

**STUDY OF CUSTOMER RESPONSE TO BRAND IMITATION,
IN KALADY PANCHAYAT**

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ABSTRACT - In this study researcher has find out the customer response for the branded and imitated product in the market. Branded products' image and customer evaluation towards the imitated products are also provided. Researcher also gave the effect of the imitated product on customers and its respective brand. The image of store depends on existence and nonexistence of the imitated brand. According to the author the customer buys the branded product and not the imitated product. As we know manufacturer and producer invest on the R&D for a particular product and the imitators use that readymade information making copy of the product and selling in cheap rate and make their profit where the main investors incurred a huge losses and demotivate the employer, manufacturer, and producer. But at the same time it provides the similar product to the customer in low rate. But this similar product may not have up to the mark quality.

Keywords: Customer preference, brand imitation, brand piracy, brand counterfeiting, branded products.

INTRODUCTION

As the competition is increasing, brand imitation or piracy is the one of the major problem for brand leaders. In the process of Brand imitation is imitators copies the special attributes of the leading brand such as name, symbol, shape, color, packaging etc. and they are identically similar to widely popular and famous brand. Few of examples of brand imitations are below:

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Original Brand



Imitated Brand



Procter & Gamble, An old and established company which deals regularly with imitation of a large number of brands, especially such historic ones as Tide laundry detergent and Head & Shoulders shampoo. P&G has made 70 separate improvements to Tide since the brand's launch in 1956, with the core promise that it will get clothes cleaner than any other laundry detergent on the market. The firm's consistent investment in product improvements enhances Tide's perceived superiority and provides the basis for information to differentiate brands. P&G devotes \$1.2 billion annually to research and development, holding more than 2,500 active patents and employing 1,250 Ph.D. scientists. The company is clearly committed to innovation through

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research. The practice of brand imitation is legal issue and it has different law like trademark law copyright law etc. A research has focus on the amendment in the law for brand imitation and counterfeiting: But here the major problem is brand can change over a time period and they are different within the country and country to country. So in each country there are different laws keeping in mind the customer beliefs values and experience. Due to these dealing with the imitators becomes very expensive and ongoing process. Imitators sold their product in cheap price hence these products are quite sillier to the real branded product and the prices are just half of them so customer tend to buy these imitate brands. Present study is attempted to know what are the causes for which customer leaves the original brand and buy imitate brand? What are the reasons to imitate the original brand?

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the causes of buying imitated products.
2. To know the customers perceptions for identifying the reason for imitation of popular brands.
3. To examine the effects of brand imitation on similar popular brand.

III. NATURE

Descriptive study will be carried out in Kalady Panchayat which is in Ernakulam district in the state of Kerala. A sample of 10 retail outlets is selected by convenient sampling and 100 customers are selected by simple random sampling. The retailers were asked to give responses to pre-formulated questionnaire and the customers were requested to response the standardized questionnaire. The respondents of the study comprised of retailers and customers with different brands, age group, gender, income group etc. in Kalady. Data will be collected by filling questionnaires and personal interviews with the sampling elements and secondary data will be collected by the help of website, research journals & Magazines. The techniques of data analyzed with be Kurtosis & Skewness (Mean and standard deviation).

IV. HYPOTHESIS

1. Pseudo psychological satisfaction of buying the great product at low price is the major reason to buy imitated brands.
2. Middle class income customer wants to match their societal status with high class group.
3. Imitator focuses on maximize the reach in local market and to generate more revenue in short time.
4. The imitated brands directly affects to the popular brands image, product quality and price.

V. JUSTIFICATION OF HYPOTHESES

Customer has strong feeling to buy the imitated product as it gives pseudo satisfaction to the customers. Brand imitation provides the similar or duplicate product at cheap prices, so the middle class customers can easily maintain their societal status with high class groups. But the consequences of buying such product are lie on customer. The major focus of imitator is to get the local targeted group of customers and increase the revenue/ profits, but these imitated brands directly harms the image of the famous brands and also hamper the quality, price and targeted segments. Hence the above hypothesis is drawn.

VI. LITERATURE

Being a form of processing fluency, perceptual processing fluency has been shown to affect evaluations. For example, Labroo, Dhar and Lee (2008) showed that when consumers are first primed with a visual identifier for a product (e.g., a dog), they subsequently process a product depicting the visual identifier on its packaging (e.g., a bottle of pet shampoo with a dog on its label) with greater ease and evaluate it more favorably relative to a product not depicting the visual identifier on its packaging (e.g., the same bottle of pet shampoo but without a dog on its label) We consider how the degree of brand differentiation and the number of competitive and imitation brands in the market determine the extent of the cost of brand switching, and how this affects the level of brand loyalty. We Conclude that:

(1)As brand differentiation increases, the cost of brand switching Increases.

(2)When the number of competitive brands, increases, the cost of switching brands from one to any other brand, decreases. Therefore, buyer loyalty is less consolidated and is more easily switched to another. (Van Horen, Femke; Pieters, Rik 2012) Consumers consider feature imitation to be unacceptable and unfair, which causes reactance toward the copycat brand. Yet, even though consumers are aware of the use of theme imitation, it is perceived to be more acceptable and less unfair, which helps copycat evaluation.(Wilke, Ricky; Zaichkowsky, Judith Lynne Dec. 1999) Discusses the impact of brand imitation on innovation, competition, and brand equity. Problems associated with trademark laws governing brand imitation; Difference between imitation and counterfeit. (Zaichkowsky, Judith Lynne; Simpson, Richard Neil Jan.1996) Imitating the look of an existing successful brand is a common occurrence in today's crowded marketplace. It was found that a negative experience with an imitator brand increased the evaluations of the original brand. A positive experience with the imitator was shown to have the opposite effect, and there was a decrease in the evaluations of the original brand.

VII. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

- The study will help to know the effect of imitation on popular brands.

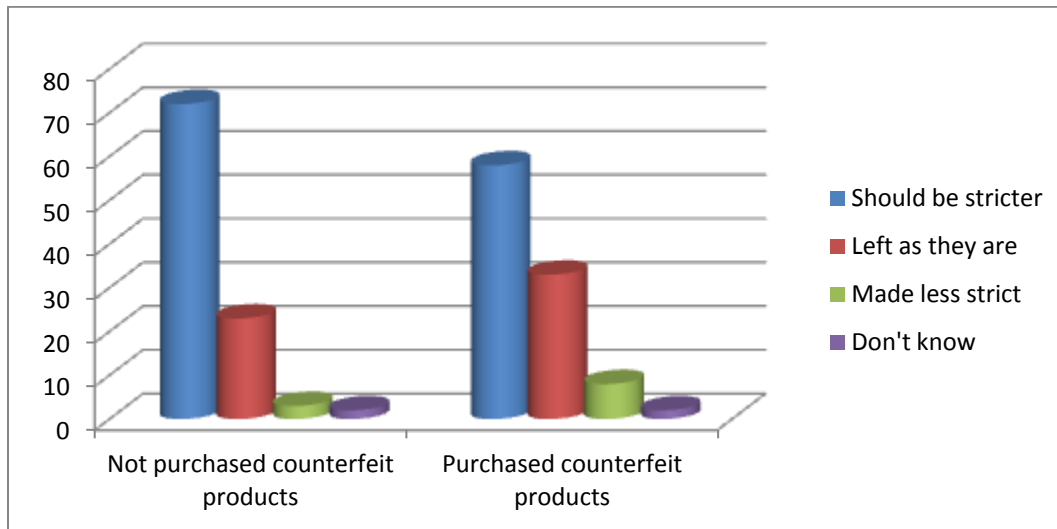
International Journal Of Core Engineering & Management (IJCEM)

Volume 3, Issue 1, April 2016

- The will help to identify the causes to buy imitated brands
- The study will help to find out the reasons of brand imitation.
- This study will reveal the customer psychology related to imitated products.
- The study will help to know the various problems after purchasing the imitated products.
- The study includes the various aspects such as post purchase satisfaction, monetary benefits to customer by buying imitated products etc.
- The study will be helpful to control the unethical practices regarding brand imitations.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS

Do you think counterfeiting and piracy laws should be stricter, left as they are, or made less strict?



1. Most of the customers irrespective of their age wanted to buy branded products.
2. People have strong desire to maintain their societal status showing Branded products they have, comparing to high class people.
3. Young group wants to go with the latest fashion trends so they believe in “Use and Throw Practice” for this reason they tend to buy imitated products at cheap price.
4. Imitation occurs in case of consumables and status related products.

International Journal Of Core Engineering & Management (IJCEM)

Volume 3, Issue 1, April 2016

5. The principal reasons to buy imitated products are:
 - a) High price of branded products.
 - b) Low affordability.
 - c) Low earning capacity.
 - d) Non availability of branded products.
6. Malpractices by manufacturers/markets.
7. The major effect of imitation of brands on popular brands are:
 - a) Imitation leads to poor Brand image
 - b) Effects the actual Price of the product
 - c) Leads to poor Quality of the products
 - d) Targeted customers diverts from income class groups into local customers and buyers.
8. The major problem after purchasing imitated products is the quality of the product and after sales services.
9. Two major reasons of brand imitation:
 - a) Focus and tap the local market
 - b) Generate high revenue by copying the big brands and selling them to cheap prices.

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