promotion being one of those tools that helps companies bring a rise in their profits and increase their overall sales¹. Promotion can be divided into various groups and forms. Sales promotions are a part of the marketing mix which consists of other elements. Their effect on the market can be seen in numerous roles. Kotler defines sales promotion as a collection of multiple tools that provide help but are also used for the short term to help provide a more effective way to reach the consumers and increase the amount of buying among them³. On the other hand, the other types of promotion are usually focused on enhancing the consumer and organization relationship. This is meant to encourage the interaction between the two parties so that the level of awareness increases about the products. Sales promotions is considered to be one of the most

effective and essential tools of marketing in today's day and age³.

Brand image in terms of consumer image has been the focal point for a number of studies over the years. Some researchers believe that sales promotions play a positive impact on the consumer's mind and as a consequence, brand image becomes better. Brand image and brand association are two factors that are considered to have the potential and capability to build strong brand equity due to their great impact on them⁸.

Sales Promotion: It is considered to be a short-term incentive that is provided to the customers to encourage them to purchase a product or service³. However, Alvarez and Casielles assume that sales promotion is a strategy used by marketing professionals to meet the objectives of the organization¹.

The ultimate purpose of sales promotional activities could include maximizing profit through a marginal increase in sales by applying a few marketing techniques like personal selling, advertising, events, window displays etc. It can be applied practically in the form of sending direct email, catalogues, trade and fashion shows, free training, coupon, demo, prices reduction, free gifts, contest etc. Nonetheless, the focus has been on sales promotion to evoke current and potential future customers to more business related activities so as to increase profit margin in immediate sales⁹. Financial saving is considered to be the main appeal for customers in terms of providing sales promotions to them. Apart from the basic motive for opting for sales promotion strategies, the factors that seem to motivate people like saving up on cash, quality of the product, ease of access to market, the concept of receiving value and entertainment may be one of the most important benefits of sale promotion⁹.

Sivani et al.¹⁰ argued that the sales promotion methods are instruments that look for to expand offers of items and brands, more often than not in a short time, in light of the fact that they demonstration in the shopper's brain as an advantage to it, accordingly creating a buyer conduct. Along these lines, it is accepted that sales promotion affects the consumer perception that lead to buy goal. All things considered, concentrates, for example, those directed by Cotton and Blatberg, Baker and, more as of late, Alvarez and Casielles, concluded that the adequacy of sales promotion in the reactions and purchasers' states of mind, both financial as non-fiscal, more than the earlier period of decades^{1,11,12}.

Consumer Perception: A consumer is someone who pays something to consume goods and services available. Consumers are key players who affect the economic system of any country. Due to the importance of consumer demand, producers would have non-existent incentives to produce anything. The key motivation being, selling to the consumers. Often times, the two terms "consumers" and "customers" are used interchangeably despite there being a distinct difference

between the two. A customer is someone who buys a product or service whereas a consumer is someone who buys and then uses the product or service in question. A consumer can be a customer but a customer is not always a consumer. In a business operation, a consumer is considered to be the end user¹³.

Perception can be defined as per our recognition and interpretation of sensory information. It also consists of the way we respond to certain material provided to us. Perception can be thought of as a process where sensory information is taken in from the surroundings and is used in order to interact with the environment. Perception provides us with the ability to take sensory information in and then turn it into something useful and meaningful¹⁴.

Brand Image: A way of displaying uniqueness of their products from the competitors is branding. It is used as a marketing technique that helps provide the option of differentiating the products of one company from the other. Image can be defined as the set of all beliefs as well as ideas along with impression of the person that he holds pertinent to any object¹⁵. BI (Brand Image) is also reflected to be a signaling phenomenon as increased brand image certifies good quality of the product that can diminish any uncertainty that consumers might feel¹⁶. Brand image is considered to be the quality and added value that a brand provides to its customers². If the brand image is strong, it will encourage the consumer to pay greater prices for it. As a result, there is significant increase in the competitive edge and success within the market for a company¹⁷.

According to Zhang Brand image consider being an essential part of brand esteem, which insinuates buyer's general acknowledgment and feeling about a brand and affects purchaser lead. Moreover, creator expressed, for publicists whatever their associations' advancing methods are, the crucial inspiration driving their advancement exercises is to affect purchasers' wisdom and perspective toward a brand, set up the brand picture in customers' mind, and enliven clients' certifiable securing behavior of the brand, subsequently gloat in deals, ideally catch the offer of the market and making brand picture¹⁸.

Literature Review: Sales Promotion and Brand Image: As seen previously, the consumers respond directly to price fluctuations. The higher the price of a brand and its products, the better quality is perceived to be. Whether it is for research or in the practical field, sales promotions' impact on consumer's view of brand value has been in question for quite some time now¹⁹. Countless scholars have argued that the incessant change in price and the varying of brand cost– benefit relations have had a direct influence on perceived customer value of the brand²⁰. The value of the brand is the image that is being portrayed.

The execution of a suitable sales promotion may promise an increase in sales in a considerably short amount of time but only for that specific time period. This validates the inclination of

establishments towards investing a huge part of their budget in these activities. The value and importance of sales promotion will be felt to a much greater degree when they are used less frequently, especially when the customers are not awaiting its occurrence. If the consumer is already expecting when one of these activities will happen, the result of this will not be as effective as required. It is consequently essential for the consumer not to be able to expect sales promotions, and therefore not incorporate these incentives into the product's attributes.

Sales Promotion and Consumer Perception: Sales promotions include various kinds of promotion tools. They are an integral part of the marketing strategy that any company applies for its products and services. Both monetary and non-monetary promotions are included in this. Monetary promotions include price deals and discounts. They help save the consumer money every time they purchase a service or product. The main types of price deals include, price discounts, as mentioned before, as well as price-cut, coupons, rebates, refunds and bonus packs. This study is mainly based on price discounts. Price deals are generally found to have a negative relationship with consumer perception. They are usually reliant on attracting new buyers for a mature product or service, increase consumer use and selling multiple units to accelerate the trial use of a new product (providing a sample) to convince existing and potential new customers to increase their purchases²¹.

Consumer Perception and Brand Image: Consumer behavior is essentially a process of how people choose, buy, or use different products, services or even experiences as per the Business Dictionary. The factors that affect how these decisions are made are generally believed to be the price of the product in question, or its quality. However, nowadays especially, we tend to see consumer buying behavior to be independent from these influences. Instead, we are starting to witness the products worth being induced by a number of different elements, such as the brand, the store's name, their past experiences and even the information of the product. In other words, the consumer perception; a customer's awareness, impression and consciousness about a company²².

Therefore, one of the best ways to sway a customer's standing on your product, is to develop a strong brand image. A brand image is basically the impression a customer or consumer has in their mind about the brand's personality, which must be slowly and carefully developed over time, through extensive marketing campaigns, such as through advertising. In fact, according to Solomon Timothy, the founder and CEO of one IMS, brand image does not only consist of the logo of the brand itself, rather it is a combination of multiple links that consumers form on the basis of every contact or dealing they have with the company²³.

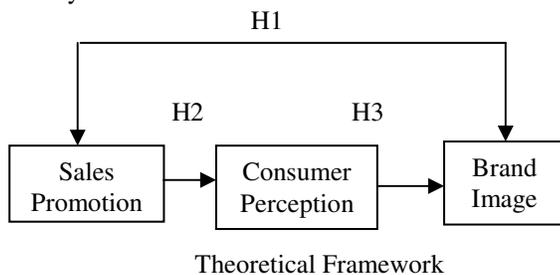
Sales Promotion, Consumer Perception and Brand Image: Pricing strategies which are used for the sole reason of promoting the available products and services to potential

customers, like ‘2 for \$4’, ‘70% off’ or ‘sale – for a limited time period only’ – are extremely widespread in the society these days²⁴. Additionally, the outlook of price tags, rebates, sale adverts, cell phone plans, bundle offers, etc., are progressively built on psychological factors instead of economic ones²⁵.

The brand image created with the support of consumer perception which considered to some degree as manageable by marketing planners¹⁰. The experiences that the consumers have with the brand along with their performance are included in this¹⁶. Consequently, Das G. et al. conducted research, their conclusion is matched with Kim’s study with additions to cognitive and emotional contentment²⁶. Brand image is, As per ERDIL is similar to the company meeting the needs of the consumer²⁷. Brand image also determines the worth and originality for the customers²⁸. Negative emotions or memories related to the products or brand also contribute widely to the attitude the consumer has toward the products or store⁷.

Research Methodology

H1: Sales Promotion has a significant positive impact on Brand Image. ii. H2: Sales promotion has a significant positive impact on consumer’s perception. iii. H3: Consumer Perception has a significant positive impact on Brand Image. iv. H4: Consumer Perception mediates between Sales Promotion and Brand Image positively.



Research Design and Techniques: The research is quantitative and casual in nature. Multiple number of tests were used in study like demographics frequency analysis, Cronbach’s reliability, correlation, multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis and mediation effect to check the relationships; strengths and effects between variables. To analyze this complex data, a software statistical package for social sciences SPSS-21 was used.

Sample Selection: For our study, data has been collected from 1386 Doctors and Nurses as consumers of who use clothing brands and have knowledge about sales promotions and brand image. Stratified sampling technique was used to collect the data.

Results and discussion

Pilot testing: For pilot testing to check the reliability of variable items, 30 respondents were selected. As shown in Table-1 Sales promotion our independent variable has 5 items (e.g. Sales

promotion activities catch my attention while shopping) with alpha reliability of .672. Consumer perception our mediating variable has 6 items (e.g. I often find that purchasing a product from a sale is more satisfactory) with alpha reliability of .630. In last our dependent variable brand image has 5 items (e.g. Brands that offer more than 4 discount sales per year seem desperate to sell their products) with alpha reliability of .706. Results conclude that the research framework is reliable and questionnaire is ready to be circulated for final research interpretation.

Table-1: Pilot testing.

Variable Name	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Sales Promotion	5	.672
Consumer Perception	6	.630
Brand Image	5	.706

Demographics Test: To conduct study, 1600 respondents were selected based upon stratified sampling. They were asked to provide information pertinent to demographics of gender, age, education, designation and University in first portion of questionnaire. From 1600 respondents, 1386 were collected fully, rest were discarded due to incompleteness. Hence, 86.6% were added in data analysis and 13.4% were excluded. The Table-2 illustrates 658 (47.5%) were male and 728 (52.5%) were female. The highest ratio of responded was female. Likewise, 61.6% have MBBS degree, 28% have FCPS degree along with MBBS degree and 10.4% have either Diploma, BDS or other relevant nursing degree. Hence, the sample contains highest statistics of MBBS degree holders. Ages are seen differently in a sample, 42.2% respondents were between 26-30 years of age, 26.7% were in between 31-35 years, 17.2% were in between 36-40 years and 13.9% were above or equal to 40. Our 51% respondents were Lecturers/demonstrators, 26.6% were assistant professors 8.8% were Associate Professor and 3.2% were Professors and only 10.4% were Nurses including both gender. We collected data from four of Medical Universities namely Shaheed Motarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana, Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences (LLUMHS) Jamshoro, Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) Karachi and Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences (PUMHS) Nawabshah/Benazir Abad with sample proportionate of 55.1%, 23.9%, 6.92% and 14.08% respectively.

Descriptive Statistics: Before checking relations, strengths and effects of hypotheses, it is necessary to check the normality of data. To check normality, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were conducted. In above table means are between 1-5 which mean mostly answers were agree. The standard deviations are minimal which mean that there is not much deviation in data. The data is skewed as all skewness value lay

between +1 to -1. The kurtosis values also fall between +3 to -3. Sales Promotion (SP) our independent variable has 5 items with reliability of $\alpha = .632$. Consumer Perception (CP) our mediator has 6 items with reliability $\alpha = .606$. Brand Image (BI) our dependent variable has 5 items with reliability of $\alpha = .651$. All items within variable are internal consistent. All these results fall within their respective ranges which conclude that the data is normal.

Table-2: Demographics Analysis.

Respondent demographics		N=100
Gender	Male	47.5%
	Female	52.5
Education	MBSS	61.6%
	MBSS-FCPS	28.0%
	Others	10.4%
Age	26-30	42.2%
	31-35	26.7%
	36-40	17.2%
	40 and above	13.9%
Designation	Lecturer/Demonstrator	51.0%
	Assistant Professor	26.6%
	Associate Professor	8.8%
	Professor	3.2%
	Nurse	10.4%
University	SMBBMU	55.1%
	LUMHS	23.9%
	DUHS	06.92%
	PUMHS	14.08%

Table-3: Descriptive Analysis.

	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbachs Alpha
SP	100	4.0272	.54946	-.538	1.313	.632
CP	100	3.9140	.54376	.141	1.171	.606
BI	100	4.1696	.57585	-.080	.791	.651

Correlation Test: The correlation analysis was conducted to check the relationship and strength between variables. All relations are examined using Pearson test on 2-tailed. All correlation results are significant with 95% and 99% confidence level. Sales Promotion has weak positive relation with Consumer Perception (.158*, $p < .05$). Sales Promotion has weak positive correlation with Brand Image (.245**, $p < .05$). Consumer Perception has moderate positive correlation with Brand Image (.400**, $p < .05$).

Table-4: Correlation Analysis.

	SP	CP	BI
Sales Promotion (SP)			
Consumer Perception (CP)	.158*		
Brand Image (BI)	.245**	.400**	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis: To answer research questions and analyzing hypotheses regression test is carried to see effect and correlation test was conducted to check relationship among variables.

H1, Adjusted R^2 is 0.461 which shows that 46.1% change in Brand Image is due to presence of Sales Promotion. F-test was also done which considers this model to be fitted ($f = 15.8790$ $P = < .05$). The beta value ($\beta = .2450$) shows that 1-unit change in Sales Promotion will cause 24%-unit change in Brand Image. With t-test (3.895, $P < .05$) significant result H1 is supported.

In Hypothesis 2, Adjusted R^2 is 0.25 which shows that 25% change in Consumer Perception is due to presence of Sales Promotion. F-test was also done which considers this model to be fitted ($f = 6.3463$ $P = < .05$). The beta value ($\beta = .1580$) shows that 1-unit change in Sales Promotion will cause 15.8%-unit change in Consumer Perception. With t-test (2.5192, $P < .05$) significant result H2 is supported.

The H3, where Adjusted R^2 is .1939 which shows that 19.39% change in Brand Image is due to presence of Consumer Perception. F-test was also done which considers this model to be fitted ($f = 29.5158$, $P = < .05$). The beta value ($\beta = .4404$) shows that 1-unit change in Consumer Perception will cause 44%-unit change in Brand Image. With t-test (6.4025 $P < .05$) significant result H3 is supported.

Mediation test: Direct effect of Sales Promotion X on Brand image Y is .1958 (19% $P < .05$). That is H1 already supported. Indirect effect of Sales Promotion X on Brand image Y is .0613 (6.13%, $P < .05$). The indirect effect is due to presence of mediator Consumer Perception. Total effect of Sales Promotion X on Brand image Y is .2571 (25.71%, $P < .05$). The increase in total effect is due to combination of direct and indirect effects which supports our H4 and concludes that Consumer Perception (CP) mediates in the relationship between Sales Promotion (SP) and Brand Image (BI).

Table-5: Regression Analysis.

HYP	IV	DV	Adj. R ²	F	B	t-test	Sig
H1	SP	BI	.4610	15.8790	.2450	3.8950	.0000
H2	SP	CP	.250	6.3463	.1580	2.5192	.0124
H3	CP	BI	.1939	29.7158	.4404	6.4025	.0000

Table-6: Effect of X on Y (Direct, Indirect and Total).

		Effect Size	Sig.
Direct Effect	SP (X) → BI (Y)	0.1958	0.002
Indirect Effect	SP (X) → BI (Y)	0.0613	0.013
Total Effect	SP (X) → BI (Y)	0.2571	0.000

Table-7: Hypotheses Summary.

Hypotheses	Description	Status
H1	Sales Promotion has a significant positive impact on Brand Image	Supported
H2	Sales Promotion has a significant positive impact on Consumer Perception	Supported
H3	Consumer Perception has a significant positive impact on Brand Image	Supported
H4	Consumer Perception mediates between Sales promotion and Brand Image	Supported

Findings of Research: i. H1: Supported: Sales Promotion has a positive effect on Consumer Perception. If a brand conducts sales promotion, the consumers will perceive it as a positive activity. ii. H2: Supported: Sales Promotion has a positive impact on Brand Image. Increased sales promotions give the brand a considerably positive image. Hence, it is seen that sales promotion bring about a positive effect on brand image. iii. H3: Supported: Consumer Perception affects Brand Image positively. The way consumers perceive a brand changes the image created of it. So, we can tell that brand image is positively affected by consumer perception. iv. H4: Supported: Consumer Perception mediates between Sales Promotion and Brand Image. Consumer Perception plays the role of the mediator between the two variables. With increased sales promotions, the consumer perception changes positively. As a result, it affects the brand image positively.

Conclusion

The main objective of the study is to investigate the impact of sales promotions on brand image with a mediating effect of consumer perception. Based upon survey SPSS-21 employed to tests the hypotheses. The hypotheses set for the study have all been supported based on the findings of the survey questionnaire. Sales promotion has been shown to bring a

change to the perception of the consumers. The way customers think of the brand is a step towards changing the image of the brand either negatively or positively. From our research, we have concluded that these two variables are linked to each other in a way that they affect each other positively.

We have previously seen that brand image is created with the help of the target market. They help determine what the brand represents. A brand communicates the sentiments that display the reason for its existence. This means, customers who perceive their reason for being in a positive way provide them with a more positive image. They mirror the ideology that the brand represents. Discounts, promotions and other marketing tools play a role in determining what the customers think. They help differentiate one brand from another by providing a means of interaction between the brand and the consumer. Interaction creates memories for the customer. If these memories are positive, a more positive perception is created in their minds. On the other hand, if the interaction is negative, the consumers will leave with a bad taste in their mouth. They would acknowledge this as the overall experience with the brand. Such instances leave the consumers with a bad image of the brand. Sales promotions have an effect on the brand image where consumer perception plays the mediating role. This was the final hypothesis which is supported based on the results of the survey

conducted. The findings supported the fact that sales promotions have positive impact on brand image whereas the consumer perception found a significant positive mediator. From literature and our findings, we did not find any difference in the results of general public as consumers and doctors as well as nurses as consumers. As their lives are seem to diverted more towards their profession rather on social as compared to general public or other professions but being a human nature they live, perceive and consume similar to others. Hence, the findings supported the fact that sales promotions have positive impact on brand image whereas the consumer perception found a significant positive mediator. The study can be beneficial for marketing managers of relevant products.

Future Directions: This study is focused on the fashion/apparel industry of Pakistan. Additionally, the sample was collected from the areas of different medical Universities of Sindh Province of Pakistan. Based on these factors, the generalization of the results and findings is limited for Pakistan. The same cannot be applied to other forms of products and industries. The geographic location of the study makes it narrow for the results to be applicable to other areas worldwide. Since branded apparel industry is functional all across the world, there are different factors that should be considered in future studies. Some of which include income, cultural events taking place, location of the stores and so on. The time spent on this research should be increased so that ample studies can be done to come to the right conclusion.

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