CUSTOMER PREFERENCES ON TWO WHEELERTYRE PURCHASE - A STUDY ON BRAND AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to measure the brand awareness among the customers about the various brands in Motorcycle Tyre industry and to study the customer preferences while purchasing a motorcycle tyre. Brand awareness is always considered to be an unavoidable criterion in determining a consumer’s purchase decision. Brand awareness can be depicted into 3 facets – Top of the Mind Recall, Unaided Recall and Aided Recall, each of these 3 facets having its own influence on the customer’s buying decision. This paper tries to study the brand awareness of the motorcycle tyre brands in all the three facets. Apart from brand awareness it also aims at capturing some of the important customer buying preferences and criteria for making a purchase decision and the brand association. The analysis has been conducted in explorative and descriptive phases with respondents focused in the state of Kerala.

Keywords: Brand awareness; Brand association; consideration set; Preference set; Selection criteria; Preference brand.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Before planning and designing any marketing campaign or event, it’s necessary to understand the brand awareness among the customers and their preferences and buying behaviours. This study was conducted to help Tolins Tyres to identify the brand awareness of their products among other competitors in the market and to help them identify the selection criteria and buying behaviour of customers while purchasing motorcycle tyres. Based on the brand awareness, the consideration set and preference set is identified which is the most preferred brands by the customers. Brand association is also a crucial factor to design the marketing events and campaigns and also to understand the strengths and weakness of the brand and its product offerings. The selection criteria considered by a buyer is the core benefits and attributes the brand should offer in order to attain competitive advantage over the other players in the market. This study finally recommends the organization the core benefits and attributes they should concentrate on in order to increase their sales and improve the brand image.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Aaker [1] “Brand equity is a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds to (or subtract from) the value provided by a product or services to a firm or the firm’s consumers.

One of the most important topics in marketing management is brand awareness. Brand awareness measures are used widely in researches as a measure of marketing effectiveness and brand performance. Brand awareness is meant to be one of the crucial components of a brand’s consumer-based brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Keller and Davey (2001) define building brand awareness as the method of confirming potential customers know the classes in which the brand is competing. Customers consider brand awareness as the basis of their equity and all other brand characteristic build on it. Likewise, Rossiter and Percy (1991) states that building brand awareness is the vital first step in building brand.

There are three widely used measures of brand awareness - top of the mind recall, unaided recall and aided recall. Top of the mind is the first brand recalled in response to the cue given as product category. Unaided recall is the other brand which is recalled without any cue other than the product category. Aided recall is the brands recalled after giving cues like logos or the brand name itself.

Some researchers have mentioned that particular measure of brand awareness is more appropriate than the other in specific situations. For example, Rossiter and Percy (1991) mentioned that at the time of purchase when the different options available are present for example, if the brands are displayed on a supermarket shelf, then aided brand awareness is more relevant, else unaided recall should be used. Dickson and Sawyer (1990) suggests that top of mind awareness is more appropriate when a choice among competing brands has to be made rapidly; they mentioned that this method has to be applied in low involvement and impulse purchases like those products in supermarkets (see also Franzen, 1999).

The consumer behaviour and attitude towards various brands is also a construct in this study. Multi-attribute Fishbein model uses attributes, beliefs, and weights as the basis for determining the propensity for a consumer to choose one option over another. Bettman and Lutz (1975) pointed out that Fishbein's multi attribute theory is found to demonstrate reasonably high construct validity. Individual differences in attribute combination rules are identified, and the issue of cognitive averaging vs. cognitive summation is raised.
This literature review inspects previous publications and researches that relate to customer’s knowledge about tyres, their purchase decision behaviour and decisions, and what they know about tyre, recycling, disposal and maintenance.

3. METHODOLOGY
In the explorative research primary data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews of tyre customers, i.e. two-wheeler users and tyre dealers and distributors. This included data collection pertaining to brand recall and also selection criteria for buying tyre. The secondary data was collected from various research articles and company documents. In the descriptive research a detailed questionnaire was designed to capture data pertaining to all the variables and the survey was conducted as a google form among 158 respondents. There was a second survey conducted in the descriptive phase to understand the brand preferences and importance of selection criteria obtained. The respondents were only from the state of Kerala as the company is wishing to develop their market in this area.

The questionnaire has two sections one covering the demographics of the respondent which includes Age, Gender, Education, Occupation etc. The subjective section comprised of questions related to brand awareness, selection criteria and buying behaviour. The second questionnaire was aimed at collecting data regarding the brand preferences based on the importance of selection criteria. The target audience included 84.9% of males and only 15.1% of females, which reflects that majority of the tyre customers are males. Most of them were in the age group 20-30 and majority of them were professionals.

4. RESULTS
The brand awareness was very high for MRF in all the three facets of brand awareness measurement with top of the mind recall of 49% and unaided recall of 44%. Bridgestone, Goodyear and JK Tyres followed MRF in top of the mind recall. For Tolins Tyres the top of the mind recall was 3% which is a very less value. Similarly, in Unaided recall, MRF, CEAT, Bridgestone and JK Tyres were the top players and Tolins has a better value of 7% unaided recall. In this study, the cues given for aided recall were the name of the brand and their logos.

![Figure 1 Top of the mind Recall](image1)

![Figure 2 Unaided Recall](image2)

![Figure 3 Aided Recall](image3)
Brand association was measured using attribute association benefit association and word association. Tolins brand has very less association to the benefits considered by customers and the competitors are far ahead of Tolins. Tolins should improve on all the aspects of benefits and attributes in order to compete with the other players in the industry. The word association was ascertained through the questionnaire where the respondents were asked to describe the word which they relate to the brand Tolins. The findings are shown in the graph. 12.6% of the respondents associate Tolins brand to the word Tyres and 11.6% of them associate to the word Grip.

Consumer preferences included preferences towards prices of tyres, type of tyre dealer, country of origin of Tyre Company and advertisement of tyres in motorcycle tyre. Apart from these the customers preference while purchasing new tyres for car/motorcycle, whether people will select the same tyres that came with his vehicle (OEM fitted) or will they switch to tyres of higher/lower price range was also captured. It was found that 62% of the people want to replace the tyres of their motorcycle with the tyre of the same company that came fitted from the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer). 6% of the people said that they would switch to any other brand of lower price and 32% said that they would switch to any other brand of higher price.

4.1. Reasons for selecting a particular option as given by the people were

- Buy the tyre of the same company, which came fitted with the original motorcycle at any quoted price.
  - The tyres that are fitted by the OEM are perceived to be better suited for the vehicle as the OEM fits them.
  - People are satisfied with the performance of the tyre that came fitted from the OEM.
- Switch to any other brand of lower price
  - Economy was the only reason given by these people for switching to any other brand of lower price.
- Switch to any other brand of higher price
  - The reason for selecting a brand of higher price was that people have the perception that higher the price, better the quality.

The price range of the tyres of motorcycle was divided into three-sub ranges: economy, premium and super premium. Premium came out as the dominant sub-range in case of front tyre of motorcycle but in case of rear tyre, Super Premium was the dominant sub-range. People prefer costlier tyre for the rear of motorcycle.

In case of preference of type of tyre dealer, 54% of the people preferred Exclusive Dealer, 40% of people preferred Composite Dealer. 6% of the people did not prefer a dealer as shown by the graph.
The major reasons given by people, who prefer Exclusive Dealer are:

- Exclusive Dealers are More Reliable
- Exclusive Dealer keep Original Tyres

The major reason given by people, who prefer Composite Dealer is:

- At Composite Dealer Customer can have variety with respect to different brands in tyre industry

![Figure 5 Preference of Dealer]

The Respondents were asked, whether country of origin (Indian or foreign) of tyre company make a difference to them. 63% of the people said that country of origin of Tyre Company does not make a difference to them and 37% of the people said that it makes a difference to them. These 37% of the people, who said that origin of Tyre company makes a difference to them, were asked which company (Indian or Foreign) they would prefer. 56% of them said that they would prefer Indian company and 44% of these people said that they would prefer Foreign Company as shown by the graph.

4.2. The reasons given by the people, who said that they would prefer Indian Tyre Company are

- These people have the perception that Tyres manufactured by Indian Companies are better suited for Indian roads.
- Awareness of people about Indian Tyre Companies is more.

4.3. The reason given by the people, who said that they would prefer Foreign Tyre Company is

- These people have the perception that foreign tyres have better quality than Indian tyres.

Buying roles was studied to determine the extent to which the end users were involved in the purchase decision for motorcycle tyres. This was necessary because branding is less effective in low involvement products. Mechanic influences the tyre purchasing decision the most followed by friends/family and tyre dealer and the brand ambassadors have little impact on the purchase decision. Hence Tolins need not spend on an advertisement with famous personality as the brand ambassador.
Figure 6 People Influencing Tyre Purchase Decision

A self-administered questionnaire was formed which included 24 most relevant variables from the above list. The respondents were asked to rate the variables on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 was lowest and 5 was highest) based on its importance in influencing their selection of a brand of car radial tyre. The data collected from the sample was put into SPSS and factor analysis was carried out. The results of factor analysis are as given below:

Table 1 Selection Criteria Obtained from Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Brand Image</th>
<th>2.68</th>
<th>4. Driving comfort</th>
<th>3.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Riding Comfort Provided</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Promotion</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>Ease of braking</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Experience</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5. Technological superiority</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto Magazines and Brochures</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Pattern of button/treads</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Advertisements</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction surveys</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Performance</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>Technical specifications</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durability</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>6. Safety 3.48</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Sales Service</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>Lower noise</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Value for money</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>Ease of driving on wet road</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>7. Opinion / Recommendation of Experts</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount Received</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>Mechanic Recommendations</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warranty Offered</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>Driver Recommendations</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Name</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Friends Recommendations</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>Dealer’s Recommendations</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. IMPORTANCE OF SELECTION CRITERIA

Figure 7 Importance of Selection Criteria

In the second survey conducted in the descriptive research phase, there were 59 respondents and they were asked to distribute 100 points among the selection criteria obtained in the factor analysis according to their importance in the selection of a brand of motorcycle tyre. The graph above shows the importance of various selection criteria.

According to chart 10, safety, performance and driving comfort provided by various brands of car radial tyre stand out to be the important factors. This means that the ease of driving on wet roads, durability, after sales service, ease of braking and riding comfort provided by the tyres are important variables for the end users.
An interesting revelation is the fact that looks of the tyre, recommendations of experts and technological superiority are considered as relatively less important factors by the end users when they decide on a particular brand of tyre.

5.1. Evaluation of Brands on Selection Criteria
The total number of respondents surveyed in the second phase was 59. These respondents were asked to rate the top six brands on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being lowest and 5 being highest) on the selection criteria identified. These ratings were averaged across all the respondents. Fishbein’s Multi-Attribute Model was used and the weighted score for each brand was calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
<th>JK</th>
<th>MRF</th>
<th>CEAT</th>
<th>Goodyear</th>
<th>Tolins</th>
<th>Bridgestone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>13.45</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money</td>
<td>14.09</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Comfort</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>15.71</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from table 4, the respondents perceived MRF to be the best brand in motorcycle tyre category. MRF was followed by Bridgestone and Goodyear respectively. The respondents rated MRF higher than other brands in all the eight selection criteria considered. This underlines the strong positive perception end users have about MRF. The respondents rated Bridgestone as the second highest in all the criteria except ‘Performance’. Tolins was rated the least in all the attributes except performance. The respondents perceived Tolins to be better than Bridgestone in ‘Performance’. This is particularly important because the respondents have rated ‘Performance’ as the second most important selection criterion.

These results can be utilised by Tolins to improve their brand image. Tolins should concentrate efforts on improving the safety of their products which is considered as the most important attribute by the target audience. They can capitalize on the performance attribute which is perceived to be very high by the target audience to strengthen their position in the market.

6. CONCLUSION
The study provided an insight on the overall brand awareness of various players in the motorcycle tyre industry and the customer buying behaviour and selection criteria. MRF is the brand with highest brand awareness and brand association. Tolins has to improve the brand awareness by aggressive marketing campaigns and increasing the visibility of their brand and products. Most customers prefer to purchase tyre from an exclusive dealer rather than a composite dealer and hence Tolins should build a network of their own exclusive showrooms for the distribution. Majority of the customers prefer purchasing tyre from an Indian manufacturer rather than a foreign player, and in the word association many of the respondents associated Tolins to Indian, so this can be capitalised by the company to increase
the sales. The biggest influencer in tyre purchase decision is the mechanic and the recommendation from friends/family but the final decision maker in buying tyres have majorly been taken by the customer itself.

In order to create and expand brand’s share, companies must realize the importance of increasing and leveraging the brand’s unaided and aided awareness. Marketing and integrated communication must be instigated, with unusual importance on customer relationship management and advertising, which plays essential roles in this route.

REFERENCES