

Role of Price and Quality in Shaping Consumer Perception of Shoes Brands: A Case of Kathmandu Valley

Prerak Thapa and Ramesh Rawat*

Abstract

This study examines the role of price and quality in shaping consumer perception in shoes brands in Kathmandu valley. Customer perception of quality is the dependent variable. The selected independent variables are price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, and socio economic status for consumer. The primary source of data is used to assess the opinions of respondents regarding price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, and socio economic status for consumer and customer perception of quality. The study is based on primary data of 119 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation and multiple regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of role of price and quality in shaping consumer perception if shoes brands in Kathmandu valley.

The study showed a positive impact of price range on customer perception of quality. It indicates that repair and maintenance service leads to increase in customer perception of quality. Similarly, the study showed a positive impact of spare part supply on customer perception of quality. It indicates that easily available of spare part supply leads to an increase in customer perception of quality. Likewise, the study also revealed a positive impact of services camp on customer perception of quality. It indicates that provision of services camp leads to an increase in customer perception of quality. Further, the study observed a positive impact of mileage on customer perception of quality. It indicates that higher the mileage, higher would be the customer perception of quality. In addition, the study observed a positive impact of price on customer perception of quality. It indicates that affordable price leads to an increase in customer perception of quality.

Keywords: price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, socio economic status for consumer, customer perception of quality

1. Introduction

A brand is a name, a term, a symbol, or any other unique element of a product that identifies one firm's products and sets them apart from the competition. A brand has also been defined as, a distinguishing name and symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. Washburn and Plank (2002) argued brand equity, specifically consumer-based brand equity, can be measured according to four elements – brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association. Here, consumer-based means that cognitive and behavioral brand equity at the individual consumer level through a consumer survey (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). It is important to examine which of the brand equity elements is important for consumers to recognize brand value and also to make a purchase decision. Keller (1993) stated that consumer-based brand equity is the differential marketing effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand, and it arises from a brand that is familiar to customers and is associated in their memories.

Footwear is manufactured according to the needs of the consumers and therefore priority should be given to the consumers (Saeed & Baig, 2013). Fashion clothing inhabits

* Mr. Thapa is a Freelance Researcher, Kathmandu, Nepal and Mr. Rawat is the Research Faculty, Uniglobe College (Pokhara University affiliate), Kathmandu, Nepal.

a focal position in the industry and is more than a basic need in the lives of many people. According to O'Cass (2004), the understanding of participating antecedents and consequences in the fashion industry is important because of the economic value of the industry, its social function and the meaning it has for consumers. There is renewed interest in research on fashion cues, perceived quality and consumer satisfaction, particularly with regard to apparel (Kang & Park-Poaps 2011). South Africa is an emerging economy, with retail expected to address the needs of a diverse consumer population (Prinsloo, 2011). Footwear is associated with social status, and fashion aspects are an important criterion that often dominate shoe design (Krauss *et al.*, 2010).

Branding is a result of the promotional activities undertaken by companies (Hsiung, 2011). Hu *et al.* (2009) stated that branding comprises three components, that is, the image of the product itself, followed by the corporation's image, and lastly, the image of competitors' brands. Eze *et al.* (2012) stated that consumers do not express their intentions by purchasing products based on the image of the brand, by demonstrating that brand name is not always prioritized by consumers in making their purchases. The relations between brand equity dimensions had also effect on brand equity. Brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty were the significant dimensions of brand equity (Yoo *et al.*, 2000). Building brand equity is considered an important part of brand building (Keller, 1998). Brand equity has shown it strategic roles and importance in gaining competitive advantage and in strategic management decisions.

Brand equity is the appropriate tool for evaluating long run impact of marketing decisions (Simon & Sullivan, 1993). Brand equity generates revenue, lower costs, and higher profits and it has direct implications for the firm's ability to command higher prices, customer's willingness to seek out new distribution channels, the effectiveness of marketing communications and the success of brand extensions and licensing opportunities (Keller, 2003). Marketing strategy is taken as important tools for establishing brand equity. Marketing elements like advertising expenditures, sales force, public relations, slogans or jingles, symbols and packages, warranties, and event marketing have been 6 proposed as factors contributing to brand equity (Keller, 2002).

Marketing actions have the potentiality to affect brand equity because it represents the effect of accumulated marketing investments into the brand. Brand name recognition with strong associations, perceived quality of product, and brand loyalty can be developed through careful long-term investment (Yoo *et al.*, 2000). When making a decision about marketing actions, managers need to consider their potential impact on brand equity (Keller, 1998).

Ahmad and Sherwani (2015) found brand perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness and brand loyalty had significant positive relation with brand equity. Also, brand equity had significant positive relations with customer satisfaction. Alhaddad (2015) found that perceived quality, brand image and brand trust as determinants of brand loyalty. Al- Bhukya (2015) investigated the determinants of customer-based retailer brand equity as an empirical verification approach from Indian large retail market. Major objective of the study was to examine and very the applicability of customer based brand equity model. Kavosh and Asadi (2014) found that distribution channels had positive effect on perceived quality. Performance of distribution channels had positive effect on brand loyalty. Value based pricing had shown effect on brand loyalty. Brand image had effect on brand loyalty. Perception of quality (perceived quality) had the highest effect and the customer obligation had the lowest effect on customers' loyalty of Minoos Corporation.

Hosseini and Moezzi (2015) found that price and perceived quality were not significantly related. Price and brand loyalty were significant but negatively correlated. Firm image and perceived quality were significantly correlated. Distribution intensity and perceived quality were not significantly correlated. Hou and Wonglorsaichon (2015) found that brand awareness was positively related to brand trust. Brand trust was positively related to brand equity. Brand image had indirect impact on brand equity through perceived quality and brand trust. Perceived had an indirect impact on brand loyalty through influence of brand trust. Brand loyalty was positively related to brand equity. Lei and Chu (2015) found that perceived quality, perceived value and price premium had a significant dimension of brand equity. Behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty was effective on brand loyalty. Brand equity had positively influenced on consumer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction had positively influenced on brand loyalty. Brand equity had positively influenced brand loyalty. Consumer satisfaction had mediated the influence of brand equity on brand loyalty.

Nasarbadi and Zandi (2015) confirmed that significant relationship was found between price with brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty of Samsung Company. Type of product had shown significant relationship with brand awareness, perceived quality. Piaralal and Mei (2015) found that strong relationship was indicated between brand equity and perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand image. Perceived quality reported as the highest contributor to brand equity. Alhaddad (2014) showed that brand loyalty and brand image had significant positive effect on brand equity. Buu and Lang (2014) found brand awareness and associations had positive effect on 49 perceived quality of brand. Brand awareness and associations had positive effect on trust of brand. Perceived quality of brand had positive effect on trust of brand.

Dib and Alhaddad (2014) found that that brand awareness had significant positive effect on perceived quality, brand trust and brand equity. Brand trust also had significant positive effect on brand loyalty as well as brand equity. Perceived quality had significant positive effect of on brand loyalty. Perceived quality did not influence both brand trust and brand equity. Kavosh and Asadi (2014) found that distribution channels had positive effect on perceived quality. Performance of distribution channels had positive effect on brand loyalty. Value based pricing had shown effect on brand loyalty. Brand image had effect on brand loyalty. Perception of quality (perceived quality) had the highest effect and the customer obligation had the lowest effect on customers' loyalty of Minoo Corporation.

In the context of Nepal, Shrestha (2011) explained brand equity as the value that a brand has for a particular organization or company. Mahato (1991) defined brand equity with the major elements: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and other proprietary brand assets. Koirala and Shrestha (2015) empirically confirmed and validated the brand equity model is suitable in the context of Nepalese leather shoe brands. Shrestha (2011) depicted perceived quality positively contributes to increase the brand equity of higher education on MBA academic program in Nepal. Shrestha (2011) measured on brand equity of dairy milk brands in Nepal.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the role of price and quality in shaping consumer perception in shoes brands. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to examine the role of price and quality in shaping consumer perception in shoes brands in Kathmandu Valley. Specifically, it examines the relationship of price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, and socio economic status for consumer with role of price and quality in shaping consumer perception in shoes brands in Kathmandu Valley.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: section two describes the sample, data, and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and final section draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data which were collected from 119 respondents through questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, socio economic status for consumer and customer perception of quality. This study is based on descriptive as well as causal comparative research designs.

The model

The model estimated in this study assumes that customer perception of quality depends upon various factors. The dependent variable selected for the study is customer perception of quality. Similarly, the selected independent variables are price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, socio economic status for consumer. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

Customer perception of quality = f (price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategies, socio economic status for consumer)

More specifically,

$$CPQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PR + \beta_2 BR + \beta_3 PDI + \beta_4 MAS + \beta_5 SCSC + e$$

Where,

CPQ = Consumer perception of quality

PR = Price range

BR = Brand reputation

MAS = Marketing and advertising strategy

PDI = Product design and innovation

SCSC = Socio economic status for consumer

Price range was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "The price range of a shoe brand is a significant factor in determining its perceived quality", "Higher-priced shoes brand are generally perceived to have better quality compared to lower priced ones" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.926$).

Brand reputation was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly

agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “A shoe brands reputation significantly influences my perception of its quality”, “I believe that shoe brands with a strong reputation generally offer higher-quality products” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.932$).

Product design and innovation were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Innovative product design enhances my perception of a shoe brand’s quality.”, “I believe that shoe brands known for innovative designs generally offer higher-quality products”, and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.951$).

Marketing and advertising strategy was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The marketing strategies used by a shoe brand significantly impact my perception of its product quality”, “Shoe brands with effective distribution channels are more likely to be perceived as offering high-quality products” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.954$).

Socio economic status for consumer was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The socio-economic status of consumers significantly influences their perception of shoe brand quality”, “The socio-economic status of consumers affects their expectations regarding the quality of shoe brands”, and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.933$).

Consumer perception of quality was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “A shoe brands reputation significantly influences my perception of its quality”, “I believe that shoe brands with a strong reputation generally offer higher-quality products” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.932$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with the hypothesis formulation.

Price range

Price is a factor that must be controlled harmoniously with the goal achieved by the company. According to Ashaduzzaman *et al.* (2011), price is an amount of money that is charged on a product or service or a number of value that consumer exchanges with the benefit from having or using a service product that is exchanged. The price that is paid by the consumer is influenced by the consumer’s income. Likewise, Wei *et al.* (2014) suggested that price is the second important factor for consumer so that the operator can decrease the service fee and can increase the network facility. From marketing point of view, price is a monetary unit or other measurement (service and other item) that was exchanges to get the possession or using right of a service or thing. Similarly, Shiraj (2014) stated the relation between customer’s value and market price from a long-lasting product category. The result supported the claim that price is based on value although it is more superior to other price

policy; however, it is not yet set as the most superior practice. Setting a low price can increase price fairness perceived, decrease financial risk and strengthen higher buying intention from price strategy held (Lan and Sheng, 2014). Consumer evaluation is influenced by the attraction of high quality and low price and retailer context. The attraction from the same level is from the price desired and the willingness to pay, buying intention that is higher for the price desired and quality perception (Alnazer, 2013). The attractiveness of advertising and pricing strategies could increase consumer perceptions and purchase intentions (Wu, 2014). With the high brand awareness and low brand awareness, price discount was more effective than premium price (Othman and Rahman, 2014). The price sensitivity had a significantly moderate effect to quality value and consumer buying intention (Rajput *et al.*, 2012). Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between price range and consumer perception of quality.

Brand reputation

Brand image is a perception on brand that is the reflection of consumer's memory on toward the association of its brand (Kessuvan *et al.*, 2015). According to Dib and Alnazer (2013) found that brand image is a kind of associations in the consumer's minds when considering a particular brand. The association can be the memories about the brand's character, traits, strengths, and weaknesses of the brand. By creating the right brand image of a product, it will influence consumer evaluation on the alternative brand (Aylar, 2012). According to Kazemi *et al.* (2014) the present purchase is directly influenced by brand awareness and indirectly by brand image, brand equity influences purchase decision (Goh, 2014). Torlak *et al.* (2014) found that brand can give a big benefit to the producer and consumer, brand can make a certain level where a satisfied consumer can choose the product easier so that the brand can increase the value for the consumer. Interactivity and attitude had a significant positive effect to the attitude on brand that in time will have a positive effect to the purchase decision (koshki *et al.*, 2014). Fuad (2012) found that the brand image is not the only factor that significantly influenced in choosing a product or brand to buy. There are other aspects such as quality, convenience, expectations and demographic characteristics also influence the purchase decision. Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between brand reputation and consumer perception of quality.

Product design and innovation

Design innovation plays a key role in determining product success and prior research has demonstrated its substantial impact by using a variety of products ranging from core to expect ones. The stand-alone market for augmented products is already sizable today and is expected to grow continuously. For instance, sales of mobile accessories reached \$81.5 billion globally in 2015, and are expected to grow to \$101 billion in 2020 (Shrestha, 2011). Design innovation consists of aesthetics, features, and emotional or symbolic aspects, and serves as the antecedent of perceived value that, in turn, determines purchasing behavior (Homburg *et al.*, 2015). In fact, prior research on this topic centers on core and expected products while leaving augmented products under studied. Thus, product innovation investigate the relationships among design innovation, perceived value, and purchase intention for augmented products. Notably, varied purchase and usage experiences can create different evaluations of the same product, leading to different perceived value (Babin *et al.*, 1994).

Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between product design and innovation and consumer perception of quality.

Marketing and advertising strategies

Advertisement effectiveness and different techniques which can be used for measuring advertisement effectiveness (Beerli and Santana, 1999). According to Neal and Bathe (1997), advertisement effectiveness can be judged either by examining whether the advertisement have led to an increase in the number of consumers who would consider the product/service or by investigating whether the promotional campaign improved the value of the product/service in the consumers' collective mind, thus increasing the number of customers who would choose the product/service. Similarly, Neal and Bathe (1997) showed how measuring brand value can be used for testing advertisement effectiveness and how this measurement system can differentiate between changing a brand's perceived performance and changing how consumers view the entire category. Beerli and Santana (1999) showed that the copy testing which they designed was valid, reliable, sensitive and independent in its applications and could as such be applied in similar promotional campaigns. Korgaonkar et al. (1984) found that competition among firms has an important impact on advertisement effectiveness. The study indicated that as competition decreases the probability that an advertising campaign will be successful increases. Murphy and Maynard (1996) studied advertisement effectiveness by investigating the cognitive conflict between advertising agencies and their clients. Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₄: There is a positive relationship between marketing and advertising strategies and consumer perception of quality.

Socio economic status of consumer

Socioeconomic status has also been a frequent and important segmentation criterion in research on education (Shrestha, 2013). There are many reasons for the central role of the concept of socioeconomic status across multiple disciplines. Socioeconomic status determines an individual's opportunities and challenges in all realms of life and provides information about an individual's access to social and economic resources (Duncan *et al.*, 2002). Despite the fact that social class has been widely utilized in marketing research over the past seven decades, relatively limited attention has been paid to the construct itself. This dearth of research on the measurement of social class is also noted in other disciplines. A recent report by a task force commissioned by the American Psychological Association (Saeed *et al.*, 2006) recommended that the APA establish a continuing Committee on Socioeconomic Status to ensure that issues of SES receive more attention by APA members, calling for more research in the conceptualization and measurement of SES. Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₅: There is a positive relationship between socio economic statuses of consumer and consumer perception of quality.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this

purpose, Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients along with mean and standard deviation has been computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall’s Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 119 observations. The dependent variable is CPQ (Customer perception of quality). The independent variables are PR (Price range), BR (Brand reputation), PDI (Product design and innovation), MAS (Marketing and advertising strategy), and SESC (socio economic status of consumer).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	CPQ	PR	BR	PDI	MAS	SESC
CPQ	3.978	0.853	1					
PR	3.977	0.868	0.699**	1				
BR	3.862	0.558	0.534**	0.453**	1			
PDI	3.862	0.951	0.660**	0.641**	0.640**	1		
MAS	3.984	0.969	0.514**	0.505**	0.453**	0.682**	1	
SESC	3.953	0.909	0.570**	0.512**	0.499**	0.641**	0.565**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively

Table 1 shows the Kendall’s correlation coefficients of dependent and independent variables. The study indicates that price range is positively correlated to customer perception of quality. Likewise, brand reputation are positively correlated to the customer perception of quality indicating that higher the brand reputation, higher will would be the customer perception of quality. Similarly, product design and innovation is positively correlated to customer perception of quality indicating that better product design and innovation lead to increase in customer perception of quality. Furthermore, marketing and advertising strategy is positively correlated to customer perception of quality. This implies supportive marketing and advertising strategy leads to increase in customer perception of quality. However, socio economic status for consumer is positively correlated to the improvement customer perception of quality. It shows that proper socio economic status for consumer leads to increase perception of quality of shoe brand in Kathmandu valley.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it shows the regression results of price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategy and socio economic status for consumer on consumer perception of quality

Table 2

Estimated regression result of price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategy and socio economic status for consumer on consumer perception of quality

The results are based on 119 observations using linear regression model. The model is $CPQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PR + \beta_2 BR + \beta_3 PDI + \beta_4 MAS + \beta_5 SESC + \epsilon$, where the dependent variable is CPQ (Customer perception of quality). The independent variables are PR (Price range), BR (Brand reputation), PDI (Product design and innovation), MAS (Marketing and advertising strategy), and SESC (socio economic status of consumer).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R _{bar} ²	SEE	F-value
		PR	BR	PDI	MAS	SESC			
1	0.221 (0.812)**	0.898 (13.603)**					0.607	0.500	185.040
2	0.856 (2.970)**		0.784 (10.634)**				0.485	0.572	113.080
3	0.238 (1.118)**			0.939 (17.336)**			0.716	0.425	300.524
4	0.238 (1.118)**				0.856 (13.932)**		0.619	0.492	194.112
5	0.626 (2.530)**					0.812 (13.327)**	0.597	0.506	177.609
6	0.137 (0.502)**	0.731 (6.368)**	0.198 (1.771)**				0.614	0.495	95.761
7	0.074 (0.317)**	0.241 (1.978)**	0.049 (0.484)**	0.778 (6.741)**			0.721	0.421	103.235
8	0.045 (0.192)*	0.218 (1.787)	0.112 (1.027)**	0.669 (5.020)**	0.198 (1.597)**		0.724	0.419	79.099
9	0.042 (0.183)	0.122 (0.967)	0.132 (1.236)*	0.715 (5.422)	0.028 (0.182)**	0.297 (2.435)**	0.735	0.410	67.177

Note:

1. Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
2. The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
3. Consumer perception of quality is the dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for price range are positive with the consumer perception of quality. It indicates that price range has positive impact on the consumer perception of quality. Likewise, the beta coefficients for brand reputation are positive with the consumer perception of quality. It indicates that brand reputation have positive impact on the consumer perception of quality. In addition, the beta coefficients for product design and innovation are positive with the consumer perception of quality. It indicates that product design and innovation has a positive impact on the consumer perception of quality. Further, the beta coefficients for marketing and advertising strategy are positively related with the consumer perception of quality. It indicates that marketing and advertising strategy has a positive impact on the consumer perception of quality. Moreover, the beta coefficient for socio economic status of consumer are positively related with the consumer perception of quality. It indicates that socio economic status of consumer has a positive impact on the consumer perception of quality.

4. Summary and conclusion

Brand equity became one of the most important marketing concepts since 1980s and it has been defined as, a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers. Brand equity as the value that a brand has for a particular organization or company. Brand equity provides a competitive advantage because it gives the brand the power to capture and hold into a larger share of the market and to sell at prices with higher profit.

This study attempts to examine the role of price and quality in shaping consumer perception of shoe brands: A case of Kathmandu Valley. The study is based on primary data with 119 observations.

The major conclusion of the study is that price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategy and socio economic status for

consumer have a positive impact on customer perception of quality. It indicates that higher the price range, brand reputation, product design and innovation, marketing and advertising strategy and socio economic status for consumer, higher would be the customer perception of quality. The study also concludes that product design and innovation is most significant factor followed by marketing and advertising strategy that determines the change in customer perception of quality.

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