

Influence of Product Ban on Buyer's Association with the Brand: an Exploratory Analysis of Ban on Patanjali's Coronil

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ABSTRACT: The bare minimum level of norms are usually designed by the apex regulatory bodies of the specific products categories, such as in India the ready to eat products follow the norms set by FSSAI, bottled water has BIS standards, and pharma industry has FDA set norms. The motivation to adhere to these norms are two folds one the nonconformance will attract the restrictive penalties in the form of threat of a ban or restriction to enter in the market. Or the other is very difficult to handle when the reaction to such act is exhibited in the form of a backlash by the consumers as a reaction of the treacherous act, this is more severe since it has a potential to challenge the existence of a brand in the market and it has some-times evaporated the legacy earned by the brand, if not managed properly, with great care and diligence.

Recently, Baba Ramdev, a well-known Yoga Gure; launched a product called 'Coronil' on 23rd June 2020, amidst the situation of COVID-19 pandemic, under the umbrella brand of Patanjali. The very second day multiple governmental departments came strongly recommending the claims conveyed by the brand and suggested the buyers not to buy it. This is a typical situation to study the various influences imposed in the form of restrictive regulations on a brand, in the category of high risk. If these unique situations are not managed properly it may spill over the negative image on other products of the same brand, leading into heavy losses either temporary or it may cause the damage the brand reputation permanently. This research paper attempts to evaluates how, the attempt of marketing and subsequent imposed restriction on 'Coronil' a so-claimed proactive medicine launched as a remedy against the pandemic causing Corona virus, has impacted the brand equity among the committed buyers of Patanjali brand.

Key Words: Coronil, branding in crises, ban on pharmaceuticals, restrictions on medicine, umbrella branding

I. INTRODUCTION:

Every brand design and follow specific set of norms to ensure the delivery of the brand to satisfy the desired goals for which the brand is purchased in the marketplace by its consumers. The bare minimum level of these norms are usually designed by the apex regulatory bodies of the specific category of products, such in India the ready to eat products follow the norms set by FSSAI, bottled water has BIS standards, and pharma industry has FDA set norms. The motivation to adhere to these norms are two folds one the nonconformance will attract the restrictive penalties in the form of threat of a ban or restriction to enter in the market. Or the other is very difficult to handle when the reaction to such act is exhibited in the form of a backlash by the consumers as a reaction of the treacherous act, this is more severe since it has a potential to challenge the existence of a brand in the market and it has sometimes evaporated the legacy earned by the brand, if not managed properly, with great care and diligence. Usually, in such occasions of a challenge posed either out of ignorance about the norms or deliberate act in the attempt of riding the commercial surge. It is evident in the past that the brand owners have managed such situations by offering a compensation to the users and the consumers as a remedial measure for regain the confidence in the brand.

This compensatory act is practiced and suitable in case of durable product category. There are very rare examples in the sensitive product category of high risk like pharmaceuticals. Any ignorant and casual approach towards the norms or the noncompliance may be a life-threatening challenge by the consumers. And it may overshadow the other products and there is a huge threat of losing the brand image for the brand. Largely the market demand for pharmaceutical products is classified as derived in its nature and any wrong word of mouth contributed by any

influencing party has a potential to tarnish the image of the entire brand.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Brand equity is reflected through the emotional elements a consumer possesses about a brand and these emotions perpetually exhibited in the judgmental decisions about the brand. The brand equity acts as a value defensive mechanism for the brand image. The dynamic nature of the market forces poses challenging eco-system suddenly converts into a potential challenge to the brand equity. Managing brand equity is thus a more complicated challenge beyond a logo, symbol or name (Keller, 1993). The brand equity lives in the mind of its consumers, meaning that any mistake made by a brand impacts its consumers in terms of its magnitude and importance assigned to such a mistake by them. It is found that any such mistakes will be remembered by the consumer for a long-term and it is immediately reflected in the overall brand image. Brand image is the view the consumers have about a brand, brand image is split into three distinct sections, Corporate Image, Social Image and Product Image (Sierra, Jet al., 2010). Consumer perception have a significant impact on the brand image. A good consumer perception significantly maintains a competitive advantage in convincing the consumers to believe in the brand and to give the brand a preference over the other similar brands during the buying process (Diallo, Lambey & Checchin, 2017).

In the market eco-system, the brand image is judged simultaneously by two groups of consumers, the acquainted and the un-acquainted with a specific brand. These are simply the new and the existing consumers. The existing consumers usually buy things they needed, and the new consumers buy things they wanted (Lewis and Bridger, 2003). The acquainted consumers support

those companies, products and services they believe to be authentic, they are invariably busy, viewing time spent shopping as time wasted, besides the brand experience had already bridged the gap between their real and ideal selves (Lewis and Bridger, 2003). For the un-acquainted the brand image acts as a propeller first for brand switching and it breaks the inertia of brand usage. On the other hand, if the new users are fed a false brand identity, they are not quick to forgive and due to the weak bonds, they will almost immediately move on to the competing brand (Lewis and Bridger, 2003). Therefore, brand image is an important element of brand equity (Keller, 2013). If the brand is not trustworthy, its consumers will lose interest in it immediately. Having authenticity is a huge competitive advantage for every brand.

Actions in the area of brand management are very critical if they are not managed properly it leads the entire organization to get an image of an ignorant and careless company (Zhao, et al., 2011). It has a severe potential to pose a threat for not only the specific product which undergoes such band or restriction but its inclusive for all its brands specifically since the consumers are judgmental on the basis of common and nontangible parameters to address the most complicated and delicate area of quality.

The Indian medicinal market be it herbal or ayurveda based preparatory medicines has reached in a stage of saturation, flooded with similar products and services or exact copies of each other. This means that brand's now need to use how consumers behave towards them as a form of competitive advantage (Roehm, et al., 2006).

Research Questions:

- 1) The research attempts to estimate how the statutory ban imposed on 'Coronil' (a so-called proactive medicine against the pandemic causing Corona virus), has impacted the brand equity among the committed buyers of Patanjali brand.
- 2) The research attempts to estimate how the statutory ban imposed on 'Coronil' (a so-called proactive medicine against the pandemic causing Corona virus), has impacted the brand equity among the 'first-time buyers of Patanjali brand.
- 3) The research attempts to estimate how the demographic characteristics has impacted in responding about the statutory ban imposed on 'Coronil' (a so-called proactive medicine against the pandemic causing Corona virus),

by the committed and the first-time buyers of Patanjali brand.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The current research aims to determine the level of identification with a brand according to the social identification theory (SIT). To evaluate the committed buyers' reactions to the brand ambassadors, which signifies SIT as a relevant theory to base an investigation of how athletes' brand value in social media are perceived. discover the major brand attributes which maintains and motivates the brand image perceptions intact with its buyers. These aspects encompass brand likeability, brand identity, buying status, and perceived tone of the brand message floated in various forms of communication. The committed buyers were identified according to fan identity scale (Wann and Branscombe, 1993), which the current research adapts to gauge respondents' commitment as fan and follower of the Patanjali brand. The first stage has allowed the respondents to identify them into self-categorized as high-level or low-level fans. After fanfare questions are administered to respondents, an adapted brand image scale (Reysen, 2005) is presented to respondents to collect their responses in reaction to the marketing messages broadcasted across various electronic news channels about the brand Coronil by Brand ambassador Baba Ramdev.

Variables:

The impact of episodic event like restrictions in the form of a statutory ban on a product's marketing activities percolates in the consumer's behavioral responses and that can be measured as natural reactions of the consumers. These can be measured in the form of response to the brand identification (confident/skeptical), perception about the marketing message (positive/negative), and its impact on their association with the brand (first time buyers/regular buyers), as independent variables for overall likability and commitment with the brand as the dependent variables about the brand under the study. This study has applied and adopted an observable and measured the influence on a related Variable.

Buyer's Commitment: (IV)

The identification of the committed buyer's had been estimated by using the modified (Wann and Branscombe's, 1993) ten-item fan identity scale scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = Not Important and 5 = Very Important.

The measure was calculated as the mean score across scale variables. Cronbach's alpha was employed for scale variables such as fan identification and likeability. The threshold was set at 0.8, (Peterson, 1994). The measure was then recoded as a binary measure, with respondents categorized as having high or low identification, with the cut point calculated as the median value 3 in the scale of 5 items.

Message Tone: (IV)

The respondents were asked to be recognize the message tone either as a positive or negative message delivered by the public broad casters on the brand ambassador Baba Ramdev's description delivered about the product 'Coronil'. The message tone was therefore a variable for which the participants had to associate with one of two possible values: positive or negative. Respondents were coded into one of two "message tone" groups. This had been followed on the basis on the marketing communication adopted as a stimulus to get associated with. A suitable pre-test was conducted to ensure the validity of the categorization of messages as positive or negative.

Coverage in the form of messages describing the prohibitory ban imposed by the Aayush Authorities of India conveyed by the TV coverage had been coded as positive and negative signify categorical assignments pertaining to message stimuli for respondents (Patanjali fans) to rate likeability on messages floated in favor and against the brand 'Patanjali'. Message tone refers to either positive or negative message included in the study design and is defined as a perceived emotional or cognitive trigger by which a media consumer associates positivity or negativity in relation to media content (Kwak, Kwon, & Lim, 2015).

Association as the group status: (IV)

Respondents were presented with two attributed to choose either a 'Continue with brand' or 'switching from Patanjali'. Group Status after statutory ban had been checked with two groups of byers i.e. first-time buyers and regular buyers, was therefore a variable for which participants had one of two possible values: ingroup (favorable to Patanjali) or outgroup (switching from Patanjali). Respondents were coded into one of two "group status" groups based on the marketing restriction imposed by the health ministry against the 'Coronil' product of brand Patanjali. Every buyer's perceived relationship of association with a brand may dictate an ingroup affiliation or outgroup affiliation. Either category defines membership to

group or defines the individual’s status within the group. The social identity theory (SIT) explains that group identity is a recurring behavioral outcome of societies of varying formations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Such identity constructs often relate to pursuits of social mobility (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and may be a byproduct of social competition (Haslam et al., 2010).

Likeability: (DV)

The dependent variable for the present study was the respondents’ ‘likeability score about the marketing messages broadcasted by Baba Ramdev and the subsequent restriction imposed against the so-claimed anti Covid-product ‘Coronil’ in the multi product range of brand Patanjali. These likeability ratings were computed using a modified and subsequently suitably adapted version of a ten-item likeability scale (Reyse, 2005). The scale addresses about how a committed buyer perceives the brand attributes or a specific media message delivered about the brand. Likeability is further defined in the context of brand reactions from yoga or persona of superiority which is a result of cognition-based perceptions (Nguyen, Melewar, & Chen, 2013). Such perceptions may relate to group status (ingroup/outgroup) and/or message tone. This scale prompts participants to rate each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = Not at All

and 5 =Extremely. The measure has been calculated based on the mean score across scale items. Using Cronbach’s alpha, internal reliability of the items tested which was good ($\alpha = 0.98$).

Sample:

The sample for this study had been collected five days after the exact day of the incident of the announcement of ‘Coronil’ product i.e. 23 June 2020 by Baba Ramdev. The sample were collected for five days, between 28th June 2020 to 30th June 2020, at various retail outlet stores of Patanjali located in various non virus contaminated areas, i.e. non restricted areas in the city of Mumbai, under the MCGM i.e. Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. The sample consisted of 121 respondents, collected by three engagements every day of the survey. Among these 7 responses were found incomplete and those were excluded from the data to be analyzed, so the exact remained sample size was 114 Nos. Thus, the final composition in the sample included (57 males, 57 females) ranging in the age from 22 and above measured in years ($M = 20.35$, $SD = 3.12$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions. As stated above, seven participants accessed the survey but completed no questions and were therefore removed. Demographic descriptive by condition are shown in Table 1.

Table No.1 Sample Details

Variable	Value Label	N
Gender	Male	57
	Female	57
Education	Below Graduation	42
	Graduation	41
	Above Graduation	31
Income	Average	31
	Good	59
	High	24
Access-on-Media	TV news	11
	Newspaper	92
	Social Media	11

(Source: Primary study)

IV. DATA ANALYSIS:

A model of multivariate analysis of variance was designed to test whether there were differences between the means of the identified buyer groups on a combination of five dependent variables. Out of these four were demographic

characteristics viz. gender, education, income and age. Age of buyers which was collected as a continuous variable so that it had been adopted to check the sensitivity of all response variables in the model to estimate the weighted least squares regression in the model design age was used for

weighing by Ageas of the subjects. The multivariate model was designed to estimate the effect of media coverage broadcasted in the form of news coverage conducted about the statutory ban imposed on the product ‘Coronil’ to test the two parameters viz. commitment towards Patanjali products and likability towards Patanjali products, on the two groups of buyers, specifically designed

according to buyer’s association with brand Patanjali, termed as ‘regular’ buyers and ‘first time’ buyers.

The test results of the statistical tests of between-subjects’ effects has been estimated to infer the model suitability as per the designed variables. As shown in table no.2 below.

Table No.2 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Group of Buyers	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	Regular Buyer	228.066 ^a	10	22.807	99.101	.000
	First Time Buyer	218.740 ^b	10	21.874	107.001	.000
Gender	Regular Buyer	0.113	1	0.113	0.489	.486
	First Time Buyer	0.001	1	0.001	0.005	.944
Education	Regular Buyer	0.045	2	0.022	0.097	.908
	First Time Buyer	3.131	2	1.565	7.658	.001
income	Regular Buyer	2.816	2	1.408	6.117	.003
	First Time Buyer	1.979	2	0.990	4.841	.010
Media Access	Regular Buyer	0.204	2	0.102	0.443	.643
	First Time Buyer	0.015	2	0.007	0.036	.965
Commitment Scale	Regular Buyer	0.158	1	0.158	0.687	.409
	First Time Buyer	0.674	1	0.674	3.296	.072
Likability Scale	Regular Buyer	0.133	1	0.133	0.579	.449
	First Time Buyer	0.216	1	0.216	1.058	.306
Error	Regular Buyer	23.934	104	0.230		
	First Time Buyer	21.260	104	0.204		
Total	Regular Buyer	252.000	114			
	First Time Buyer	240.000	114			
a. R Squared = .905 (Adjusted R Squared = .896)						
b. R Squared = .911 (Adjusted R Squared = .903)						
Design: gender + education + income + access + commitment scale + likability scale						

(source: Primary data analysis)

Wilks’ lambda had been calculated for each variable measured under this study to test the null hypothesis that the subjected dependent variance has no significant impact on commitment and likability towards Patanjali products, due to the statutory ban.

1. There was no statistically significant difference in type of groups of buyers based on their genders tested for whether they are buying the Patanjali products first time or regularly, $F(2,103) = 0.245, P > 0.05; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = 0.995$.

2. There was a statistically significant difference in type of groups of buyers based on their level of education whether they are buying the Patanjali products first time or regularly, $F(4,206) = 3.705, P < 0.05; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = 0.870$.

3. There was a statistically significant difference in type of groups of buyers based on their level of income whether they are buying the Patanjali products first time or regularly $F(4,206) = 5.277, P < 0.05; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = 0.823$.

4. There was no statistically significant difference in type of groups of buyers based on their type of media access whether they are buying the Patanjali products first time or regularly, $F(4,206) = 0.237, P > 0.05; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = 0.991$.
5. There was no statistically significant difference in type of groups of buyers based on their commitment towards Patanjali products, $F(2,103) = 1.970, P > 0.05; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = 0.963$.
6. There was no statistically significant difference in type of groups of buyers based on their likability towards Patanjali products, $F(2,103) = 0.809, P > 0.05; \text{Wilk's } \lambda = 0.985$.

V. RESULTS:

The test results of the above results were as narrated in the above Table No.2 The designed model has an estimation effectiveness up to 90.5% and with the addition of buyers ages it improves up to 91.1% predictability. It shows the suitability of the designed model. The media coverage about the statutory ban has influenced the first-time buyers due to two demographic characteristics, their level of individual education and their monthly income both had found as a significantly affecting their association with the brand Patanjali. The significance of income had been found equally among the regular buyers due to the media coverage about the statutory ban resulted in their commitment towards Patanjali products and likability towards Patanjali products.

VI. CONCLUSION:

Brand Patanjali has indicated an insignificant influence of media coverage and the brand acceptance across all the five demographic characteristics viz. age, education, gender and education and income of its regular buyers. The message of doubt has unable to create even a small dent in the trust levels of the regular buyers. Buyers brand commitment towards Patanjali remained as strong as before. Only the first-time buyers due to their level of education and level of income had shown some influence of the media coverage of statutory ban imposed on brand Patanjali. The pricing of the product needs to be done a slightly carefully since the income has a direct influence on the affordability perception. There need to specific efforts about buyer's education about the product to cultivate understanding about its usage. Group status had indicated both the first time and regular buyers as same response towards brand Patanjali even after the statutory ban is an indication of sound crises management and it indicates the brand perception as a deep rooted in the overall marketplace. This is a real goodwill.

Scope for further study:

Even though this study was conducted to assess the impact of ban on a popularity of the brand Patanjali, but this may be suitable if we add the study on relative trust levels of a brand as an effect of such restrictions i.e. ban on all other existing brands dealing in a specific category of products to estimate the spread effect of such statutory ban on other players across the category.

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