

The Impact of Brand Image on Customer Satisfaction: An Empirical Study of Departmental Store in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *Over the last decade, the departmental marketing sector of Bangladesh has witnessed immense growth and is now catering to customers. To make sure that these customers remain loyal, the departmental stores are working to achieve high customer satisfaction through improved superior brand image by better service quality and reasonable price. This study, particularly, looks at all of these aspects and their association with customer satisfaction. Data was collected from the exit corner of the store, according to their availability and interest of the customers was chosen randomly from the ten largest departmental store in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The sample size was 200 and 150 completed questionnaires were received back with a response rate of 75%. The Results of this research are favorable and will help the department store service providers to shape their products and pricing policies in such a way that they could maximize customer satisfaction and maintain their customers in order to achieve higher market share.*

Keywords: *Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Departmental Store*

1 Introduction:

Brand is the most powerful influence on the way people perceive their immediate environment, thus it remains a crucial concept in literature. Department store retailing plays an important role in the functioning of modern economies and hence in the standard of living of consumers. Bangladesh has a different retailing landscape where it has both a sophisticated first world retailing sector, especially in the urban areas and a third world retailing infrastructure in the rural and township areas. The township and rural areas are not fully developed, with reliance still on the traditional forms of retailing infrastructure. In the 1900s and the early 2000s store retailers struggled to maintain a viable position in a competitive retail market (Moye & Kinedo, 2002). Departmental store brand is the overall impression of a store as perceived by consumers, tangibly and intangibly, and becomes pivotal to ascertain as it may be used as a competitive advantage by retailers to evaluate the success of their marketing efforts and establish, through similar efforts, a competitive advantage incomparable host markets overseas (Ranelid & Ballo, 2006 Reynolds et al., 2002). The importance of store brand for department store retailers cannot be disputed (Du Preez, Visser Van Noordwyk, 2008). In the highly competitive and dynamic retail market, organisations endeavour to use all possible resources to gain market share. One way of differentiating one department store from another is the unique department store image offered to clientele. Consumers use store brand image as an evaluative criterion in the decision-making process concerning retail outlet selection. Varley (2005) summarised this situation as follows: “in concentrated and relatively saturated retail markets, the position that a retailer etches out in the consumers’ mind is a vital element of its strategy. Customers must be given a good reason to shop with one retailer rather than another.

The image of a retailer differentiates it from its competitors and provides the backdrop that portrays its service and merchandise offering. The brand may be one of the most important reasons why consumers prefer specific service providers and avoid others. For the prestige seeking consumer, store brand is even more significant (Deeter-Schmelz, Moore & Goe-Bel, 2000). In a highly competitive environment retailers therefore have to be highly cognisant of the dimensions of their service, specifically the “mental pictures” that consumers develop the various dimensions of their service and how that might influence the image of their organisation (Lewison, 1997). Since consumers’ choice of a store and their loyalty towards a specific store or service provider are influenced by their band of the service provider, it is crucial that the brand of a service provider should be crafted with its target market in mind. That would help consumers to identify and positively associate with it (Newman & Cullen, 2002).

Department stores in Bangladesh have generally been enjoying tremendous growth in recent years. In the same vein, the environment has continually changed bringing more and more challenges to the players. Various changes have been witnessed in the legal environment, competitive field, consumer needs and also in the area of technology. To improve competitiveness, major department stores are growing rapidly, adopting aggressive strategies to attract customers due to emergence of new departmental store formats and competition between departmental store. A firm’s brand image has a significant impact on customer satisfaction especially across major departmental store as a result store infrastructure, convenience, store service and sales activities acts as the four components of store image, and they all impact customer satisfaction directly. Indeed in a competitive Bangladesh market, increased customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy of the major departmental store thus the need for a good brand image which significantly improves service quality. The study will be based on brand relationship theory in which customers generate individual relationships based on their individual perception of brand value, brand meaning and their experiences. According to Da Silva and Syed (2006) the idea behind brand image is that the consumer is not purchasing just the product or service but also the image associated with that product or service. Brand images should be positive, unique and instant and not created but formed. When the consumers purchase the product, they are also purchasing its image. Brand image is the objective and mental feedback of the consumers when they purchase a product. Bangladesh has a potentially second biggest market in South Asia and is likely to experience faster growth in the modern retail sector as the economy continues its upward trend. In fact, Bangladesh's modern grocery retail sales are forecast to more than double by the end of the 2016 trading period thanks to the government's continued effort to improve the country's business environment. Even though the retail sector is dominated by traditional retail channels, independent supermarkets and departmental store in the countryside, the development of modern grocery chains has taken root in urban areas. The retail sector in Bangladesh is dominated many small scale retailers. Traditionally, Departmental stores are viewed as markets for rich and middle class consumers. For a long time, they were only found in large cities of the developed world and middle-income countries. However, urbanization and increasing incomes in the developing world, including Bangladesh, have inevitably invited departmental store.

Retail markets have become very competitive in recent times, both globally and locally. Indeed, the entering of Walmart into the South African retail market has been hailed as an event that will benefit cost-conscious buyers because of the increased competition (Cambiaso, 2011). The Bangladesh’s market is characterised by heterogeneous groups of consumers. This heterogeneity exists in the food and non-food markets, which comprise customers with different income, tastes, expectations, and motives. In business retailing, the exploration of studies on consumer demographics, behaviour, attitude and attribute are useful as a framework for profiling consumer’s ultimate choice in retail purchasing (Doherty, 2007). Dhurup and Oosthuyzen (2012)

argues the formation of store brand image is a complex process which may be influenced by various variables, which have been difficult for researchers to conceptualise and operationalise. Retail is a fast-growing industry that is expanding each day. As the population grows, the expectations of customers increase. Customer perception has a huge influence on a customer's retail preference. It is important for departmental store retailers to know what the customers' preferences are in order to acknowledge future demands and shape their marketing strategies accordingly (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). In light of the above, understanding consumers' buying behaviour is of utmost importance for retailers, to enable them to maintain their competitive edge. Consumer characteristics, store attributes, store image, store choice and retailing strategies are some of the key concepts that play a role in successful retailing (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). The marketing mix along with the stores image attributes equally contribute to the overall store image, which consumers apply to evaluate the store on a multi-attribute utility function (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). Departmental stores offer a variety of goods and services. The differences in the shopping experience of customers between retail outlets are often as significant to the customer as differences in the physical characteristics of the goods offered (Gomez et al, 2004). Taking this into account, consumer satisfaction regarding departmental stores and the implications of these satisfaction on store brand image is a prominent aspect of the customer experience which has received little attention from researchers in Bangladesh. This study aims to fill this gap by uncovering insights into the impact of brand image on customer satisfaction of departmental stores in the Bangladesh.

2 Literature review

Brand relationship theory was advanced by Gummesson (2002) and pointed that there exist relationships among human beings. Consequently, consumers define the brand relationship from their own individual perspectives and the brand relationship and relational value are very much personalized in the minds of consumers. Consumers generate individual relationships based on their individual perception of brand value, brand meaning and their experiences. That is, customers seem to personally create the brand through their communications across multiple contexts (Lindberg, 2001).

2.1 *Corporate brand image:*

Davies, Chun, Da Silva and Roper (2003) indicated that anything could be a brand, such as a company, corporate or name. Keller (1993) defined brand image is a perception about a brand held in consumer memory. Corporate brands are intangible assets for companies that are difficult to imitate, and it is different from products brands as emphasizing the important of brand values (De Chertanony, 1999). Ind (1997) reported that when consumers purchase products from a company, they not only buy products but also receive a set of values from the company. Corporate brands are a sum of values representing the corporate (Ind, 1997), and a positive corporate brand image is not only help companies to increase competition but also encourage consumers to re-purchases (Porter & Claycomb, 1997). Consumers more favorable the image has higher perceived in quality, value, satisfaction and loyalty (Johnson, Andreessen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001).

2.2 *Customer satisfaction:*

Satisfaction can be separated into two approaches either as a transaction-specific satisfaction (Olsen & Johnson, 2003) or as a cumulative satisfaction/post-consumption satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). After 1990s,

many researchers view satisfaction as customers' cumulative, after purchase, and overall judgment about purchasing behavior (Johnson, Anderson & Fornell, 1995; Engel & Blackwell, 1982; Oliver, 1997). According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction is defined from the mixture of both affection (emotion) and cognition approach as "the consumer's fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or over-fulfillment" (Oliver, 1997). Customer satisfaction is viewed as influencing repurchase intentions and behavior, which, in turn, leads to an organization's future revenue and profits. However, Bowen and Shoemaker (2003) stated that satisfied customers might not return to the firm and spread positive word-of-mouth communications to others. One of the reasons is that the firm does not deliver what customers need or want (Roig, Garcia, Tena & Monzonis, 2006). Woodruff (1997) further identified that customer satisfaction measurement without fulfillment of customer perceived value could not really meet the customer's expectations. Therefore, other variables should exist to further explain the relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty (Shamim, 2022).

2.3 Relevant studies on brand image and customer satisfaction

Aaker (1991) and Rory (2000) pointed out that, with the construction of good brand image, customers were likely to increase the satisfaction of usage, and would like to recommend to others. Gensch (1978) considered brand image as having more influence on the purchase intention and the satisfaction of customers while the product attribute was not easily defined. Graeff (1996) mentioned that, when the customer's self-image was more similar to the brand image, customer satisfaction would be affected. Romaniuk and Sharp (2003) found the positive relation between brand image and customer satisfaction. Many scholars, such as Su (2005), Zhi (2005), Lin (2005), Chen (2005), Xu (2006), Shi (2006), Lin (2006), Yang (2006), and Zhang (2007), also confirmed the positive relations between brand image and customer satisfaction. Whereas, if the provided service was lower than the service expectation of the customer, he/she would then feel very dissatisfied. The schema memory of a brand included the interpretation of characteristics, from a target market, to the attributes and the advantages of the product, the use situation, the users, and the manufacturer/marketing personnel that people thought and felt after seeing and hearing the brand name. Consequently, it was substantially a set of associative thoughts that the customer learned about the brand. Therefore, customer satisfaction and brand image revealed notably positive relation (Hong Quang Zong, Hong Quang Yuen far, Zhu Zhi Zhong's, etc. translation, 2008). Customers tend to explain the internal and external attributes of products and the viewpoint of image, as well as the viewpoints of feeling and perception. Brand image constructs measurement variables with user image, product image, and enterprise image that customer satisfaction and brand image show remarkably positive relation (Zhang and Mo, 2008). Huang (2000) regarded four dimensions in measuring customer satisfaction, as (1) customer expectation which reflected the expected product performance of customers whose previous consuming experiences before purchasing would become the expectation on product performance; (2) product performance, as a kind of comparison standard that customers would compare the actual product performance after purchasing with the expectation before purchasing; (3) disconfirmation, as a kind of major agent variable that a person's expectation would be confirmed to correspond the product performance to his/her expectation, and (4) customer satisfaction, as an output after purchasing that, when the actual product performance was larger than or equal to the expectation before the act, the customer would feel satisfied; or, when the actual product performance was smaller than the expectation before the act, the customer would feel dissatisfied (Emel and Nafiz, 2009). Besides, customer

satisfaction and brand value appeared remarkable relation. Chen (2008) considered that the measuring dimensions of customer satisfaction contained the satisfaction with professional level and customer interaction, and the overall customer satisfaction and brand image presented significant relation. Chen (2001) classified brand association into functional association (product attribute association), and nonfunctional association (non-product related attribute association). In addition, brand association also paid attention to organization association. Consequently, products were associated with functional attributes and non-functional attributes, while organizational association was divided into company ability and social responsibility association, and customer satisfaction and brand association revealed notably positive relation (Seyed et al., 2009). Aaker (1991) defined brand image as a set of brand association types which were normally organized in a meaningful way. Brand association was divided into 11 kinds of characteristics, as product characteristic, invisibility, customer benefit, relative price, usage/ application, user/customer, famous people/persons, life style/personality, product variety, competitors, and countries/ geographic districts. However, even if these associations are equally classified, various associations present characteristics with different strength (Jose and Mohammad, 2009). Therefore, various associations will appear different effects on brand image, but various brand associations present significantly positive relation with customer satisfaction. Gensch (1978) thought that a market could simply be won by winning customers. With service innovation, the biggest trust of customers was obtained, the extensive social support was won, and the brand image was completely set up to acquire customer satisfaction and loyalty. Besides, regarding customers as the value of enterprise existence, the premise of existence, and the foundation of development, the entire company would have consensus. Therefore, customer satisfaction and brand image appear significantly positive relation. China Unicom takes customer satisfaction as an objective with explicit customer orientation and pursues the ideal realm of total customer satisfaction (TCS). With service innovation, it gets affirmation from customers, acquires customer loyalty, and pushes brand image to develop forward. Apparently, customer satisfaction and brand value reveal notably positive relation. Based on the aforementioned depiction, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H1: The corporate brand image is a direct path and is a factor that significantly affects the customer satisfaction.

3 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of brand image on the customer satisfaction. In order to collect the data from the targeted population, a questionnaire survey was developed. The survey is composed of two parts:

Demographic

Subjective

The Demographic section contains the factors: Gender, Age, occupation and income level, whereas the subjective part deals with the factors of brand image and customer satisfaction. In order to measure the highly significant features that are very important in analyzing the effect brand image on customer satisfaction 5-point Likert measurement scale is used. The participants were selected on the basis of their availability and their interest. In every store, the respondents were picked from the exit corner of the store according to their availability and interest. The sample size was 200 and 150 completed questionnaires were received back with

a response rate of 75% customers was chosen randomly from the ten large departmental in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In order to collect data close ended questions were used to measure the effect of brand image on customer satisfaction.

4 Findings

Demographics In this research, it was found that out of 150 of total respondents, 100 of them were female, which represented 66.33% and 50 respondents were male representing 33.34% of the whole sample population. It shows that the percentage of female respondents is higher and dominated the sample of the research. In general, it can be suggested that in this sample selection, the majority of respondent is dominated by female. The distribution of respondents by gender is presented in Table. 1.

Table 1. Respondents Gender

	Female	Male	Total
Count	100	50	150
Percentage(%)	66.33%	33.34%	100%

It was found that the respondent's highest age range is within 25-35 years old which represented 40% of the sample. It can be suggested that within the sample most of the respondents are younger customers. The second highest respondents' age range is within 36-45 with the total of 27.34% of the sample. The smallest percentage of the respondents' age range is 5.34% of the range over 55 years old. The remaining respondents are below 25 and within 46- 55 which represent 6.67% and 20.67% respectively. Table 2 shows the age range of the respondents.

Table 2. The distribution of respondents' age range

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25	10	6.67%
25-35	60	40%
36-45	41	27.34%
46-55	31	20.67%
Over 55	8	5.34%
	150	100

Based on the data collected, it shows that the majority of the respondents are Non-Government Employees which represent 33.33% of the whole sample of population. The second highest occupation percentage is owner or Private Business which represents 27.33% followed by government official with the total of 16.67% of the sample. Besides that, it also shows that the lowest distribution of respondents' occupation is others where it represents only 8% of the sample. Table 3 shows the overall distribution of the respondents' occupation.

Table 3. The distribution of respondents' occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Government Employees	25	16.67%
Non-Government Employees	50	33.33%
Owner or Private Business	41	27.33%
Student	22	14.67%
Others	12	8%
Total	150	100%

4.1 Departmental store Brand Image

Successful brand image enables consumers to identify the needs that the brand satisfies and to differentiate the brand from its competitors, and consequently increases the likelihood that consumers will purchase the brand. The study sought to establish from the respondents the impact of brand image on customer satisfaction in major departmental store in Dhaka, Bangladesh in a five point Likert scale. The range was ‘strongly disagree (1)’ to ‘strongly agree (5)’. The scores of respondents ‘disagreement represent a variable which had a mean score of below 3.0 while the scores of above 3.0 represent respondents’ agreement with the influence of brand image. A standard deviation of >0.9 implies a significant difference on the impact of the variable among respondents. The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they were in agreement with the brand image of the departmental store. This was important for the study in order to determine the influence of brand image on customers visit to the departmental store. The findings presented in table 4 that departmental store brand improves the way I am perceived by others (mean= 4.289); departmental store brand can be dependable for use (mean = 4.224); Departmental store brand provides solution to my expectations (mean=4.124); Departmental store brand performs as it promises (mean=3.985); Departmental store brand enhances the perceptions that I have a desirable lifestyle (mean=3.964); Departmental store brand makes a good impression of me on other people (mean=3.923); Visiting the departmental store prevents me from looking cheap (mean=3.902); The departmental store increases my frequency of visit (3.874); Departmental store brand is effective to my needs than other brands (mean=3.802); The departmental store makes me feel good (mean=3.732); departmental store brand helps me to better fit into my social group (mean=3.602); Departmental store brand makes me beautiful (mean=3.589); The departmental store makes me feel delighted (mean=3.452); and The visit to the departmental store gives me pleasure (mean=3.177). From the results, it can be concluded that departmental store brand influences the shopping of the customers as it enhances their perception, impression on other people and fit into a social group.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of image of the departmental store.

Departmental Brand Image	Mean	Standard Deviation
The departmental store makes me feel good	3.732	0.678
The departmental store makes me feel delighted	3.452	0.549
The departmental store increases my frequency of visit	3.874	0.832

The visit to the departmental store gives me pleasure	3.177	0.826
Visiting the departmental store prevents me from looking cheap	3.902	1.231
Store brand enhances the perceptions that I have a desirable lifestyle	3.964	0.892
Departmental store brand helps me to better fit into my social group	3.602	1.292
Departmental store brand improves the way I am perceived by others	4.289	1.291
Departmental store brand performs as it promises	3.985	0.902
The departmental store brand makes me beautiful	3.589	1.672
The departmental store brand can be dependable for use	4.224	0.892
The departmental store brand provides a solution to my expectations	4.124	0.903
The departmental storebrand makes a good impression on me	3.923	1.023
The departmental store brand is effective to my needs	3.802	0.987
Mean scores	3.831357	

4.2 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is derived from the overall satisfaction towards the services offered by the departmental store. The respondents were requested to indicate their satisfaction with the departmental services. The results in table 5 indicate that the customers were satisfied with the location of departmental store (mean = 4.238); The departmental store has all products required by customers (mean=4.231); The departmental store has loyalty programs (mean=4.189); The departmental store accepts returns and exchanges (mean=4.128); product identification thus reducing shopper's search time (mean = 4.013); products being of quality (mean=3.972); short wait time to cash registers (mean=3.952); Sales assistants are helpful (mean=3.902); prices of products being reasonable which makes customers satisfied (mean = 3.891); provision of timely and accurate information to customers (mean = 3.782); fresh products (3.781); solve customers' problems quickly (mean = 3.451). From the results it can be concluded that the customers were satisfied with the prices, location, layout, product quality and shorter time to cash registers.

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction	Mean	Standard Deviation
The departmental store has all products required by customers	4.231	0.903
The departmental store has short wait time to cash registers	3.952	0.893
Sales assistants are helpful in navigating store aisles and selecting complementary items	3.902	0.782

The departmental store provide timely and accurate information to customers	3.782	0.782
The departmental store solve customers' problems quickly	3.451	0.982
The departmental store accepts returns and exchanges	4.128	1.231
The departmental store layout enables customer orientation and product identification thus reducing shopper's search time	4.013	0.783
The products in the departmental store are of good quality	3.972	0.892
All products in the departmental store are fresh	3.781	1.024
The departmental store has loyalty programs	4.189	0.892
The departmental store is located in convenient location	4.238	0.912
The prices of products in the departmental store is reasonable	3.891	0.873
Mean scores	3.960833	

4.3 Impact of Brand Image on Customer Satisfaction

The effect of brand image benefits on customer satisfaction is assessed through regression analysis in which the overall brand image benefit is predictor variable and overall customer satisfaction is the dependent variable. $Customer\ satisfaction = 0.789 + 0.564 (Brand\ Image)$

Above linear equation shows that 100 percent change in brand image will bring 56.4% change in customer satisfaction. In equation C=0.789 which shows that the average of customer satisfaction will be 0.789 when brand image is zero whereas 0.564 is the value of beta that shows one unit increase in brand image will bring 0.564 units change in customer satisfaction. The following Table 6, 7 and 8 respectively show the model summary, ANOVA and coefficients of regression.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.892*	0.813	0.821	0.226

*. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image

Table 6 shows R= 0.892 shows 89.2% variation in brand image and customer satisfaction. R square is the coefficient of determination which shows 81.3% total variation in customer satisfaction due to the predictors.

Table 7: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	24.565	1	23.562	410.231	0.012
Regression	8.763	148	0.072		

Residual 3.3328 149
Total

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image
- b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

From the above analysis of variance in table 7 the results show a fit between the hypothesized model and the obtained data ($F=410.231$, $P=0.012$).

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig
	Coefficients				
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	0.789	0.173		-7.034	0.023
Brand Image	0.564	0.043	0.784	21.231	0.012

Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Table 8 shows the coefficients of regression. Unstandardized coefficient B tells the intercept and coefficient for predictor variable. The sig. (P-value) indicates the measure of likelihood that the difference in outcome occurred by chance. In the above regression model, we see that overall brand image has significant effects on customer satisfaction where $P = 0.012$ which is less than 0.05. The effects of overall brand image show 0.564 point changes in the management of brand image for each point change in customer satisfaction in unstandardized coefficients. Thus, the regression analysis indicates that the overall brand image has significant effects ($P = 0.012$ and $\beta = 0.784$) on customer satisfaction in standardized coefficients. This indicates that brand image and customer satisfaction have significant positive relationships. This means that the enhancement of one variable has a direct influence for the enhancement of other variables. This result is consistent with the results obtained by Hess and Story (2006), they asserted that the reputable brand image enables the customers to distinguish their needs that the brand fulfills and it differentiates the company from others and enhances the customer performance over the brand. Similarly, this outcome is also consistent with the results by Dick and Basu (2004), they found that the success of the brand could generate customers' awareness regarding the dignity of the brand which helps to enhance their satisfaction from the purchase of particular brands and so optimize the profitability of the company due to their purchase of products and services from the company.

5 Conclusion

The results of this study show that the corporate brand image is a direct path and is a factor that significantly affects the customer satisfaction. The finding supports departmental brand image effects on customer satisfaction and the results are consistent with the findings of Johnson, Andreessen, Lervik & Cha, (2001); and Davies et al. (2003). Based on the research results, the corporate brand image significantly affects customer satisfaction for the sample. Therefore, firms have to specifically focus on these factors in order to build a long-term and mutually profitable relationship with a customer and create loyalty as competitive advantages in the market. From the respondents, departmental store should also pay more attention to female, young customers who are under 35 years old, and consumers who are employees and business men. The study focuses on departmental store in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and adopts only a quantitative research method. Future research

could use a different design to examine the causal relationships posited by the theories, such as marketing mix (4Ps) and relationship quality, to explore other antecedents on loyalty, and should be conducted in other industries and other Asian countries or different global regions.

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