CHAPTER V
DISCUSSIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Based on the analysis and interpretation results of the study, the following observations were made.

From table no.4.1 the following findings were observed related to the first objective of knowing the background of housewives who have participated in the study.

- Majority of the housewives (43%) are from urban areas and 38.2% are from semi-urban areas. 18.8% of the housewives are from rural areas.

- Regarding the Educational status of the housewives, 47.2% of the housewives hold a PG degree and 18.9% of them hold a degree. 24.7% of the housewives have completed SSLC and 9.2% of them have completed Secondary School level of education.

- With regard to the educational status of the husbands of housewives’, 33.1% of the housewives’ husbands hold a degree and 39.2% of them hold a PG degree or above. 24.9% of them have completed SSLC and 2.8% of them have completed Secondary School level of education.

- 50% of the housewives live in a joint family and remaining 50% of them live in nuclear families.

- 48% of the housewives’ husbands are employed in private firms and 30.3% of them are self employed. 15.9% of them are government employees and 5.8% of them are professionals.

- Regarding the total family income of the housewives, 20.9% of them earn more than Rs.40,000 per month and 26.3% of them earn between Rs.30,001 and Rs.40,000. 20.7% of them are earning up to Rs.10,000 per month.
The total expenses of the family in a month is up to Rs.10,000 for 30.3% of the housewives and between Rs.10,001 and Rs.15,000 for 36.5% of them. The limit falls between Rs.20,001 and Rs.25,000 for 4.4% of them and it exceed above Rs.25,000 for 3.6% of the housewives.

From table no.4.2.1 to 4.2.9 the following findings were observed related to the objective of assessing the influence of brand factors on the purchase of specific brands of mixer grinder by the sample respondents.

- The brand factors namely brand heuristics, brand trust, perceived quality, brand association and overall brand equity all have a significant influence on the purchase of the specific brands of mixer grinder by the sample respondents.

From table no.4.3.1 to 4.3.9 the following findings were observed related to the objective of assessing the influence of brand factors on the purchase of specific brands of television by the sample respondents.

- The brand factors namely brand heuristics, brand knowledge and brand trust have a significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of television by the sample respondents.

- The other factors namely brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association and overall brand equity has not influenced the purchase of the specific brands of television by sample respondents.

From table no.4.4.1 to 4.4.9 the following findings were observed related to the objective of assessing the influence of brand factors on the purchase of specific brands of refrigerator by the sample respondents.

- The brand factors namely brand heuristics, brand knowledge, brand trust, perceived quality and brand association all have significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of refrigerator by the sample respondents.
From table no.4.5.1 to 4.5.9 the following findings were observed with regard to the objective of assessing the influence of brand factors on the purchase of specific brands of washing machine by the sample respondents.

- The brand factors namely brand heuristics and brand association has significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of washing machine by the sample respondents.

It is observed that the discriminant results predicting the influence of brand factors on the purchase of all the 4 durable products selected for the study have shown that ‘brand heuristic’ is one factor that has a significant influence on the purchase. The results of the study are consistent with the brand heuristic literature presented by Robert J. Oxoby and Hugh Finnigan who have suggested that consumers’ judgments of quality may be heavily dependent on first impressions that develop into brand and price heuristics. It is proved that after learning initial brand-quality or price-quality relationships, the ensuing blocking may affect judgments regarding other similarly branded or priced products.

Indeed, a large literature demonstrates how initially encountered information plays an important role in determining the categories that individuals use to simplify decision making. (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000; Smith Lopez, & Osherson, 1992). In another research by Tversky & Kahneman, (1982) it is found that if initially encountered attribute-quality relationships are strong and consumers make decisions in the face of familiar stimuli, initially learned relationships may be paramount in decision making, serving as heuristics that reduce cognitive and information processing costs. As rightly said by Van Osselaer, S.M. J., and Alba J.W. (2003) these heuristics may facilitate consumers’ decision making regarding both individual and family brands.

Further it is observed that, brand trust is influencing the purchase decision of 3 durable products namely mixer grinder, television and washing machine. Generally, the better the reputation of the brand, as perceived by the consumers,
the higher should be the level of trust that consumers have on the brand. Brand reputation is related to brand name which according to Keller (1998) is one of the factor that facilitate the development of brand awareness or familiarity which will lead to higher level of brand trust.

The result of the study has confirmed that brand knowledge is influencing the purchase of specific brands of television and refrigerator by the respondents. The results are similar to those in the earlier literature which says that, according to Ha and Perks (2005) consumers’ satisfaction and loyalty develops as a result of the consumers’ positive experience with the brand which will positively affect brand commitment and re-purchase intentions (Fullerton 2005) and improve brand reputation (Selnes 1993). Alba and Hutchinson (1987) study reveals that consumers’ brand experience refers to their knowledge of and familiarity with a brand or brand category. The findings also revealed that brand knowledge relates to consumers’ natural tendency to trust a well-known brand. The brand implies an assurance of a standard of quality, dependability, performance and service. Johnson and Russo have said that strong brands are thought to have a memory encoding and storage advantage over unknown brands in building brand awareness and image. Their findings support the view that consumers familiar with a brand have better encoding ability and better developed procedural knowledge.

Brand association has a significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of mixer grinder, refrigerator and washing machine. This result supports the view that positive brand associations are developed if the product which the brand depicts is durable, marketable and desirable. The customers must be persuaded that the brand possesses the features and attributes satisfying their needs. This will lead to customers having a positive impression about the product. Positive brand association helps an organization to gain goodwill, and obstructs the competitor’s entry into the market.
From table no.4.6.1 to 4.6.9 the following findings were observed with respect to the objective of assessing the influence of product features on the purchase of specific brands of mixer grinder by the sample respondents.

- The attributes/product features namely ‘compliance with local safety standards’, ‘has all the features I expected’ and ‘dealers providing good service’, all these have a significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of mixer grinder.

From table no.4.7.1 to 4.7.9 the following findings were observed with respect to the objective of assessing the influence of product features on the purchase of specific brands of television by the sample respondents.

- The attributes/product features namely ‘compliance with local safety standards’, ‘has all the features that I expected’, ‘product style, package and usage up to my expectation’, ‘dealers providing good service’, ‘has strong reputation’ and ‘has good resale value’, all these have a significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of television by the sample respondents.

From table no.4.8.1 to 4.8.9 the following findings were observed with respect to the objective of assessing the influence of product features on the purchase of specific brands of refrigerator by the sample respondents.

- The attributes/product features namely ‘compliance with local safety standards’, ‘has all the features that I expected’, ‘dealers providing good service’, package and usage up to my expectation’, ‘has strong reputation’ and ‘has good resale value’, all these have a significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of refrigerator by the sample respondents.
From table no.4.9.1 to 4.9.9 the following findings were observed with respect to the objective of assessing the influence of product features on the purchase of specific brands of washing machine by the sample respondents.

The attributes/product features namely ‘easy to source spare parts for the brand’, ‘compliance with local safety standards’, ‘dealers providing good service’, ‘not over priced’ and ‘financial facilities available’, all these have a significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of washing machine by the sample respondents.

The results of the discriminant factor analysis predicting the influence of product attributes on purchase intention have shown that the product features namely, ‘compliance with local safety standards’, ‘has all the features expected’ and ‘dealers providing good service’ all these have significant influence on the purchase intention of all the four durable products. The features namely, ‘product style’, ‘package and usage up to my expectation’, ‘reputation of the brand’ and ‘good resale value’ all these have great influence on the purchase intention of two durable goods namely television and refrigerator.

From table no.4.10 the following finding was observed with regard to assessing the purchase intention of the sample respondents using brand factors.

- The brand factors namely brand heuristics, brand knowledge, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association and overall brand all have significant influence on the purchase of specific brands of refrigerator by the sample respondents.

The regression coefficient analysis results predicting the purchase intention of respondents using brand factors have shown that among all the brand factors, overall brand equity is the strongest influence followed by perceived quality, brand association, brand knowledge, brand loyalty and brand heuristics. There is
empirical evidence supporting the results. Keller (1993) offered a cognitive psychology perspective, defining customer-based brand equity as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand. Adopting an information economics view, Erdem and Swait (1998) argue that consumer-based brand equity is the value of a brand as a credible signal of a product's position. More generally, brand equity is often referred to as the added value to the firm, the trade, or the consumer with which a brand endows a product (Farquhar 1989). Such equity endowments come from current or potential consumer learning which influences how the product is encoded and acted upon by consumers. It stands to reason that such learning is dynamic and influences consumer choice processes and outcomes either directly or indirectly by influencing the effectiveness of the branded product's marketing mix elements.

Donald R. Lichtenstein and Scot Burton have conducted a study to assess the accuracy with which consumers perceive objective price-quality relationships. “Objective quality” has been defined as the “unbiased measurement of quality based on characteristics such as design, durability, performance and safety. Four studies were conducted and the results of the studies have shown that there appears to be a positive, but not strong, correlation between the perceived and objective price-quality relationships and perception accuracy appears to be moderated by product type. Across all four studies, consumers held more accurate price-quality perceptions for nondurable products than for durable products. There seem to be up to four different clusters of consumers based on price-quality perceptions; a price-perceived quality schema group, a nondurable price-perceived quality schema group, a durable price-perceived quality schema group and a no price-perceived quality schema group.

Future research directions and Implications

In interpreting the results of this study, one must consider also its limitations. The scope of the study examined the influence of brand factors and
product attributes on the purchase of only four durable products namely mixer
grinder, television, refrigerator and washing machine. Future investigations can
be examined for other durable products and also for non-durable products. Further,
consumer choice is inherently a dynamic process. Increasing competition in
consumer durable market is driving frequent shifts in the behavioural dimensions
of consumers and attributes of brands which affect the brand preference. Future
research may be directed towards measuring such changes and their
interrelationship among other influencing factors to help managers develop
strategic and sound principles and practices that respond to these changes.

This research has important implications for understanding consumer
decision making and marketing strategies required by firms. Specifically,
marketers may exploit blocking in new markets where consumers initially know
little of a product’s attribute-quality relationships. The presence of blocking
emphasizes the importance of the initial messages producers send to consumers
about their products. In a competitive output market these initial quality messages
may create constructs around which consumers organize their judgments about a
product’s innate quality. These messages may provide producers with a
competitive edge that would not exist in the absence of blocking.

The empirical findings also suggest that in addition to simply satisfying
consumer need, marketers are recommended to maximize customers’ perceived
value in terms of quality, reputation and price to promote brand trust. They need
to emphasize on delivering services with superior quality, pleasing service
interactions and companies’ favourable image to capture target customers.

In addition, marketers may consider strategies focusing on developing
services with reliability and integrity to enhance customer loyalty. The competitive or value pricing strategy should be taken into account in order to
sustain customers’ favourable perception towards branded durable goods in terms
of value for money.
Alba and Hutchinson have proposed that the cognitive structures used to differentiate products become ‘more refined and more complete’ as familiarity with a brand increases. The authors suggest that the ability to elaborate on given information and to remember product information improves as familiarity increases. Brand familiarity refers to the number of product related experiences that have been accumulated by the consumer, including advertising exposures, information search, interactions with sales persons, choice and decision making, purchasing and product usage. Furthermore, research in consumer psychology has shown that direct behaviour or experience with a brand appears to have greater impact on a consumer’s associative network. As brand usage increases, the total number of brand associations recalled from memory will increase. Hence, we might expect that consistent with Alba and Hutchinson’s findings, consumers who have more experience with a brand tend not only to be more familiar with the brand but also to have a more multi-dimensional associative network. This more developed associative network should correspond to a greater level of brand knowledge and a higher number of brand associations that are more accessible from memory.

Using multiple media campaign/ multiple communication tools is expected to be efficient in gaining more attention from customers and also resulting in a positive response to a campaign and positive attitude towards the brand. Hence marketers can use integrated marketing communication tools such as advertising, sales promotion, publicity, direct marketing and personal selling as they allow better informational access between communication tools.

Brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty can be increased by the following ways.
Offering a guarantee and price discount make sense to customers. At the time of exchange offers, giving a fair and better price concession for new products may enhance the product impressions and customer loyalty.

Staying in touch with customers through regular communication, updating the website, providing online service with regard to repairs and maintenance of the goods, technical assistance, information about free service and upgradation, locating the nearest dealer etc. may facilitate the consumer confidence and decision and also saves time.

Showing gratitude or saying ‘Thank You’ in many ways like sending greetings and wishes on special occasions (Birthdays, Wedding Anniversaries, New Year and other festivals) will establish the relationship capital of the customers consistently.

Recognizing long term customers through customer meets, receiving frequent feedbacks on product performance etc. will strengthen the emotional bondage between the customers and the brand.

Introducing new features or creating extra critical success points better than the competitors.

Making realistic promises to build brand confidence.

Using advanced techniques for effective advertisement by balancing cost and benefits.

Having presence in social networking media such as Face book, Twitter etc. for resolving complaints and getting feedback for better enrichment and modifications of products.

Companies must go further and train and encourage their distributors and dealers to serve their customers well so as to build brand loyalty through reasonable offers and intangible incentives.
- Brands can be promoted in sponsored special events such as sports through innovative advertisement processes.
- Companies can form Clubs and Consumer Communities.
- Trade shows can also be conducted as they represent a great opportunity to build brand awareness, knowledge and interest.
- Schemes such as discount coupons, referral programs etc. can be introduced to enhance brand loyalty.
- User groups can be formed to collect vital information about the frequency of purchase, usage, buying occasions, opinion about the functionality etc. Companies can offer novel gifts to encourage them for offering such valuable information.
CONCLUSION

In the new emerging business scenario, brands are becoming the most valuable assets that a business can possess. Brands are capable of transforming mundane products into objects of desire. Accordingly the market value of a business is determined by the number and types of brands it holds. Brands create identifiable streams of earnings for a firm. Brands are the basis of consumer relationship. Brands are conduits. They bring consumers and markets closer and bind them together. It is this strength that may allow a marketer to leverage a brand into new product categories.

Brands which have integrity inspire trust. When the brand performs what it promises to do and also is consistent in its performance, consumers will rely on the brand. Good brands win trust by providing assured, risk free delivery of satisfaction. A strong brand acts as a symbol of trust. It simplifies customer decision making in a market that is close to chaos. Product proliferation, brand extensions, claims and counter claims and information explosion are making buying decisions much more complex and difficult than they ever were. Accordingly, the need for brands which customer can blindly trust is felt more than ever in the current marketing environment. A brand that is trusted by the market is not only the one that enjoys high familiarity but also one that is perceived by customers as offering quality and reassurance.

Consumers recognize brands by building favourable attitude towards them and through the purchase decision process. Brand preference is understood as a measure of brand loyalty in which a consumer exercises his decision to choose a particular brand in the presence of competing brands.
In conclusion, the study has increased the understanding of how brand factors and product features affect the purchase intention and also the actual purchase of specific brands of durable products namely mixer grinder, television, refrigerator and washing machine based on empirical research. By recognizing that marketing activity can potentially enhance or maintain consumers’ awareness of the brand or the favourability, strength and uniqueness of various types of brand associations. This study may provide the perspective that will enable marketers to take better short-term and long term marketing actions.