

Word of Mouth Communication: An Antecedent of Brand Personality. The Case of Dairy Brands in Sri Lanka

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Abstract:

Word-of-mouth communication is all about communicating with others one's experience with particular brand, is a key marketing approach for dairy product marketers in Sri Lanka because, the information provided through this channel is often viewed as reliable by others. According to the findings of this research, using word-of-mouth communication as a technique for developing Dairy brands' distinct characteristics is a critical aspect that may contribute to brand personality. By gathering data from 200 respondents, the current study intends to investigate the effect of word of mouth communication on brand personality. The findings show that word of mouth communication has a favorable impact on the development of a brand personality. This finding can function as course of action for marketing strategies in the context of fast moving consumer goods by building strong WOM strategy for dairy brands and thus resulting in brand personality.

Key Words: word of mouth communication, brand personality, marketing strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

Word of mouth (WOM) has long been recognized as one of the most effective and helpful communication channels for businesses, and it has become increasingly important as communication system and societal development have improved. WOM communication was seen to be an important part of interactive marketing since it influenced customers and turned them into brand ambassadors (Tri Cuong DAM, 2020). The practice by which consumers exchange information and knowledge about a brand, company, or service is known as word of mouth communication (Srivastava & Sharma, 2017). It's all about telling others about a brand

one uses, which is currently playing an important role in marketing communication in a brand's stability and longevity (Regina et al., 2015).

Brand personality is a set of human attributes associated with a brand name. A brand personality is one that a customer can recognize with, and an effective brand will establish brand equity by maintaining a consistent set of qualities. This is the additional which a brand obtains in addition to its practical benefits to customers and business (Warakamol, 2018). Brand personality links provide a brand a visual representation that is similar to that of other people: they make us think of a brand as if it were a person. A person's personality has been defined by specific traits, and by certain characteristics (Seo & Park, 2018).

WOM communication has evolved into a vital means of disseminating information that has the potential to impact buyers' purchasing decisions and attitudes about commodity categories and brands (Regina et al., 2015). The primary purpose of this research is to see how word-of-mouth communication affects brand personality. Researchers in this study are attempting to establish a link between the independent variable of word of mouth communication and the dependent variable of brand personality. Other research goals include exploring the multiple aspects of word of mouth communication, examining the relative effects of positive word of mouth communication on the brand personality of brand in the dairy milk powder industry in Sri Lanka, and examining the relative impact of negative word of mouth communication on the brand personality of the dairy milk powder brands in Sri Lanka. This paper addresses WOM and its impact on brand personality of brands in the Sri Lankan dairy milk powder market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Brand Personality

Brand personality is an appealing and attractive concept in this modern marketing era. It is one of the most important segments of a visual image of a brand (Aaker, 1996), and may be the most critical element in a buyer's purchase process. The personality concept reacts to the current trend in society to place a high priority on social relations. It also states to the notion that interpersonal ties are crucial in social life (Warakamol, 2018). It strives to lift products to sophisticated levels of need fulfillment, such as belonging, love, and esteem, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Brand personality can be created in a multitude of settings and with a range of tools. A set of human characteristics has been identified as brand personality impacted by the brand. The fact is that every brand has a personality, and if the business doesn't really design one, this personality will emerge naturally in the minds of the consumers in the target market (Aaker, 1996).

Through direct or indirect interactions, the brand is molded in the mind and heart of the client. Individuals that are in some way related to the brand called as direct sources include people like managers, family members, and the company's brand ambassador (Seo & Oark, 2018), as well as, Indirect factors include marketing strategies and data resources such as attributes of a firm's market offerings, brand name, brand symbol, advertisement, cost, and packaging. Firms that successfully integrate brand personality into their broader marketing strategies can affect user views significantly and more effectively than companies that use slow but steady communication approaches (Burke et al., 1994).

By incorporating brand attributes and figurative connections people have with a brand or product, brand personality influences brand reputation and opinions. The five dimensions of brand personality using a brand personality scale includes Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Brand personality also reflects customer perception about particular brand and how they value some features brands above others, which may impact their choice of brand among other brands available in the market. For marketers, brand personality has several advantages, including increased customer desire and adoption of particular brand (Sirgy, 1982), increased consumer trust and loyalty with the brand, and the potential to elicit emotional responses from the customers in the market (Fournier, 1994).

2.2 Word of Mouth Communication

According to Kotler & Keller (2015), building a strong connection between individuals within families and communities necessitates communication. Likewise, communication is critical in any company as an active tool for encouraging and strengthening the firms involved. According to Dam (2020) perspectives on the nature of communication in an organization, among them is verbal communication is important for both internal and external institution. WOM is a product or service that intends to give individual data, a communication method for providing advice either individually or in groups is used (Kotler & Keller, 2015). Businesses that produce something as market offerings to satisfy their customers usually use word of mouth as one of their key communication channels, as it is thought to be quite effective at quickening up the marketing process and bringing value to the organisation (Worakamol, 2018). Individual communication in the form of word of mouth between the individual customers may be an effective strategy of advertising since it is mostly offered by user-to-other customers within their circle. This ensures that customers are fulfilled with the company's media advertising. Further, happy customers' referrals for the products offered by the firm is more readily transmitted to other customers, hence, personal communication channels of word of mouth are quite broad. (Kotler & Keller, 2015).

As a result, Silverman (2001) claims that the success of WoM communication is intimately related to the communication style, which he views as a form of social contact consumers

have regarding their personal experiences with a firm or a product. According to Singh (1990), (WoM) is a profitable interpersonal communication in attempting to influence a person's attitude as well as communicating information about products or services, individuals who are considered to be independent of the company providing the product or services, through a medium that is thought to be independent not sponsored by the firm. According to this perspective, WOMC is a dynamic social process with four important qualities that set it apart from other types of marketing communication: non-marketing source, face-to-face interaction, free information exchange, and two-way flow.

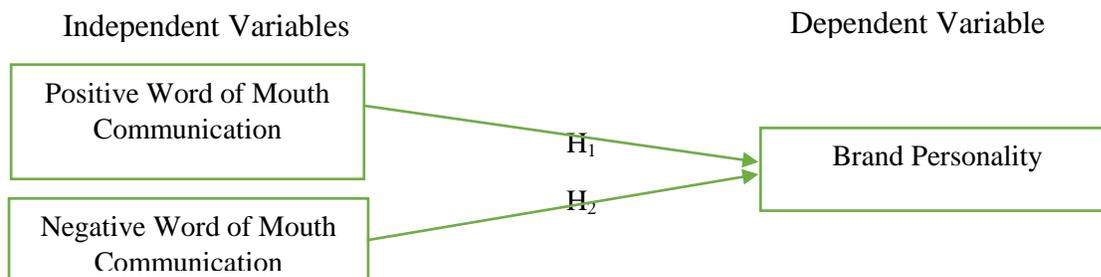
The role WoMC plays in a business is determined by four factors: the product's nature, the individuals or groups a company is seeking to reach, buyer connectivity, and industry strategies (Haywood, 1999). Because WoMC does not influence all businesses in the same manner, and because these characteristics alter over time, the value of WoMC to company and industry fluctuates. In the meantime, some researchers believe WoMC is a motivating factor behind acts, while others believe as it is the result of previous experiences (Murray 1991). WoMC, on the other hand, has been discovered to play a critical role in altering attitudes and behaviors, particularly when it comes to the diffusion of innovations.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Formulation of Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

The relationship between WoMC as an independent variable and Brand Personality as a dependent variable is explained in this conceptual framework. This association can be shown as follows, based on the narrowed scope of the literature review.

Conceptual Framework



Based on the above conceptual model, the following two hypotheses were developed.

H₁: There is a relationship between positive WOM and brand personality in dairy milk powder industry

H₂: There is a relationship between negative WOM and brand personality in dairy milk powder industry

3.2 Population, Sampling and Data Collection

The term "population" refers to the complete group of people the researcher is interested in learning more about (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The full set of units for which the survey data are to be utilized to form inferences is the way the term population is defined. The whole collection of participants who fulfill the specified set of criteria is referred to as the target population of a research. The goal of this study was to look into the link between word-of-mouth communication and brand personality. As a result, the population of Sri Lanka consisted entirely of dairy milk powder consumers (both male and female).

The basic idea of sampling is by selecting some elements in a population in order to draw conclusion that can be generalised. A member of the population is referred to as a sample. It is made up of members who have been chosen from among them. In other words, the sample would consist of some, but not all, members of the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). A sampling is the process of taking samples from the population in the area where the study is being conducted. This study was designed to gather information from household customers in Sri Lanka who use dairy milk powder. To make the selection effective, sample is collected through Simple random sampling method. There are so many persons use dairy milk powder in Sri Lanka in which 200 consumers as sample of this study and data were collected through giving questionnaire to customers particularly for dairy milk powder users

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Reliability

The level of reliability reflects how free of bias it is, ensuring consistent measurement across time and across different objects. To establish a metric's reliability, its consistency and stability are examined. The consistency of the parts utilized to measure the idea relates to how well they fit together as a group. Cronbach's alpha is a reliability coefficient that measures how well elements in a set are positively associated. Results of this analysis is shown below

Table 1: Dimensions and Cronbach's Alpha for Variables

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha
Positive WoMC	0.886
Negative WoMC	0.857
Brand personality	0.893

Above Cronbach's Alpha table that illustrates how reliable data or a questionnaire is. In other words, Cronbach's Alpha is a criterion for determining whether or not data is credible. The data

value for Cronbach's Alpha must be larger than 0.5. As a result, it denotes that the data used in the study is trustworthy.

3.3.2 Validity

The degree to which an observation or measurement matches the construct that was supposed to be observed or measured is known as validity. Content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity are all types of validity that can be measured in a study (Sekeran & Bougie, 2013). Convergent validity is the tendency for one measure of a concept to correlate strongly with other measures of the same construct, Discriminant validity refers to a test's capacity to correlate as expected theoretically with a group of related constructs in a network despite a nonsignificant correlation with measures of unrelated constructs, must all be maximized.

Considering the dimension of the word of mouth communication, researcher calculate the validity of the particular indicators and there the all KMO standards values are greater than 0.5 and it convey that the all the indicators meet the validity measures.

Table 2: Dimensions and KMO and Bartlett's Test results for Variables

Dimension	KMO Standard .5 <	Significance Standard .05>	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	df
Positive word of mouth communication	.859	.000	608.364	1
Negative word of mouth communication	.794	.000	405.58	1
Brand personality	.750	.000	372.714	1

Source: Survey data

3.3.3 Frequency Analysis

Gender composition of the sample

200 respondents of this study have been described in Table -3 which shows gender wise distribution of the sample. It demonstrates that female 57% and male 43% majority responded is female.

Table 3: Gender wise distribution of the sample

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	114	57
Male	86	43
Total	200	100%

Age Distribution of the sample

200 respondents of this study have been described in Table -4 which shows age wise distribution of the sample. It demonstrates that 36-45 age group shows 40.55% highest and more than 55 years age group 4% least percentage.

Table 4: Age wise distribution of the sample

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-25	26	13.00
26-35	62	31.00
36-45	81	40.55
46-55	23	11.50
55>	8	4.00
Total	200	100%

Distribution of Level of Education

Table 4 depicts the distribution of the sample based on the education level. And it reveals that majority of the respondent fallen under GCA A/L category.

Table 4: Education level distribution of the sample

Education	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	6	3.0
Primary education	8	4.0
GCE(O/L)	23	11.5
GCE(A/L)	118	59
Degree	45	22.5
Total	100	100%

3.4 Descriptive statistics

Table 5 reports the descriptive statistics of this study. This reports that PWOM 15.38 mean, 3.407 SD and minimum if 7 and maximum of 21. Further, NWOM shows 7.34 mean, 2.699 of SD and Maximum of 13 and minimum of 3. Finally, BP shows the mean of 10.23 and 4.32 SD and maximum 26 and minimum 9.

Table 5: Education level distribution of the sample

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Max	Min
PWoMC	15.38	3.407	21	7
NWoMC	7.34	2.699	13	3
BP	10.23	4.32	26	9

3.5 Regression Analysis

The purpose of regression analysis is to analyze relationships among positive word of mouth communication (PWoMC), Negative word of mouth communication (NWoMC) and Brand Personality (BP)

Table 6: Model Summary

R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.709	.681	4.355

- a. Predictors: (Constant), PWoMC, NWoMC
 b. Dependent Variables: BP

Table 7: Results of Multiple regression

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.328	7	1.904	165.228	.000 ^b
	Residual	1.060	92	.012		
	Total	14.388	99			

Table 8: Results of Coefficient

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	8.222	1.423		5.776	.000
	PWoMC	1.992	.091	.842	21.989	.000
	NWoMC	-2.351	.131	-.787	17.972	.002

- a. Dependent Variable: BP

Based on the Table 8, the multiple regression model obtained is as below

$$BP=8.222+1.992PWoMC-2.351NWoMC$$

According to the data analysis results table7 depicts that the model summary shows R² of 70.9% and adjusted R² is 68.1% which are explain the model fitness. 70.9 % of variability in the dependent variable of Brand Personality is explained by the independent variables of positive word of mouth communication and negative word of mouth communication. Further, table 7

shows the significant ($P < 0.05$) association among BP, positive and negative word of mouth communications. Moreover, regression results show in table 8 and it reports that BP and PWoMC significantly positive associated. Meantime, BP and NWoMC reported significant negative association. Accordingly, the below hypothesis concluded.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Results
H1: There is a relationship between positive WoMC and brand personality in dairy milk powder industry in Sri Lanka	Accepted
H2: There is a relationship between negative WoMC and brand personality in dairy milk powder industry in Sri Lanka	Accepted

3.6 CONCLUSION

This research conducted to measure the impact of WoM communication on brand personality in dairy milk powder industry in Sri Lanka. The evidence supported that the dairy milk industry is very sensitive market and highly depends on the word of mouth communication. Positive Word of Mouth communication has a positive impact whereas, Negative Word of Mouth communication has its serious negative impact on Brand Personality.

3.7 Managerial Implication

Dairy milk powder companies should enhance and focus on maintaining a constant customer contact with their clients. Because it generates profit for the company and makes customers happy through improved customer service, it spreads positive word of mouth about the brand in the dairy business. Customers are highly quality conscious and price sensitive. Hence, the quality of the product can enhance positive word of mouth communication. Those negative word of mouth communications highly impact on brand personality. Consequently, today customers are high educated and they are very much considering on benefits they can gain by using any dairy product. Hence achieving wide spread positive word of mouth will develop higher brand personality among people. Understanding the result delineate the fact that several factors of word of mouth communication can have considerable effect on brand personality.

3.8 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research was not kept it attention on identifying and underlining the factors of word of mouth communication affecting to the brand personality on income level. Also, other demographical factors also can be considered such as marital status, occupation level and social status could be identified as another researchable aspect for this research study in future research including moderating and mediating variables between word of mouth communication

and brand personality. The study could be extended to include more sample form island wide to cover higher response rate and to generalize the findings much better than those finding with minimum respondents.

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