# *An Evaluation of Brands Image, Product Attributes and Perceived Quality of a Selected Consumer Non-durable Product*

- Md. Enayet Hossain•

***Abstract***

*According to the author the purpose of the study is to test empirically the conceptualization of consumer brand evaluation: brandimage, brand attitude and perceived quality of a soft drink which is considered as a non-durable product. Ten attributes have been taken into consideration for the study. The findings support brand evaluation for the same product using different factors. Results of the study might be useful to academicians, manufacturers, and other applied researchers.*

## Introduction

Brand attributes consist of 'bits' of information that are linked to a brand name in consumer memory and that, when combined with the brand name, make up a brand's image (Keller, 1993). The brand attributes themselves come from a variety of sources, including consumer experiences, marketing communications, and/or word of mouth (Krishnan, 1996). The linkages between the brand name, its attributes, and other brands in the marketplace mean that associated attributes can be unique to the consumer, unique to the brand, or shared with other brands (Meyers-Levy, 1989). Soft drink is an important product item in modern society both urban and rural areas. Consumers mainly purchase the product for their refreshment. Today it has a web in various parties and picnics. Gradually it is becoming more popular in the consumers' world and its demand is world- wide (Nuruzzaman, 1996). Consumers purchase decisions for soft drinks are always influenced by a number of factors, which lead them to select a particular brand in preference to others. In this study ten attributes are considered as important cues, which lead consumer to select a particular brand of soft drink. This study examines products from a low involvement consumer product category. Researchers include brand, which is highly similar on measurable attributes such as caloric content. The reasoning is that the nature of the competitive marketplace

• Assistant Professor, Marketing Department, Rajasthan University, Bangladesh.

offers many brands within distinct subcategories and this may provide further understanding of brand choice relating to present market conditions.

**Related Terms**

**Brand:** The brand is conceptualized as a node in memory, which allows other information about the brand to be "anchored" to it (Aaker 1991). The conceptualization of a network of brand associations in memory with brand as a central core has been put forward by many others (Killer 1993, Holden 1993, Holden & Lutz 1992). A brand that is not considered cannot be chosen (Baker et al. 1986). Further, the probability of the brand being chosen is a condition of the number of other brands in the consideration set. Consumers may employ heuristics (decision rule) to buy only familiar, well-established brands (Roselius 1971, Jacoby et al. 1977 both cited in Keller 1993). For a consumer to buy a brand positive attitude must first be made but brand attitude cannot be formed and intention to buy cannot occur unless brand awareness occurs (Rossister & Perey, Rossister et al 1991).

**Brand image: A** brand image is the totality of consumer perceptions about the brand, or how they see it, which may not coincide with the brand identity. Brand image is defined as the reasoned or emotional perception consumers attach to specific brands (Dobni and Zinkhan,1990). A brand image consists of functional and symbolic brand beliefs. A measurement technique using semantic differential items generated for the relevant product category has been suggested for measuring brand image (Dolich, 1969; Fry and Claxton, 1971). Brand image associations are largely product category specific and measures should be customized for the unique characteristics of specific brand categories (Park and Srinivasan, 1994; Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Brand benefits are the foundation of brand image. Chiranjeeb (1997) claimed that a brand name itself is the foundation of brand image. In a broad sense purchase decisions are based almost solely upon the attitude existing at the time of purchase. The factors which may prevent consumers from converting their attitudes into intentions and buying behavior are very numerous and frequent (Wallendorf, 1979).

**Brand attitude:** Attitudes are not overt behaviors but rather are covert, or unobservable internal reactions (Kim 2002). It is one of the pervasive notions in all of the Marketing (Gillbert 1995). Formal attitudes are learned predispositions to respond to some object in a consistent way. The response may be favorable or unfavorable (Wallendorf, 1979)**.** Consumers learn these attitudes over time by

being exposed to the object directly or through receiving information about the object. Our learned attitudes serve as general guides to our overt behavior with respect to the attitude object, giving rise to a consistently favorable or unfavorable pattern of response.

**Product Attributes**: Product attributes are the benefits of products, and these benefits are the surface means used in advertisement and promotion offer to connect the brand with a motivation which influence brand attitude (Rossister, 1987). Nowadays, companies try to differentiate their products emphasizing some trivial attributes which in a real sense create no differences from those of its competitors' or, sometimes they are not actually used by consumers at all (Chowdhury & Islam 2003). Different techniques are suggested in the literature to find out which attributes consumers use to judge products (Snelders and Schoormans 2000). Making a product different from it's competitors by adding even a meaningless attribute can increase consumers' quality perception or can decrease perceived risk (Simonson and Tversky, 1992). It is evident that product attributes are most salient to the consumers (Garvin, 1983, 1984). In reality, during the decision for a dealing, it is assumed that consumers not only consider the present value of the products but also take the future performance or future associated with the product attributes into consideration (Chowdhury and Islam, 2003).

**Perceived Quality:** Perceived quality is defined as the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988; Aaker and Jacobson, 1994). For example, Sethuraman and Cole (1997) found that perceived quality explains a considerable portion of the variance in the price premium consumers are willing to pay for national brands. The perceived quality of products and services of strong brands add value to consumers' purchase evaluations.

**Non-Durable Products:** Soft drink has been considered as a consumer non-durable for the study. At present many brands of soft drink are being consumed in Bangladesh. Consumers can express their attachment and be loyal to a brand. Consumers avoid those brands which are not attributed as expected by them (Mia 1990). Consumers' purchase decisions for soft drinks are always influenced by a number of attributes that lead them to select a particular brand in preference to other available brands in the market. The present study is for measuring brand image based on perceived quality dimension. Low involvement products may be viewed differently from high involvement products. Low involvement products

are advertised and promoted frequently and consumers are likely to have formed a more objective view of the nature of the attributes, even those that are more abstract. We postulate that this may be an explanation for the difference in attributes.

**Soft Drinks:** Once upon a time a soft drink was considered as a prestigious product in Bangladesh and it has become acceptable to people of every age group. The first soft drink business was begun in 1783 as an artificial mineral water. Using the modern brand name, an Atlanta pharmacist began to sell Coca-Cola as a tonic in 1886 (Kotler, 1999). Mr. Sattar was the first entrepreneur to be involved with the marketing of soft drinks in 1965 in the then East Pakistan (Solaiman & Chowdhury 1996).

**Justification of the study**

Many national companies of various countries are deregulating and encouraging market forces to operate. Multinational companies are also aggressively moving into new markets and practising global marketing by maintaining conformance of quality and brand positioning. Consumers of a product also are getting multiple options to choose their product or brands by considering quality and other features.

Quality "lies in the eyes of the beholder" (Garvin, 1984). Individual consumers are assumed to have different wants or needs, and those goods that best satisfy their preferences are regarded as having the highest quality (Edwards 1968; Kuehn and Day, 1962). This is an idiosyncratic personal view of quality, and one that is highly subjective (Garvin, 1984).

A quality product is one that provides references at an acceptable price (Broch 1982; Feigenbaum, 1961). Consumers are for value that will best satisfy their needs and wants. They are for products that best satisfy their preferences with minimum cost i.e. they expect the highest quality of the products. In the consumer oriented markets intrinsic quality is becoming a basic expectation of customers (Carpenter Glazer, and Nakamoto, 1994). Product attributes as well as psychological mechanisms may influence the purchase of products. Some, of these attribute beliefs create a strong sense of preference in consumers mind; (Barringer, Foster, and Macy, 1999; Bloch and Richins, 1983). Today's consumers are very conscious about various soft drinks. This study will help the marketers to know consumer choice of their brands. After knowing this, company or marketers can take an efficient and effective measures to persuade the

consumers. Manufacturing companies should be well informed about the dimension of quality emphasized by consumers for taking their purchase decision. Research is a careful inquiry or examination to discover new information or relationships and to expand and to verity knowledge (Abedin, 1996). The quality of a product and its brand image is becoming an important competitive issue in the global market place.

**Objectives and Research Questions**

The overall purpose of the study is to test empirically consumers' brand evaluation brand image, brand attitude and quality perception. The specific objectives of the research are first, to measure the image of brands, second, to investigate the impact of brand image and the attributes on brand preferences; and third to provide suggestion to managers of brands and other related bodies for practical measurement of the brand image based on different attributes of quality perception.

**Brands and Attributes Selection:** Different foreign and local brands of soft drinks are available in the market. The brands Coca-Cola, Pepsi, 7up, Sprite, Pran and Rc-Cola have regular demand, supply, and sales in Bangladesh. The respondents cited about twenty attributes. But only ten e.g. attributes, Taste/ Flavor, Digestion, Calorie Content, Sugar Content, Pungency, Price, Color, Hygien, Brand Image and Power of Freshness were taken into consideration for the convenience of the study.

**Sample Respondents:** The student sample has been used in this study.

**Sample Size**: The sample size is reduced into 300. Besides, 80 respondents provided their opinions for pre-testing questionnaire but they are not included here.

**Data Collection Method and Procedures:** Data were collected from students of different years and departments, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. A set of structured pre tested questionnaires were used. The data were collected from the 15 dormitories including three female dormitories of the said University on random basis. In the surface page of the questionnaire, the purpose of the study is mentioned. The respondents were kept informed regarding the attributes of soft drink through the seven point scale ranging from Very Strongly Believe to Very Strongly Disbelieve (7 to 1). This scale is widely used in comparing brand,

product and company images (Malhotra et al. 1996). There were 300 questionnaires for overall evaluation.

**Data Analysis Procedures:** Collected data were analyzed using statistical tools of computer programs *viz.* Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The findings of the study are presented in a manner that meets the purpose of the study.

**Findings of the Study**

The data from the survey were coded and entered for statistical analysis. The data obtained were analyzed by using " Factor Analysis" for identification of the 'key factors' preferred by the consumers. Factor analysis identifies common dimensions of factors from the observed variables that have a high correlation with the observed variables.

**Correlation Matrix Analysis:** For confirmatory factor analysis, computation of correlation is essential. It is done to determine the appropriateness of the factor analytic model. If there is high correlation (≥.8) between two independent variables those should be excluded from the factor analysis. The mentioned correlation matrix (Table: 1) has displayed correlation between the variables mean and standard deviation of the scale items and reliability alpha coefficient for each variable. This table indicated that all of the variables are significantly correlated to each other. The table also has indicated that all the scale items used in this study for data collection were reliable as the coefficient alpha value for none of the value is below .06 as suggested by Churchill and Peter (1984). For facto analysis, correlation matrix is necessary for testing significance and Cronbech's Alpha help to coefficient of internal consistency in difference factors, which produce a reliable scale. From the correlation matrix table one it is clear that all are Significant at P< .05 and Alpha values are ≥ .7 for each individual item (Nunnally 1994 cited Kumar et al 2005; Azam, 2004, 2005). The overall Cronbach Alpha values were calculated as .7988 for the ten explained variables, which has been expressed as highly satisfactory.

**Anti-image Correlation:** The anti image correlation matrix has been used to asses the sampling adequacy of each variable for mentioned product. The measures of sampling adequacy have been displayed on the diagonal of the ant-image correlation matrix (Table: 2). The variables with a measure of sampling accuracy that falls below the acceptable level of .5 should be excluded from the analysis for getting actual prediction. Inspection of the anti image correlation matrix reveals that all measures of sampling accuracy are well above the

acceptable level .5 (Coakes and Steed, 2001). From the given table 2 it is clear that no correlation value is < .5 each and every correlated value is acceptable ≥. 5. Therefore, each variable could be used for confirmatory factor analysis without reservation.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):** Factor analysis is a generic term for a family of statistical techniques concerned with the reduction of a set of observable variables in terms of a small number of latent factors. It has been developed primarily for analyzing relationships among a number of measurable entities (such as survey items or test scores). The underlying assumption of factor analysis is that there exist a number of unobservable latent variables (or "factors") that account for the correlations among observed variables, such that if the latent variables are partial out or held constant, the partial correlations among observed variables all become zero. In other words, the latent factors determine the values of the observed variables (Habib et al. 2005). The obtained data for the study have been analyzed following Confirmatory Factor Analysis" for identification of the 'key factors' preferred by the respondents. Factor analysis has been done systematically to find out the actual variables under each construct.

**Rotated Component Matrix:** Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation (Table 4) was performed on the survey data. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is the commonly used method for grouping the variables under few unrelated factors. Variable with a factor loading ≥ 0.5 are grouped under a factor. A factor loading is the correlation between the original variable with the specific factor and the key to understanding the nature of that particular factor (Debasish, 2004). Table 4 has provided the varimax rotated factor loadings against the mentioned10 variables. Moreover, factor analysis using Varimax rotation finds three derived factors. According to table 4, Factor 1 (F1) has an Eigen value of 3.828 and explains 38.281% of total variance. The Eigen values of the second factor, and third factor are 1.221 and 1.152 with explained variance 12.206% and 11.524% respectively. The cumulative variance accounted for by all the three factors was 62.011%.

**Scree Plot Analysis:** Scree Plot is formed by plotting the number of factors against their respective Eigen values (Hackett and Foxall 1999). In the present analysis (Figure1), an elbow in the Scree Plot suggests the retention of three factors (factors one to three may be connected by a line in a more vertical plane, whilst factors four to ten join in a more horizontal plane). Together the three

factors accounted for 62.011% of the cumulative variance. The Eigen values for the three factors were: factor 1 (3.828), factor 2 (1.221), and factor 3(1.152).

**Discussion of Findings:** The result of the initial estimation of the CFA was shown a well-fitting model. From the output of KMO and Bartlett's Test (Table: 3) it was absolutely clear to the researcher that samples taken were absolutely accurate and sampling accuracy was .839 which was far greater than .6 (Coakes and Steed, 2001). From the Rotated Components Matrix (Table: 4) it is found that factor one (F1) run with the significant variables Taste/ Flavor (T/F) with loading .824, Sugar Content (SC) bearing value .796, like these Brand Image (BI) .748, Digestive (DG) .685, Pungent (PG) .617, Color (CL) .547, Calorie Content (CC) .498 have individual loading value. For Factor two (F2) the significant variables were: Price (PR) .806, Hygienic (HG) .804, and finally for Factor three (F3), the significant variables is Freshness Power (FP) with loading value .862. Variable Calorie Content (CC) with value .498 was also considered as explanatory variable as the loading value almost .5 (.498). From the factor analysis it is clear that Taste/ Flavor, Sugar Content, Brand, Image Digestive, Pungent, Color, Calorie Content variables are grouped under the component one. It is also found that variables Price and Hygienic .804 are grouped under component two like these Freshness Power came under the component three.

**Implications of the Research Findings**

This study was focused on the identification of different influential variables that lead consumers to choose a non-durable product. The research findings may help producers, policy-makers to understand what key factors helped implement successful competitive strategies in the competitive market. These results are likely to help academicians and marketers to collect information and plan appropriate competitive strategies based on the three above components, which they prefer to develop. The selection of appropriate target markets, the development of strong product image, promotion and operation for domestic market may be recommended as specific marketing plans. More specific implication supported by consumers in this study is that product management organizations might need to play an important role as facilitators between local company and agencies for market development. The establishment of effective linkages between local organization and agencies is recommended in order to improve market competitiveness in the long run. Lastly, establishing effective cost strategies in providing different levels of quality and various types of attribute experiences can be recommended for developing market as a competitive business for the country. Finally it can be said that marketers stand to

benefit from favorable consumer attitudes, as reflected in the consistency of consumer behaviors with respect to their brand, for example brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Kim, 2002). Homogeneous respondents (as real consumer) were used for collecting data for this study. By this study the academicians, therefore, can get an idea about the theory application in marketing research.

**Limitations and Further Research**

Different limitations are found in this study and they should be addressed to encourage more sound research in the future. This study investigated the influential variables that lead consumers to perceive quality perception with brand image and product attributes perspectives in Bangladesh. A study of a representative sample of general users can vary the findings of this study that are applicable to the general people. Only 300 consumers were taken as respondents for the study from the Rajshhai University. Other categories' consumers may express different perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors concerning the issues presented in this study. The use of student subjects inhibits the generalization of these findings to other populations. Further research may be conducted to assess executives' perceptions of different brands benefits and risks for each attribute of soft drink with other catagories. The surveyed data were only collected from Rajshahi University. This study somewhat limited in its selection of observed variables. Even if those observed variables were selected based on the survey, other variables may exist to achieve further insights of product selection. This study did not include any preferences and satisfaction variables to see what and how much choice works in the market.

**Conclusion**

Basically this study considered the effect of intangible and tangible attributes on brand image development as well as its relationship to consumer preferences. There is a strong relationship between brand image and each of the preference measures utilized in the study. Across this category, the brand with the greater market share yielded substantially higher levels of brand acceptability. In turn, the brand with the higher image in the category generated significantly greater preference. The findings highlight the need to gain an understanding of the impacts of taken attributes and their contribution to brand image and preference under different components. It might have been expected that brand name may have greater importance than overall preference for the brand, given the less abstract nature of this product category. This finding should be viewed with caution, since the products used in the study were non-durable products. Finally

the measurement and management of brand image have become top priority marketing issues in recent years, as evidenced by the growing literature on the subject. Most articles automatically assume that brand image has an impact on a brand's performance. However, it does not make sense economically to invest a firm's scarce resources in strategies to add value if the value does not translate into preferences and purchase behavior. Firms need empirical evidence of the consequences of brand image. The present study demonstrated that selected ten attributes together help to build up brand image in the market. From the statistical analysis it is found that ten attributes come under three component which create the product image and indicate product perceived quality perception.

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**Table: 1, Correlations Matrix, Descriptive Statistics and Scale's Reliability**

| VA | T/ F | DG | PR | CL | CC | SC | PG | HG | BI | FP | MV | SD | AV | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T/ F | 1.000 | .537 | .222 | .377 | .402 | .585 | .455 | .247 | .567 | .047 | 4.9700 | 1.5483 | .7595 | 300 |
| DG | | 1.000 | .224 | .270 | .423 | .505 | .305 | .258 | .397 | .008 | 4.6900 | 1.2078 | .7750 | 300 |
| PR | | | 1.000 | .200 | .218 | .164 | .249 | .431 | .158 | .150 | 4.1833 | 1.5245 | .7969 | 300 |
| CL | | | | 1.000 | .324 | .368 | .416 | .272 | .357 | .089 | 4.3067 | 1.4900 | .7801 | 300 |
| CC | | | | | 1.000 | .413 | .348 | .369 | .195 | -.092 | 4.2367 | 1.0477 | .7832 | 300 |
| SC | | | | | | 1.000 | .381 | .225 | .497 | .098 | 4.7833 | 1.2550 | .7673 | 300 |
| PG | | | | | | | 1.000 | .255 | .443 | .141 | 4.5133 | 1.2335 | .7724 | 300 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HG | | | | | | | | 1.000 | .247 | .138 | 3.9600 | 1.2370 | .7845 | 300 |
| BI | | | | | | | | | 1.000 | .263 | 5.4033 | 1.3139 | .7679 | 300 |
| FP | | | | | | | | | | 1.000 | 5.4400 | 1.4306 | .8192 | 300 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N of Cases = 300.0, N of Items = 10, Alpha = .7988, Standardized item alpha = .8049, MV= Mean Value, SD=standard Deviation, AV= alpha Value, N= number of Respondents

**Table: 2, Anti-image Correlation**

| VA | T/ F | DG | PR | CL | CC | SC | PG | HG | BI | FP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T/ F | .854 | | | | | | | | | |
| DG | -.235 | .881 | | | | | | | | |
| PR | -6.4E-02 | -8.2E-02 | .760 | | | | | | | |
| CL | -6.3E-02 | 2.140E-02 | -3.1E-02 | .909 | | | | | | |
| CC | -.107 | -.189 | -2.2E-03 | -.106 | .808 | | | | | |
| SC | -.253 | -.205 | 3.07E-02 | -.104 | -180 | .879 | | | | |
| PG | -.144 | 2.746E-02 | -.104 | -.209 | -156 | -2.89E-02 | .884 | | | |
| HG | 2.6E-02 | -3.63E-02 | -.347 | -8.924E-02 | -252 | 3.014E-02 | 6.796E-04 | .772 | | |
| BI | -.315 | -.106 | 7.229E-02 | -9.654E-02 | .161 | -.189 | -.192 | -9.653E-02 | .814 | |
| FP | 9.8E-02 | 5.823E-02 | -.109 | -6.548E-03 | .159 | -5.709E-02 | -6.541E-02 | -9.011E-02 | -.228 | .574 |

a Measures of Sampling Adequacy(MSA)

Notes: VA= Variables, T/F=Taste/ Flavor, DG=Digestive, PR=Price, CL=Color, CC=Calorie Content, SC=Sugar Content, PG=Pungent, HG=Hygienic, BI=Brand Image, FP=Freshness Power.

**Table: 3, KMO and Bartlett's Test**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .839 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 837.668 |
| | df | 45 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

**Table: 5, Component Transformation Matrix**

| Component | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .900 | .435 | .032 |
| 2 | -.329 | .630 | .703 |
| 3 | .286 | -.643 | .710 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

**Table: 4, Rotated Component Matrix and Total Variance Explained**

| | Component | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| T/F | **.824** | 9.947E-02 | -4.279E-02 |
| SC | **.796** | 5.893E-02 | -3.474E-02 |
| BI | **.748** | 2.637E-02 | .375 |
| DG | **.685** | .175 | -.221 |
| PG | **.617** | .253 | .153 |
| CL | **.547** | .269 | 5.928E-02 |
| CC | .498 | .426 | -.462 |
| PR | 9.303E-02 | **.806** | .111 |
| HG | .196 | **.804** | 1.695E-02 |
| FP | 9.773E-02 | .164 | **.862** |
| **Eigenvalue** | **3.828** | **1.221** | **1.152** |
| **% of Variance** | **38.281** | **12.206** | **11.524** |
| **Cumulative %** | **38.281** | **50.487** | **62.011** |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

**Figure: 1, Scree Plot**