Exploring The Impact Of Demographic Variables On Consumer Behaviour And The Mediating Function Of Brand Equity Within The Personal Care Products Sector

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Abstract
This study intends to analyze the mediating function of brand equity and the effects of demographic factors on consumer behavior in the personal care products industry. The study was carried out in Bengaluru, India. Using the random sampling technique, a sample of 996 respondents was chosen and data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire. Age, gender, occupation, income levels, marital status and educational level were among the demographic variables that were looked at in this study. The findings revealed that consumer behaviour in the personal care product industry was not significantly impacted by these demographic factors. Hypothesis testing revealed no significant differences based on these selected demographic factors except significant differences in means were seen when comparing the 35–40 and 30-35 age groups, the 40–45 and 35–40 age groups, and the 45–50 age groups. On the other hand, Brand equity has come to be seen as a key mediating element, with a strong positive direct relationship with Consumer Behaviour (0.148). No indirect relationship is observed with consumer behaviour, which states that Brand equity did not have an impact on Consumer behaviour through other variables in this study. These results indicate how crucial it is to create and leverage brand equity in order to engage the personal care products industry successfully and create customer care marketing tactics. This study adds to the body of knowledge by illuminating how brand equity, consumer behaviour, and demographic variables interact.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Consumer Behaviour, Demographic, Personal Care, Products.

Introduction
1.1. Overview
Brand equity is a crucial indicator of a brand's value. Various brand assets, such as a strong sense of brand loyalty, the perception of high quality, widespread recognition of the brand name, robust brand associations, legally protected trademarks and patents (e.g., Kotler and Keller, 2012), adherence to manufacturing standards, and the application of innovative practises, collectively contribute to the overall value of a brand. Brand equity, as viewed through a marketing lens, represents the consumer's overall perception of the brand, encompassing their beliefs, expectations, and personal encounters with the brand. This perception can subsequently lead to specific outcomes, such as increased sales volume, the ability to charge higher prices, enhanced profitability, and other related factors (Abbey, 2014). Brand equity can be perceived as an additional value that contributes to the success of a business, as consumers' preference for a particular brand leads to the purchase of its underlying product. Alternatively, brand equity can be seen as a signal of the brand's credibility in the market and its ability to generate positive perceptions, which in turn reduces uncertainty and adds value in terms of goodwill. According to Christodoulides (2010), these brands serve as the dominant competitors in the contemporary market and serve as a means of distinguishing products from one brand to another.

Over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition among companies regarding the significance of brands as valuable intangible assets, leading to an increased emphasis on branding as a critical management priority (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). The personal care products industry is characterised by intense competition, as companies endeavour to comprehend consumer behaviour in order to efficiently target their desired audience and attain a competitive edge. Demographic variables, including age, gender, income, education, and occupation, have been widely acknowledged as significant determinants of consumer behaviour. The aforementioned variables exert influence on the decision-making processes of consumers, their brand preferences, and their product choices within the personal care products industry. The comprehension of the correlation between demographic variables and consumer behaviour holds significant importance for marketers in the formulation of efficacious marketing strategies. Previous studies showed the mixed findings regarding the influence of demographic factors on consumer behaviour (Hyde et al., 2017; Alemayehu, 2017). Also, the significance of brand equity in the marketing of personal care products is of utmost importance and should not be underestimated.

Through the implementation of this study, our objective is to fill a notable void in scholarly literature by examining the precise influence of demographic factors on consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on the intermediary function of brand equity within the personal care products industry. The results of this investigation will make a valuable addition to the current pool of knowledge and offer practical implications for marketers, enabling them to create more focused and efficient marketing strategies in the ever-changing and competitive market for personal care products.

1.2. Brand Equity (BE)

Brand equity hold significant importance within the personal care products industry. Consumers establish connections with personal care products brands through their encounters, assessments of excellence, brand standing and the emotional affiliations they form with the brand (Aaker, 1996). The presence of robust brand equity enables brands to establish a distinct identity in the market and exert an impact on consumer behaviour.

Brand equity encompasses multiple dimensions that collectively contribute to the overall robustness of a brand. The dimensions under consideration may encompass:

- *Brand Loyalty*: The level of a person's devotion to a particular brand is referred to as brand loyalty.
- *Brand Awareness*: How well-known a certain brand is among the general population.
- *Perceived Quality*: This refers to how highly consumers regard a brand's items to be of excellent quality.
- *Brand associations*: Connections made by a brand.
- *Other proprietary assets*: Trade partners and intellectual property rights were among these. The more exclusive rights a brand has accumulated, the greater its comparative advantage in numerous industries.

1.2.1. Value of Brand Equity

A brand's brand equity is considered high when it generates favourable associations in the minds of consumers, leading them to prefer it over competing brands or non-branded products (Pappu et al., 2005; Yoo et al., 2001; Arvidsson 2006). The concept in question has been thoroughly examined and analysed within the field of marketing literature throughout the previous decade. According to Keller (1993), the establishment of customer-based brand equity occurs when individuals possess brand awareness and hold favourable, influential, and unique brand associations within their cognitive framework. Moreover, scholarly research has indicated that organisations possessing robust brand equity possess the ability to command elevated prices for their products (Kuhn et al., 2008; Arvidsson, 2006). According to Ailawadi (2003), the assessment of brand equity remains a vital aspect of brand management. It serves as a valuable tool for informing marketing strategy and tactical choices, evaluating the brand's potential for expansion, assessing the impact of marketing decisions, and monitoring the brand's performance in relation to competitors over time. Brand equity is advantageous to both the business and the customer. Customers receive value from brand equity by improving the following elements:

- Achieving distinctiveness over competitors.
- Building brand loyalty
- Building confidence in decision making
- Contributing to self-esteem
- Efficient information processing
- Gaining leverage over retailers and
- Improving profit margins
- Increasing marketing efficiency and effectiveness
- Reinforcing buying
- Shopping

The ability to charge more for branded goods or services is also a result of brand equity. Numerous well-known brands are promoted as high-quality products, and many consumers are willing to pay more for a famous brand that embodies an image they want to be associated with (Sultanli, 2018).

1.2.2. Mediating Effect

The concept of brand equity plays a mediating role by influencing the connection between consumer behaviour and other variables. The mediating role is manifested through its influence on consumers' perceptions preferences and purchasing decision (Kataria & Saini, 2019; Van et al., 2022). The presence of brand equity has the potential to augment consumer engagement, foster brand loyalty and elicit favourable consumer responses, thereby exerting an influence on consumer behaviour within the personal care products industry. The comprehension of the mediating role of brand equity is important for the marketers in order to harness its influence and efficiently engage their intended audience.

1.3. Consumer Behaviour (CB)

Ernst and Young (2013) assert that in the current era of communication and technology, data and information possess a transformative potential akin to bombs, enabling a heightened focus on consumer empowerment. The act of customers making purchasing decisions is perceived as a significant advancement towards the company's objectives. The purchasing choices made by customers are impacted by the level of transparency exhibited by a firm in its delivery of goods, without resorting to aggressive tactics commonly employed within the industry's operational framework. According to a consensus among marketing management professionals, there exist three fundamental attributes that are deemed crucial in understanding customer purchasing behaviour.

Consumer behaviour pertains to the behaviours, choices and preferences demonstrated by individuals or collectives during the process of acquiring and utilizing goods or services. Consumer behaviour is of utmost importance in the personal care industry as it significantly impacts the success of brands and has a profound influence on marketing strategies. Consumer behaviour is influenced by a multitude of factors with demographics variables being a prominent category among them.

1.3.1. Demographic Variables

Consumer behaviour is impacted by a multitude of factors. The alteration of these variables leads to modifications in consumer behaviour. Demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, financial situation, family history, education level, occupation, and family size exert influence on consumer behaviour. Through the examination of demographic variables, marketers are able to acquire valuable insights pertaining to the distinct requirements, preferences, and motivations exhibited by various consumer segments, thereby influencing consumer behaviour.

Research Questions

The following two research questions will be addressed in this article.
1. How do demographic variables influence consumer behaviour in personal care products industry?
2. To what extant brand equity mediate the consumer behaviour in personal care products industry in Bengaluru, India?

Research Objectives

The following objective will be achieved throughout this study:
1. To examine how demographic factors, affect consumer behaviour
2. To research Brand Equity's mediating impact on personal care products' Consumer Behaviour.

Research Hypotheses

Following hypotheses have been developed for analysing Objective- To examine how demographic factors, affect consumer behaviour.

H_{ao}**:** There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour of Male and Female respondents.

H_{bo}**:** There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on education level of respondents.

H_{co}**:** There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on marital status of respondents.

H_{do}**:** There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on age groups of respondents.

H_{eo}**:** There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on employment status of respondents.

H_{fo}**:** There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on income level of respondents.

Scope of the study

The scope of study is centred on the personal care products industry which includes a range of items such as skincare products, haircare products, cosmetics and personal hygiene products. This research will examine a wide array of demographics factors and their influence on consumer behaviour. The assessment of brand equity's mediating role will be conducted within the given context.

Limitations of the study

➢ Firstly, the sample size was limited to a particular region and may not represent the entire population of consumers.
➢ Secondly, the study focused only on personal care products and did not take into account other FMCG products.
➢ Thirdly, the research relied on self-reported data, which could be subject to bias and social desirability effects.
➢ Finally, the study did not explore the impact of external factors such as economic conditions and cultural influences on consumer behaviour, which could have a significant impact on the results.

Notwithstanding these constrains, the primary objective of this study is to offer significant perspectives on the influence of demographic factors on consumer behaviour, specifically focusing on the intermediary role of brand equity in the personal care products industry.

Methodology

➢ ***Research design:*** The ***qualitative and quantitative design*** was selected for this investigation.
➢ ***Sampling technique***: The current study employs ***Random Sampling*** as its selected sampling strategy.
➢ ***Study Area:*** The geographical region under investigation in the present study is ***Bengaluru***, located in India.
➢ ***Sample size:*** P = 0.5 was used (Sharma, 2014) since there is a sizable population of FMCG consumers and sample size determination is challenging owing to the complex interaction of several demographic variables, including age, gender, occupation, and education. Because of this, we were able to supply the greatest feasible sample size.

$n = (Z_{\alpha/2})^2 pq/E^2$

$n = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5/0.03^2 =$ **1067.11**

➤ ***Actual Sample Size Considered-*** 1200 respondents were included in the data collection procedure, and after verification, data from 996 respondents were declared appropriate for analysis. As a result, the observed sample size of the study (996 individuals) was discovered to be lesser than the sample size initially calculated, but it remained consistent with the estimated sample size.

Table 1. 1 Sample details

Place of the study	Sample size calculated	Actual sample size considered	Pilot study respondents
Bengaluru, India	1067	996	100

➤ ***Data Type:*** Only primary data were collected during the course of this research.

➤ ***Data Source:*** A questionnaire was disseminated in and around Bengaluru, and 1200 respondents' responses were collected and compiled to obtain data.

➤ ***Data Analysis:*** Mean, standard deviation, t-test, one-way ANOVA, correlation, Tukey HSD statistical tests were utilized for the data analysis in this study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation
I. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Profile analysis of respondents

	Total count	Percentage
Gender		
Male	483	48.5
Female	513	51.5
Total	996	100
Age Group		
30-35	198	19.9
35-40	253	25.4
40-45	281	28.2
45-50	264	26.5
Total	996	100
Qualification		
Diploma	93	9.4
Graduation	458	45.9
Post-Graduation	445	44.7
Total	996	100
Occupation		
Government Service	280	28.1
Private Service	334	33.6
Business	316	31.7
Housewife	66	6.6
Total	996	100
Yearly Income (in lakhs)		
Less than 2	124	12.4
2-5	396	39.8
5-8	379	38.1
Above 8	97	9.7
Total	996	100
Marital status		
Married	322	32.3
Unmarried	313	31.4
Not Disclosed	361	36.3
Total	**996**	**100**

II. Impact of Demographic variables on Consumer Behaviour
Hao: There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour of Male and Female respondents

Table 2 Descriptive Data for Gender Groups

Sr.	Gender	Count	Mean	Sd
1	Female	513	3.84	0.766
2	Male	483	3.76	0.762

T-Test
Two independent sample T Test was administered to determine whether the means of two groups were significantly different.

Table 3. t-Test output

T- Value	DF	P. Value	Mean – Female	Mean – Male
1.6823	994	0.09283	3.841	3.759

The p value is greater than the alpha threshold of 0.05. This implies that, based on the responses provided, it is plausible to conclude that *gender has no impact on the purchasing behaviour of consumers.*

Hbo: There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on education level of respondents
This relationship is analysed using a one-way ANOVA because there is one categorical variable (education level) with more than two categories and one continuous variable (consumer behaviour):

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of education level

Education Level	count	mean	sd
DIPLOMA	93	3.77	0.827
GRADUATE	458	3.81	0.743
POST GRADUATE	445	3.80	0.775

ANOVA Output:

Table 5 shows ANOVA output

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Education	2	0.1	0.0620	0.106	0.9
Residuals	993	581.7	0.5859		

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

The p value is greater than the alpha threshold of 0.05. This indicates that, based on the collected responses, it is possible to assume that the *education level of the consumer has no impact on their decision to make a purchase.*

Hco: There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on marital status of respondents
As in the previous hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA is used to analyse this relationship because there is a categorical variable (group of marital status) with more than two categories and a continuous variable (consumer behaviour).

Table 6. Descriptive Analysis of Marital status

MS	count	mean	sd
1	322	3.81	0.748
2	313	3.81	0.76
3	361	3.79	0.786

ANOVA Output:

Table 7 shows ANOVA output

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Age Group	2	0.1	0.0411	0.07	0.932
Residuals	993	581.8	0.5859		

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

The threshold alpha level of 0.05 is exceeded by the p value. This implies that a *consumer's marital status has no impact on their choice to make a purchase.*

Hdo: There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on age group of respondents

Table 8. Descriptive analysis of age groups

Age Groups	count	mean	sd
30 - 35 Y	198	3.74	0.837
35 - 40 YR	253	3.97	0.735
40 - 45 YR	281	3.75	0.764
45 - 50 YR	264	3.74	0.716

ANOVA Output:

Table 9. Shows output of ANOVA

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Age Group	3	9.5	3.174	5.5	0.00095 ***
Residuals	992	572.4	0.577		

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

A significant p-value in a one-way ANOVA test indicates that some of the group means are different, requiring us to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that there are significant differences in the purchasing decisions of consumers across age categories.

However, it was not clear which group pairings differ. It is possible to conduct multiple pairwise comparisons in order to determine if the mean differences between certain group pairings are statistically significant. In numerous pairwise comparisons, the group means were compared with Tukey HSD.

95% family-wise confidence levels for the Tukey multiple-means test

Table 10 Tukey multiple comparisons of means

S.No	Categories of Age Groups	diff	lwr	upr	p adj
1	**35 - 40 YR-'30 - 35 YR**	**0.232301274**	**0.04682283**	**0.41777971**	**0.0071585**
2	40 - 45 YR-'30 - 35 YR	0.013665121	-0.16771096	0.19504121	0.9974170
3	45 - 50 YR-'30 - 35 YR	0.007828283	-0.17594588	0.19160244	0.9995287
4	**40 - 45 YR-35 - 40 YR**	**-0.218636153**	**-0.38805247**	**-0.04921984**	**0.0051369**
5	**45 - 50 YR-35 - 40 YR**	**-0.224472991**	**-0.39645423**	**-0.05249175**	**0.0045078**
6	45 - 50 YR-40 - 45 YR	-0.005836838	-0.17338557	0.16171190	0.9997418

• **diff:** differentiation between the relative means of the two groups
• **lwr and upr:** Lower and Upper Bounds of the 95% Confidence Interval (by default)
• **P adj**: the p-value after multiple comparisons adjustment.
The findings indicate a statistically significant distinction among the categories labelled as S.NO 1, 4, and 5, given that the adjusted p-value falls below the threshold of 0.05.

Heo: There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on employment status of respondents

Table 11 Descriptive Analysis of employment status

Occupation Status	count	mean	sd
Business	316	3.82	0.715
Govt. Service	280	3.78	0.806
Housewife	66	3.88	0.700
Private Service	334	3.79	0.788

ANOVA Output:

Table 12. represents output of ANOVA

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Occupation Status	3	0.8	0.2532	0.432	0.73
Residuals	992	581.2	0.5858		

Signif. Codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

The p value exceeds the alpha level cut-off of 0.05. This suggests that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected in favour of a competing hypothesis.

H_{fo}: There is no significant difference in Consumer Behaviour based on income levels of respondents

Table 13. Descriptive Analysis of Income

Income Level	count	mean	sd
2 - 5 Lakh	396	3.75	0.769
5 - 8 Lakh	379	3.87	0.765
Above 8 Lakh	97	3.81	0.698
Less Than 2 Lakh	124	3.77	0.791

ANOVA Output:

Table 14 shows ANOVA output

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
Income Level	3	3.2	1.0509	1.801	0.145
Residuals	992	578.8	0.5834		

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

The p value exceeds the alpha level cutoff of 0.05. This suggests that it is acceptable to believe that income levels do not influence the purchasing decisions of consumers.

III. Mediating Effect of Brand Equity

Consumer behaviour (CB) in the personal care products industry is significantly influenced by Brand equity (BE) as shown by the findings. Brand equity has a large and positive direct influence on consumer behaviour as shown by coefficient value of 0.148. Developing and maintaining brand equity as a major driver of consumer behaviour is especially important in the personal care products industry suggesting that greater levels of brand equity correspond to more positive consumer behaviour.

Table 15 Effects between variables

Relationships	Direct	Indirect	Total
FM -> CB	0.025537933	1.11E-06	2.55E-02
FM -> BE	0.069001807	0.00E+00	6.90E-02
BE -> CB	**0.148160386**	0.00E+00	1.48E-01

Results and Discussions

I. Relationship between Consumer Behaviour & Demographics

The following are the results of an analysis of the effect of demographic factors on consumer behaviour:

➤ Gender has no appreciable impact on how consumers act while making purchases. Customer evaluations were, on average, 3.76 for men and 3.84 for women. The t-test's p-value was 0.09283, which was greater than the 0.05 cutoff for significance.

➤ Education does not considerably affect how consumers behave while making purchases. The mean scores for responders with a diploma, a graduate degree, and a postgraduate degree were, respectively, 3.77, 3.81, and 3.80. The ANOVA test's p-value was 0.9, exceeding the significance threshold of 0.05.

➤ There is no substantial correlation between marital status and customer conduct while making a purchase. The mean scores for respondents who were married and single were 3.79 and 3.81, respectively. The p-value for the ANOVA test, which was over the significance cut-off of 0.05, was 0.9428.

➤ The Tukey multiple comparison test was applied, and the results showed statistically significant differences in customer behaviour among various age group categories. Comparing the age groups of 35–40 years and 30-35 years, as well as the age groups of 40–45 years and 35–40 years, and 45–50 years and 35–40 years, revealed significant variations in means.

➤ The mean consumer behaviour scores, which range from 3.78 to 3.88 for different employment status groups, are relatively comparable. This shows that respondents' work position has no impact on how they behave as consumers and make decisions about purchases. In other words, a person's work has no bearing on how they behave as a consumer when making a purchase decision, whether they are a business owner, government employee, private sector employee, or a housewife.

➤ The mean consumer behaviour scores for various income levels range from 3.75 to 3.87 and have a p-value of 1.801, which is higher than the significance threshold. This suggests that respondents' income levels have no influence over how they behave as consumers and make decisions about what to buy.

Overall, the results point to the lack of a major impact of demographic parameters like gender, education level, and marital status on consumer behaviour in terms of purchasing decisions.

II. *Mediating Function of Brand Equity*

➢ *Indirect Effects:* The correlation coefficient between BE and CB is 0.00, suggesting that there is no significant indirect relationship between these variables. This implies that the variable BE does not exert any influence on CB through other variables examined in the study.

➢ *Direct Effects:* The prevalence of BE exhibits a significant positive correlation with CB (0.148), suggesting that a higher occurrence of BE is associated with a slightly higher occurrence of CB.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research makes a valuable contribution to the scholarly comprehension of consumer behaviour within the personal care products industry. Specifically, it examines the influence of demographic factors and the mediating role play by Brand Equity. For this, data was collected and assessed from 996 respondents through questionnaire by distributing it in Bengaluru, India. The results suggest that demographic factors in isolation do not exert a statistically significant impact on consumer behaviour except few age groups but brand equity does. Brand equity which include brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty etc. have a mediating impact on Consumer behaviour. It is crucial for marketers to give utmost importance to the establishment and sustenance of robust brand equity in order to proficiently captivate their customers and attain a competitive advantage within the market. Our study posits that a thorough comprehension of consumer behaviour necessitates the inclusion of brand equity as a mediating factor. Further investigations can be extended by exploring supplementary demographics and integrating qualitative research methodologies to acquire more profound understandings of consumer behaviour and perceptions. In summary, this research emphasizes the significance of brand equity in influencing consumer behaviour and provide valuable insights for marketers operating in personal care products industry on effective approaches to engage with their consumers.

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