



Customer Perception towards Branded Goods with Special Reference to End of Season Sale: A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

Clearance Sales have evolved as one of the strongest tools in the hands of the marketers in the recent time. On one hand these clearance sales slashes the prices printed on the product and on the same hand the product is tended to be sold before the fashion vanishes. At the same hand, the retailers wish to sale the goods in the same season and tend to find an official reason to sell excess goods in the market. With the change in time, the concept of clearance sale is changed into "End of Season Sale" or EoSS.

In the study, the perception of customers is tended to be studied in regard to end of the season sale. It is pertinent to mention here is that this study is confined to branded apparels and footwear only. The gender perspective is studied to find the disparity in perception to buy the branded apparels and footwear at end of the season sale.

Keywords- *Clearance sales, End of Season Sale, EoSS, Perception, Gender disparity*

Introduction

India is a vast and diversified country. Also, it is the second most populous country on the globe. This leads to enriched diversification and the advent of consumerism in the modern marketing era. The process of recognition, establishment and survival for the marketing firms has posed a real challenge in the contemporary marketing. Cut throat competition due to magnetic attracting factors add to the fuss and mess for these firms which ultimately ends with a concrete policy making and implementation. "You have either to excel, else perish". Indian marketing scenario has witnessed a remarkable and rapid transformation especially during the last two decades or so. From the economy where majority of income was intended to be saved and major chunk of it was assumed to be spent on the bare necessities, has surpassed and overlapped with the lavish life style of the modern customer.

Emergence of middle class and increase in number of earners in the family of it, is an additive flavor to the changed or evolved marketing in Indian scenario. Paper money is replaced with the plastic and electronic money. Of course, the emergence and development of organized retail sector and recent developments therein especially in the form of malls, super markets etc is now a sort of addiction to the new purchasers. We have witnessed a favorable number of GDP, per capita income, disposable income and so but we have a great influence of the demonstration effect from the west.

Another thing which leads to adoptability of this topic relates to the new emerged purchasing habits of the customers especially in the context of branded goods, more particular in apparels and footwear. The consumer surplus so enjoyed depicts the basic human nature of saving and inclination to purchase the dearer in cheaper rates. This might also be a reason to develop a certain marketing policy by the marketers. It is an old saying that when a child learns crawling, he starts roaming from room to room in the house but when he knows to step up to walk, he clinches neighbors houses. This is how, if we have grown economically, however due to many factors & reasons, we obviously switch to the options to purchase and the things get revolutionized if the variety both vertically and horizontally precedes the behavior. Of course, inclination towards banded goods is seen as a normal scenario.



The flare-up of cyber space and the confrontation of the people to internet at a large to a young country like ours have added the feature to the modern marketing in the form of e-marketing. End of the season sale has seen an outburst response in both physical as well as online marketing. There is another facet of end of the season sale which is pertinent to mention here is that over a past few years, it has emerged as a strong marketing tool. Talking in context of the orthodox pricing strategies of the marketing mix and other promotional strategies as well, it is indeed evolved as a strong composition of both especially in context of Indian market. It is followed by developed countries too in the light of above discussion.

End of season sale is a feeder of the dynamic customer's preference and accordingly determines the perceptions in the light of fashion, availability in the next purchase time, use postponance, consumer surplus, buying behavior, brand preferences and affordability on the customer's end and stock clearance, working capital management, storage and warehousing cost, change in fashion on the marketer's end.

Customer perception defined

Customer perception is defined as the marketing concept which encompasses a customer's awareness, impression, inclination and/or consciousness about the products offered to him in the market. Business Dictionary defines that it typically influences customer behavior which gets influenced by advertising, reviews, public relations, social media, personal experiences and other channels.

Sale defined

The arrangement of these four alphabets has a magnetic power to get even the tightest fist ed shopper to indulge. It may be a motivation, influence or might be a demonstration effect or a reflex action of a typical human psyche. It has a charm of excitement of its own time both for the seller and the buyer and has a tendency to influence a typical type of consumer and buying behavior.

Branded Goods defined

Branding is the art and cornerstone of marketing (Kotler,2003). A brand is defined as a specific name, symbol or design – or, more usually some combination of these- that is used to distinguish a particular seller's product (Doyle,2002). It may be something to distinguish one producer from another. The word brand is derived from the old Norse word 'brandr' which means to burn, usually a mark to distinguish a livestock from other of its kind. Also, a potter would identify his pots by putting mark like a thumbprint into the wet clay on the bottom of the pot and the potter would expect customers to seek out those products which carried his mark (Interbrand, 1990). Today with a considerable change over a time, there is an increase in modern and sophisticated branding of both tangibles and intangibles (Sankar,2003).

End of the Season Sale

ESS may be defined as a sale in which a shop intends / offers to sell the unsold stock of spring, summer, autumn or winter at the end of each particular season at a reduced price. Cambridge University Press defines it an “occasion” when clothes or other goods relating to a particular season are sold at a lower price than usual. It has the following features:

- # It is a retailing concept
- # Only retailer, not manufacturer is involved
- # Price cuts is the key feature
- # Indian markets witness ESS in all weather change but prominently succeeding summers and winters.

Cambridge Business English Dictionary explains end of the season sale as “relating to the end of a period of time when particular clothes, products, etc. are sold in shops”. *Prices are reduced*



by up to 75 percent in our end-of-season sale. The storesells end-of-season stock at heavilydiscountedprices. It is an occasion when clothes or other goodsrelating to a particular season are sold at a lowerprice than usual (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/end-of-season>)

Financial Times describes it a sale in which a shop sells unsold stock of spring, summer, autumn, or winter clothing at the end of each particular season at a reduced price (lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=end_of_season-sale)

Modern set up of the society

The society in India is displaying a typical feature of its own. The reason is the obvious. It may be the largest composition of the society is “Young India” or it is the picture behind the “typical service sector economy” what India is today when one looks at the composition of GDP of India. Women are developing as the entrepreneurs or are holding the same positions what only males were supposed to be. Thus males and females are walking hand in hand in around every sphere of life. Emergence of middle class has increased the number of earners in the family. Also, the postponance of old age especially in the cities is a prominent factor influencing the gender perception to buy the branded goods. Eventually, the EoSS is holding its meaning in the same line.

Need of the Study

No concentrated study on the topic chosen is available/found in libraries and on web. Few factors influencing buying behavior during sales are discussed by some authors but customer perception is still an untouched area. Studies have not found the disparity in gender behavior especially at EoSS.

The study will give a new direction to the marketers’ thought in regard to EoSS. It will open up the avenues to target the customers before planning EoSS rather than the contemporary clearance sale concept followed just only competitors has opted. Moreover, the generation is really a very sharp generation and definitely if is a teacher to its immediate predecessors. The girls and boys are showing a different buying behavior because they have their own perception for their shopping. There is a significant change in previous marketing theories.

Objective of the study

The study is undertaken to consider the gender disparity in regard to perception about branded goods with reference to end of season sale.

Scope of the Study

1. The study covers the premises of branded apparels/garments and footwear only
2. Both male and female brands are considered
3. The respondents are both working and non-working. Students are also considered
4. The study is a buyer centric study
5. Only physical market is taken into account for the purpose
6. The study considers the respondents from Urban Areas only
7. The popular unisex brands like United Colors of Benetton, Woodland Tommy, Wills, Arrow, BlackBerry’s, Adidas, Reebok are taken into consideration.
8. Only two seasons are taken into account ie. Summer and Winter for studing End of Season Sale (EOSS).

Research Methodology

- The study was conducted in Urban areas only. Thus the universe is the residents of the cities of Ludhiana, Jalandhar , Patiala and Chandigarh only.The solution to the research problem is intended to be found by collecting Primary data in form of responses of 500



Structured Questionnaires framed in such a way that the non parametric test can be applied. Normality of data is checked before finding out the results for the problem.

- ▶ Use of IT is a predominant for the analysis part. The data is analyzed by using SPSS software . Mann-Whitney Test is applied.
- ▶ The convenience sampling method was used

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in gender's perception towards branded goods during EoSS

H₁: There is a significant difference in gender's perception towards branded goods during EoSS

Analysis and Interpretation

For the solution to the problem , the questionnaire was divided on the basis of Economic, Social and Psychological factors. Economic factors include discounts, savings, disposable income etc, Social factors involve social image, status, attitude, recognition, looks, consonance with fashion, gifts etc. and the Psychological factors include postponance of use, offers, lapse of offer, arrangement of routine to visit EoSS , expectation, brand image, fashion, materialism , uniqueness etc.

The age groups undertaken for the study ranged from 18-67 bifercated in 5 catagories. Continuing, the respondents were catagorised on the basis of their occupation and educational qualifications.

The first segment of data analysis includes exporting the responses to MS Excel in order to code it. Then these coded responses are exported to SPSS for analyzing the data.

Before the analysis of data and analyzing the research problem, it is essential to analyse the internal consistency of the questionnaire. For the same, the economic, psychological and social factors are studied. For this research the internal consistency of these factors were measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The internal consistency is used to measure the correlation of responses between different questions of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha (>0.7) is considered as the reliable parameter to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire with multiple items.

For this research, the Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for all the factors which came out to be 0.7986 which is greater than the rule of 0.7, thus making the questionnaire reliable. All the factors individually don't have Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7.

VARIABLE	Cronbach's Alpha
Economic Factors	0.797
Social Factors	0.599
Psychological Factors	0.770

Test of Normality

To analyze the descriptive statistics, test of normality is applied using Shapiro-Wilk Test. Depending on the normality or the deviations from it, statistical tests on the different groups are carried out. The p-Value shows the significance level and for p<_ 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and for the p-Value>_ 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. The summary of all the results of the test of normality for all the factors based on Shapiro-Wilk is presented in the table given below:

Tests of Normality table

Tests of Normality		
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk



	Statistic	df	p-value	Statistic	Df	p-value	
Economic Factors	.056	500	.001**	.988	500	.001**	Deviated
Social Factors	.076	500	.0001**	.990	500	.001**	Deviated
Psychological Factors	.085	500	.0001**	.963	500	.0001**	Deviated

Maan-Whitney Test and Kruskal-Wallis Tests for all the factors are displayed as below:

Gender

Mann-Whitney Test

Gender		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U (z)	p-value
Economic Factors	Male	263	253.83	66757.00	.543	.587
	Female	237	246.81	58493.00		
Social Factors	Male	263	253.92	66781.00	.559	.576
	Female	237	246.70	58469.00		
Psychological Factors	Male	263	243.44	64026.00	1.151	.250
	Female	237	258.33	61224.00		

1. The Maan-Whitney Test shows that there is no statistical significant difference of perception about economic factors among male and female respondents with mean rank of 253.83 and 246.81 respectively ($u. = 0.543$, $p= 0.587$)
2. There is no significant difference of perception about social factors among male and female respondents with mean rank 253.92 & 246.70 respectively where the $\mu = 0.55$ and $p = 0.576$
3. There is a significant difference in perception of psychological factors as the values have turned up like mean rank 246.7 and 243.44 but $\mu = 1.151$ and $p = 0.25$

Age

Age		N	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis	p-value
Economic Factors	>20	47	168.97	23.119	.0001**
	20-30	169	273.62		
	30-40	142	261.51		
	40-50	79	253.27		
	50-60	45	227.33		
	>=60	18	205.17		
Social Factors	>20	47	173.57	26.491	.0001**
	20-30	169	275.04		
	30-40	142	248.72		
	40-50	79	279.11		
	50-60	45	214.06		
	>=60	18	200.56		
Psychological Factors	>20	47	180.65	27.424	.0001**
	20-30	169	265.73		
	30-40	142	254.69		



Psychological Factors					
	40-50	79	286.44		
	50-60	45	229.86		
	>=60	18	150.72		

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in age groups and economic factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 168.97 , 273.62, 261.51,253.27, 227.33, 205.17 respectively for the age group > 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, >=60 (kruskal Wallis 23.119 and p- value .0001

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in age groups and social factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 173.57, 275.04, 248.72, 279.11, 214.06, 200.56 respectively for the age group > 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, >=60 (kruskal Wallis 26.491 and p- value .0001

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in age groups and economic factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 180.65, 265.73,254.69, 286.44, 229.86, 150.72 respectively for the age group > 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, >=60 (kruskal Wallis 27.424 and p- value .0001

Income

Income		N	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis	p-value
Economic Factors	0-2	96	238.01	6.367	.095
	2-5	146	274.67		
	5-10	176	246.01		
	>10	82	231.74		
Social Factors	0-2	96	242.98	9.519	.023*
	2-5	146	277.77		
	5-10	176	246.61		
	>10	82	219.09		
Psychological Factors	0-2	96	249.69	1.333	.721
	2-5	146	250.02		
	5-10	176	258.13		
	>10	82	235.92		

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is no significant difference in income groups and economic factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 238.01,274.67,246.01,231.74 respectively for the income group 0-2, 2-5, 5-10, >10 (kruskal Wallis 6.367 and p- value .095)

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in income groups and social factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 242.98, 277.77, 246.61,219.09 respectively for the income group 0-2, 2-5, 5-10, >10 (kruskal Wallis 9.519 and p- value .023)

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is no significant difference in income groups and Psychological factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 249.69, 250.02, 258.13, 235.92 respectively for the income group 0-2, 2-5, 5-10, >10 (kruskal Wallis 1.333and p- value .721)



Occupation

Occupation		N	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis	p-value
Economic Factors	Service	216	248.04	14.891	.011*
	Business	110	259.05		
	Professional	22	275.52		
	Self Employed	40	271.83		
	Student	88	210.16		
	Other	24	322.90		
Social Factors	Service	216	241.96	15.595	.008**
	Business	110	283.15		
	Professional	22	272.64		
	Self Employed	40	280.03		
	Student	88	210.04		
	Other	24	256.56		
Psychological Factors	Service	216	247.63	16.425	.006**
	Business	110	264.14		
	Professional	22	207.18		
	Self Employed	40	274.66		
	Student	88	217.94		
	Other	24	332.67		

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in occupation and Economic factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 248.04, 259.05, 275.52, 271.83, 210.16, 322.90 respectively for the service, business, professional, self employed, student, others (kruskal Wallis 14.891 and p- value .011)

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in occupation and Social factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 241.96, 283.15, 272.64, 280.03, 210.04 respectively for the service, business, professional, self employed, student, others (kruskal Wallis 15.595 and p- value .008)

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in occupation and Psychological factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 247.63, 264.14, 207.18, 274.66, 217.94, 332.67 respectively for the service, business, professional, self employed, student, others (kruskal Wallis 16.425 and p- value .006)

Education

Education		N	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis	p-value
Economic Factors	Matric	22	237.34	14.061	.003**
	Higher Secondary	78	199.79		
	Graduate	168	273.38		
	Post Graduate	232	252.23		
Social Factors	Matric	22	260.68	11.922	.008**



	Higher Secondary	78	204.72		
	Graduate	168	272.47		
	Post Graduate	232	249.02		
Psychological Factors	Matric	22	245.55	9.767	.021*
	Higher Secondary	78	204.07		
	Graduate	168	259.46		
	Post Graduate	232	260.09		

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in education and Economic factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 237.34, 199.79, 273.38, 252.23 respectively for the matric, higher secondary, Graduate and post graduate customers (kruskal Wallis 14.061 and p- value .003)

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in education and Social factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 260.68, 204.72, 272.47, 249.02 respectively for the matric, higher secondary, Graduate and post graduate customers (kruskal Wallis 11.922 and p- value .008)

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is significant difference in education and Psychological factors influencing perception towards EOSS with mean rank 245.55, 204.07, 259.46, 260.09 respectively for the matric, higher secondary, Graduate and post graduate customers (Kruskal Wallis 9.767 and p- value .021)

Conclusion

The study revealed that there is a strong inclination towards EoSS in regard to a specific category when data was analysed. It can be said that this study will surely help the marketers to develop better and innovative marketing strategies to include more and more people to EoSS if they wish to reap more profits in future.

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