A brand is the sum of the personality, presence and performance of a given product or service in the consumer's mind. It is a tool for growing the business profitably. It has been created for that purpose, but business cannot be reduced to brands. The interrelationship between the customers and the brand strategy needs to be highlighted, because this is the way in which companies operate. Hence the researcher tries to relate brand decisions to the customers’ perception.

In the present scenario, the whole domain of branding is becoming a separate area. It is relevant to study brands and branding because, first, it is part of our lives, whether we like it or not. It is also important to appreciate how part of the business world functions. For a long time branding has also been seen as part of the marketing discipline. Traditionally, branding is part of the marketing mix, or the 4Ps: product, price, promotion and place. The product has two levels: core and augmented. Branding is not the core product but the augmented level of the product. The way marketing evolves from being ‘production’ to ‘sales’ functions, to ‘customer orientation’ and now to ‘competition led’ has great implications for branding, which explains how it became central to the marketing discipline.

In its early phases, around the 1960s, marketing was concerned only with production and the selling of the output of the factory or the service centre. Its function was to sell what the company produced. The next phase began as the process of producing only the products that fulfil customers’ needs and wants; the emphasis of marketing was then on ‘meeting customers’ needs’. This phase has implications for new product development and segmentation and these took centre stage in marketing departments. The third phase began in the 1980s, by which time the customer-orientation strategy was no longer sufficient. Competition was fierce and demand started to wane. There were no longer any unfulfilled needs. Instead there were many suppliers with products and services of increasingly higher quality and value to the customer. Accordingly, it has become vital for companies to be number one and to ensure that their brands are selected and are in the consumer mindset. Branding can
create customer preference by ensuring that the products or services sold are perceived to be superior to those of competitors, and that these products and services offer the best possible perceived value for money.

This thesis provides an interesting and detailed account and analysis of contemporary branding as well as offering tools for brand decision making. It covers both theoretical and practical issues of branding and caters for students and marketing personnel who wish to gain an understanding of how brands are made and turned out in the marketplace, as well as those who are in a career as a product/brand manager.

The study forms basis of this thesis mainly focused on four concepts of branding - brand, brand purchase behaviour, brand equity and brand extension. At the same time, it discusses brand consciousness, brand mystique, brand switching and factors motivating to choose brands. Thus it provides a comprehensive synthesis of the subject, by including, where possible, various insights in the area of branding such as major purchase decision makers, selection of purchase outlets, source of brand awareness, appealing sales promotional offers etc., based on the perception of brand conscious customers in the market of consumer products in Kerala. It also covers a number of contemporary topics such as brand advertisement, brand sales promotion, brand knowledge, brand awareness, brand pricing, perceived quality and brand image, brand association, brand satisfaction, brand attachment, brand trust and brand loyalty. Finally, it examines brand purchase behaviour, customer based brand equity and the relation between brand equity and brand extension in an innovative way by analysing responds of the customers.

Today every organisation, country or town, wants to have its own brand. This study has provided some valuable and useful insights with respect to the branding in Kerala and it would be an eye opener for the brand managers to recognise and remedy the problems and constraints in its implementation and would also be useful to the policy makers, researchers and other interested persons.