

THE INTERPLAY OF BRAND IMAGE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: THE INTERMEDIARY ROLE OF PRICE PERCEPTION

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Abstract: Future profitability in the current competitive environment depends on the capacity of an enterprise to comprehend how price perception, buyer behavior, as well as brand image are related. This article makes the case that although actual goods have been significant, what really affects the choices people make to buy depends on the invisible psychological connections they have with a brand. The paper distinguishes between brand identity, that represents a business's intentional strategy, as well as brand image, that represents the client's emotional and mental initial impression. Through establishing personal connections, raising perceived superiority, and motivating devotion to the company, a solid image of the company may possess a big influence on customer decisions. Importantly, the study emphasizes how perception of prices acts as a mediator. It refers to the consumer's personal judgment of a good's worth, that could vary than the price of the item.

Keywords: Brand image, Brand identity, Customer buying behavior, Price perception, Marketing strategy, Consumer loyalty, Emotional connection, Advertising influence, Perceived value, Customer perception

ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ ИМИДЖА БРЕНДА И ПОВЕДЕНИЯ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛЕЙ: ПОСРЕДНИЧЕСКАЯ РОЛЬ ВОСПРИЯТИЯ ЦЕНЫ

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Аннотация: Будущая прибыльность в условиях современной конкурентной среды зависит от способности предприятия понимать взаимосвязь между

восприятием цены, покупательским поведением и имиджем бренда. В статье утверждается, что, хотя реальные товары имеют большое значение, истинное влияние на выбор покупателей оказывают невидимые психологические связи, которые они устанавливают с брендом. В работе проводится различие между **идентичностью бренда**, представляющей собой целенаправленную стратегию компании, и **имиджем бренда**, который формируется как эмоциональное и ментальное первое впечатление клиента. Создание личных связей, повышение воспринимаемого превосходства и формирование преданности компании позволяют сильному имиджу бренда существенно влиять на решения потребителей. Особое внимание уделяется посреднической роли восприятия цены: оно отражает субъективную оценку ценности товара потребителем, которая может отличаться от его фактической стоимости.

Ключевые слова: имидж бренда, идентичность бренда, покупательское поведение, восприятие цены, маркетинговая стратегия, лояльность потребителей, эмоциональная связь, влияние рекламы, воспринимаемая ценность, восприятие потребителя.

BREND IMIDJI VA ISTE'MOLCHI XULQ-ATVORI O'RTASIDAGI O'ZARO ALOQA: NARXNI QABUL QILISHNING VOSITACHILIK ROLI

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Annotatsiya: Zamonaviy raqobat muhitida kelajakdagi foydalilik korxonaning narxni qabul qilish, xaridor xulq-atvori va brend imidji o'rtasidagi o'zaro bog'liqlikni tushunish qobiliyatiga bog'liq. Maqolada ta'kidlanishicha, mahsulotlarning o'zi muhim bo'lsa-da, xaridorlarning xarid qilish qarorlariga ko'proq ta'sir qiluvchi omil – ular brend bilan o'rnatadigan ko'zga ko'rinmas psixologik bog'lanishlardir.

Maqolada **brend identifikatsiyasi** – kompaniyaning ongli strategiyasi, hamda **brend imidji** – mijozning hissiy va aqliy dastlabki taassuroti sifatida farqlanadi. Shaxsiy aloqalar o'rnatish, qabul qilingan ustunlikni oshirish va kompaniyaga

sodiqlikni shakllantirish orqali kuchli brend imidji iste'molchi qarorlariga sezilarli ta'sir ko'rsatishi mumkin. Ayniqsa, narxni qabul qilishning vositachilik roli alohida ta'kidlanadi: bu iste'molchining tovar qiymatini subyektiv baholashini anglatadi va u ko'pincha mahsulotning real narxidan farq qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: brend imidji, brend identifikatsiyasi, iste'molchi xulq-atvori, narxni qabul qilish, marketing strategiyasi, iste'molchi sodiqligi, hissiy bog'lanish, reklama ta'siri, qabul qilingan qiymat, iste'molchi idroki.

Introduction

Every company hoping to achieve long-term profitability in the present fiercely contested marketplace must comprehend the complex link that exists between a company and its customers. The present overview of the scientific research explores the intricate relationships between customer buying habits and brand image, paying particular attention to the crucial but frequently disregarded intermediary function of price perception. Although a business's physical goods and offerings have been significant, what really influences individual choices to buy and cultivate enduring allegiance happen to be the invisible connections, sentiments, and opinions that people have towards a brand. In order to differentiate brand image from brand identity and examine the immediate effect on customer behavior, this overview will methodically examine the conceptual basis of brand image. The article offers an in-depth examination of the way an excellent brand image may increase the perceived worth of a good and affect buyer preferences by combining thoughts from conventional marketing strategists and current promotional techniques. Additionally, it emphasizes the critical intermediary role of price perception, showing how the buyer's personal assessment of the expense of a good frequently has a greater impact as opposed to the item's real price tag. With the help of this investigation, we shall demonstrate the way companies may effectively employ a solid image of brand to draw in clients, defend their price policies, establish confidence, and eventually develop a devoted clientele in a highly competitive environment.

Literature Review. A key idea regarding marketing includes brand image, which encompasses all of a customer's opinions, emotions, and behaviors toward a specific brand. One It is a complicated, multifaceted phenomenon whose existence

is "set off by mental processes, sentiments, narratives, signs, principles and views of buyers" rather than just a brand's logo or tagline(Romano, 2022). Either via marketing, goods use, or referrals, this understanding is the "client's net takeaway" gathered from each of their encounters and dealings with the business. As a result, brand image is not a set, outward fact within the ownership of the business, instead being an inner, mental picture in the mind of the customer(Saxena and Dhar, 2017). A brand has to first appear in the customer's choice collection, which commences with brand awareness, in order to build a positive brand image. Customers start to develop a thorough impression of an entity whilst they learn regarding it, encompassing their behaviors, emotions, and opinions concerning it. Through this complex approach, a brand evolves from an ordinary good into an important asset that serves as a primary influence on advertising and decision-making(Allen, 2024). The fundamental ideas of brand image concept represent a special combination of work from two different domains: academic marketing and innovative advertising. The secret to comprehending the idea's long lasting impact represents its combination of methodical theory and tactical implementation. Many people consider the renowned marketing strategist David Ogilvy to be the "Father of Advertising" because he was the initial person to promote the significant brand image idea. Ogilvy had been brilliant in realizing that a brand encompasses much more than just its goods or services; it also reflects the feelings, ideals, and opinions that people have about it(JMC Study Team, 2025). By focusing on emotional appeal and strategic narrative, he transformed marketing and established enduring relationships with consumers via advertising initiatives for companies like Rolls-Royce and Dove. His accomplishments demonstrated how important it is to have a strong and enduring brand identity in order to establish a lasting connection with customers.

Philip Kotler, a marketing scholar, supplied the theoretical, essential basis, but Ogilvy became the first to implement it practically. According to Kotler's research, brand image is a branding notion that methodically explains the way these customer opinions and views are influenced by encounters and relationships. He established brand image as a key component in marketing science through doing this. Brand image philosophy serves as a form of art plus a science, a synthesis of tactical leadership and cognitive understanding, as demonstrated by

this double creation story, which has its roots in Ogilvy's creative work and Kotler's scholarly institutionalization(Romano, 2022).

Brand Image vs Brand Identity. The variation between brand identity versus brand image—two concepts that are occasionally utilized incorrectly interchangeably—is an essential component of differentiation in branding. The way a business deliberately builds its brand alongside the values it stands for is known as its brand identity(Huddle Creative, 2025). It serves as the cornerstone of a brand's strategy and is established by the individuals that create and select its distinctive, genuine qualities. The combination of a brand's title, background, logo, coloring scheme, layout, aesthetic and vocal voice, and mission constitutes its identity(Marion, 2023). On the other hand, the public's perception of a brand is its image. It is not constant; rather, it evolves over the years due to outside influences that are out of the business's immediate control, like public perception, press coverage, and how clients feel. A brand's identity guides everything of its company and advertising choices, and its effective execution of this identity contributes to the development of a favorable brand image in the eyes of customers. This interaction connecting the two is a crucial feedback circuit. The brand image, which is determined by the " fundamental connection to the brand and perceptions generated by the eye of the target consumers," represents the outcome of a solid brand identity(Eloveera, 2023). One important measure of a brand's strategic efficacy can be the discrepancy between its planned identity and its true image. A failure to communicate or implementation is indicated whenever the perception does not align with the intention. By employing a uniform brand identity to bridge the disparity and cultivate a desirable brand image, brand leadership seeks to take control of the connection(MasterTech, no date).

The interplay Between Brand Image And Consumer Behavior. One intricate yet crucial factor that influences customer behavior and brand image involves the interaction between the two. A business's favorable brand image may drastically affect the purchasing patterns of the intended consumers, making it an effective instrument for increasing market dominance. More buyers are basing their choice on a company's image over the actual goods in a congested market with a surge of competitors(Investopedia, 2023). Although the decision someone makes is influenced by the characteristics and aspects of the goods, the more fundamental deciding factor is how the brand is perceived. prior to reaching the ultimate

decision, buyers frequently evaluate brands by considering their image whenever presented with options. Decisions like this cannot be always centered only on logic; instead of just optimizing financial savings, they are also frequently influenced by feelings, previous usage, and the possible benefits of buying something. Customers' preexisting ideas concerning a brand and the legitimacy consumers attach to it are important psychological drivers(Dada, 2021). For example, based on the situation, a favorable brand image may have a good impact on a customer's views and intents to buy. Brands intentionally employ sentimental narrative and visual aspects including logos and color palettes to sway these ideas and mold buyer actions and preference for a brand(Investopedia, 2023). Perceived quality along with brand loyalty are significantly influenced by brand image. A positive perception of a brand enables people develop positive sentiments regarding it, and that in turn promotes loyalty. A robust brand image is essential for building consumer loyalty and promoting repeat customers in a cutthroat industry. According to study, the appetite of customers to spend more for a company's goods and brand loyalty may both be affected by brand image. A favorable brand image, for example, can convince a customer to keep purchasing from a company they have already made an investment in, such as an iPhone, as well as switch to the following model(Dada, 2021). A favorable brand image also improves perceived quality, which is the consumer's assessment of the advantages of a product in comparison to its price. Businesses must control its perceived value since it may end up in devoted customer behavior(García-Salirrosas et al., 2024).

The Mediating Role of Affordability and Price Perception. Two important factors influencing buyer decisions and use of products are affordability and pricing perception. Price perception is a personal mental evaluation of how valuable a good is in relation to its cost, whereas affordability relates to a buyer's financial capacity to buy a certain thing. In combination, both influence consumer behavior, therefore both shouldn't be separate from one another(Zhao et al., 2021). Buying choices are directly influenced by the customer's financial situation. Since customers are presented with numerous options and might not be capable or prepared to pay the higher price, raising the price for an item may result in a sharp decline in revenue in an extremely competitive marketplace. On the other hand, in a crowded market, cutting a price may end in a significant boost in revenue. A recession or a global epidemic, for example, might also increase customers' price

sensitivity thus making them less lavish and careful with their buying (Levrini and Dos Santos, 2021).

Affordability represents a conditional economic limitation that refers to a customer's power to buy a thing without experiencing financial pressure, whereas price is the intended numerical worth of an item. Affordability serves as a moderator, establishing the parameters of what a buyer might contemplate. Price perception, a mental and subjective construct which describes what a consumer believes they are spending or the amount they believe a good is of value, has become the primary purpose of this study. It is frequently different from the item's actual cost. Brand image, societal comparisons, and previous interactions all affect this personal evaluation. Since perception of prices greatly influences buying motives, it acts as a vital facilitator, spanning the disparity between actual pricing methods and final consumption results (dealhub, no date). Price perception is a key mediating factor in the intricate interaction between a company's prices and how customers behave. The buyer's ultimate decision to buy is influenced by the price perception that results from a certain pricing approach. Proof for this comes from an examination on supermarket consumer buying habits, which discovered that the link between a customer's price sensitivity and their propensity to buy is partly affected by their view of inexpensiveness. This mediating function affects long-term devotion and goes beyond only one buy. For example, a research of cheap hotels revealed that patrons that thought the prices seemed reasonable expressed greater happiness and had been more inclined to suggest or come back, indicating a clear connection between long-term loyalty and the sense of reasonable pricing (Cakici and Tekeli, 2022). To illustrate this point, the difference between "cheap" and "affordable" is very potent. Although they indicate that prices are low, "cheap" is frequently linked to inferior merchandise and might draw in a price-conscious and easily swayed consumer base. On the other hand, marketing an item as "affordable" conveys a greater value offering by implying excellent quality at a reasonable cost. By making this contrast, the customer sees a connection built on common values rather than merely an exchange. This strategic decision establishes whether a company seeks a sustainable, interpersonal approach that relies on a sense of superior value and affordability or a large-volume, inexpensive approach motivated by transactional pricing impression (Crayons&marketers, no date). Brands do more than just establish pricing; they use psychological strategies to

intentionally influence how those prices are perceived. Price anchoring influences a consumer's readiness to spend by introducing an early, greater "anchor" price which causes later, less expensive alternatives seem like a good deal in comparison. A typical instance is a jeweler that displays a client a \$18,000 ring prior to showing a \$15,000 ring, resulting in the second sound more realistic. Charm pricing, that means establishing costs somewhat lower than a round number, like \$9.99 rather than \$10.00, is an additional successful strategy. By taking advantage of the left-digit bias, this approach makes customers think the price is nearer to \$9 rather than \$10, that may result in a significant boost in transactions when in comparison with rounded prices (Azhar, 2025). The framing effect illustrates how the visual aspect of an offer may impact the way it is perceived, whereas other strategies like decoy pricing offer a less-than-ideal third choice that makes an intended item appear more appealing. A "save \$10" offer, for example, would not seem as appealing as a "get 10% off" offer. 4. Transparent pricing may additionally foster confidence and keep repeat purchasing from declining. Customers seem additionally inclined to express more confidence and keep generating purchases again and again, particularly within busy times, whenever businesses openly communicate the rationale for flexible or price increases. This illustrates that a key element of the mediating process has become the perception of fairness (O'Brien, 2024).

Research Methodology. This research study analyzes and synthesizes the body of previously published professional and academic literature using a methodical qualitative investigation strategy. This method is perfect because it enables a thorough and organized analysis of ideas, hypotheses, and proven results from multiple sources, going deeper than a straightforward synopsis to an in-depth understanding of the subject. The article is especially well-suited to the qualitative design since it emphasizes analyzing and relating data that is not numerical, in this instance written material, in order to create an argument that is logical regarding the relationship among pricing perception, customer actions, and brand image.

To guarantee a comprehensive and objective examination of the available material, the data collection procedure remained systematic and comprehensive. It started with an organized examination of scholarly resources, such as Google Scholar and JSTOR, to find literature, papers from conferences, and publications that have undergone peer review. In order to incorporate both fundamental

concepts from academia and contemporary practical viewpoints, the findings were enhanced using hunts on reliable marketing-related web pages, professional journals, and white papers. In order to maintain a concentration on the core issues of brand image, brand identity, customer buying habits, and price perception, essential search phrases were thoughtfully chosen to be both sufficiently broad to encompass the relevant piece of information and specialized enough to do so. After subsequently, each resource underwent an extensive review procedure, with accuracy, relevance, and reliability being given top priority in meeting the eligibility standards. This made certain that that the assessment included the most current findings and advances in the subject in addition to important books by authors like David Ogilvy in addition to Philip Kotler. The approach used for analysis utilized a thematic synthesis. This approach provides a thorough kind of qualitative examination that goes beyond simple literature summarization. Analyzing and carefully reviewing each chosen article was the first step in the method of selection. Important knowledge was methodically retrieved throughout that stage, including descriptions, conceptual frameworks, and evidence from empirical studies. Following that, all of these information points were organized and categorized into sub-themes and recurrent motifs. The "Brand Image" topic, for instance, included all material pertaining to public image, but the "Brand Identity" topic included specifics about a business's intentional approach. This made it possible to directly and thoroughly compare the viewpoints and conclusions of many experts. Finding fundamental connections, including whether a favorable brand image affects perceived quality and retention of clients, was made possible by the thematic synthesis. By pointing up points of consensus, disagreement, and possible holes in the current research—like the key moderating function of price perception—it additionally made it easier to critically analyze the available evidence. The last piece of writing offers a cogent and solidly defended viewpoint that rationally progresses from fundamental ideas to their intricate, use in practice by structuring the assessment according to such assembled themes: Brand Image Theory, Brand Image vs. Brand Identity, and The Interplay with Consumer Behavior and affordability and Price Perception.

Analysis and Results. After performing a thorough analysis of the body of research, this qualitative study shows a strong and intertwined connection among pricing perception, customer behavior, as well as brand image. To show the way all

three of these aspects work together, the evaluation integrates significant ideas from scholarly and academic literature.

Brand Image's Effect on Consumer Decisions

The results demonstrate that brand image has become an emotional connection created in the brain of the buyer via a variety of encounters and is more than simply a trademark or a slogan. This view serves as a strong cognitive motivator that exerts a big impact on choices about what to buy. A favorable brand image results in:

Enhanced consideration: While considering a buying decision, end users are far more inclined to think about a company with a solid, favorable image in their evaluation list.

Emotional connection: Instead of relying solely on rational, characteristic-based assessments, brand image frequently relates to sentiments, principles, and feelings. A client may choose an item depending more on feelings instead on reduced expenses as a result of this psychological attraction overriding logical judgment.

Perceived quality and brand loyalty: Repeated business and consumer loyalty are encouraged by a positive brand image. Additionally, it improves perceived quality—the buyer's own opinion of a good's worth in relation to its cost. Customer loyalty as well as readiness to spend more are significantly influenced by this idea of superior quality.

Price Perception's Mediating Function

Price perception serves as an essential intermediary in the connection between brand image and customer behavior, even though brand image is the primary trigger, according to the study. Price perception, which differs from the real price, is the buyer's personal assessment of the cost and the worth of an item. It fills the void behind a business's price plan and the ultimate choice made by the customer.

The results show that:

Perception over reality: Customers' perceptions of prices frequently have a greater impact on what they buy compared to the actual prices. For instance, if the

brand image conveys outstanding value, a customer might consider a product to be a "excellent bargain" regardless of whether it costs greater than a other brands`.

Strategic pricing approaches: To influence how consumers perceive prices, businesses employ psychological methods such price anchoring, charm pricing, and the framing impact. Such approaches significantly impact the buyer's inclination to purchase by making particular prices appear more affordable or tempting. For example, an elite brand's costly pricing is frequently seen to be an indication of its excellence and uniqueness, which strengthens the brand's reputation.

Fairness and trust: Establishing enduring devotion and confidence requires that a price be seen as reasonable. Even during difficult financial circumstances, a business that practices fair pricing—openly explaining price rises—may keep customers' trust and keep earnings from declining.

Essentially, a favorable brand image can improve a consumer's assessment of a merchandise's price by giving them the impression that it is reasonably priced. The final buying choice is subsequently affected by this positive pricing perception, strengthening the bond between the company and the customer. Because buyers tend to be more likely to embrace and possibly spend extra for a brand they have confidence and value, this dynamic shows how a powerful brand image may allow a business additional price adaptability.

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