

Effect of Brand Image on Consumer Behavior: A Study on Footwear Product in Bangladesh

Md. Mehedul Islam Sabuj

Abstract

In Bangladesh footwear market is so vast and saturated. Thus, to attract customer marketers trying to create strong brand image. This paper aims to investigate the impact of brand image on customers buying behavior of footwear products. It also tries to reveals that how the customer decides to purchase and how much the customers willing to take risk. This study is carried out based on primary data. Data has been collected from 300 respondents from the different part of the country. Data has been collected through a structured questionnaire. This paper finds the 'positive brand image' as the influential factor for purchasing footwear brand. Customers are classified into four groups on the continuum of decision dominance and risk-taking ability. It also found that customers most of cases take rational decision and seeks information before purchase. This paper will contribute in the field of behavioral study and will help the marketer to understand the behavior of the footwear customer.



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Introduction

Shoes were used for functional purpose in the early centuries. It was predominant factor in the choice of shoes. But in the recent years, their functions have been changed as the aesthetics of shoes have captured the equal share of the customer's interest as opposed to functionality. The footwear market has been continuously evolving while adapting to consumers' needs. Teenagers, young people, and recent graduates, both men and women, make up the majority of footwear customers. As shoes have evolved into a means of self-identification that aids individuals in standing out from the crowd and can symbolize a person's lifestyle, habits, or job, consumers are more aware of the brand image that producers develop in these categories. Brand equity, which refers to consumers' overall perceptions and feelings about a brand and influences customer behavior, is mostly driven by brand image. Brand image is the Consumers' general perception about the brand feature's association (Capferer, 1994). Brand image is also defined as Consumers' general perception and impression of a brand (Herzog, 1963). Regardless of their companies' marketing techniques, marketers' primary goals are to influence consumers' perceptions of and attitudes toward a brand, build that brand's reputation in their minds, and encourage actual brand-related purchases from those consumers. Increasing sales will maximize market share and build brand equity. Both academics and professionals are focused on brand equity. When a consumer is familiar with a brand and remembers certain positive, powerful, and distinctive brand connections, there is customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993). The majority of studies measure brand equity from the standpoint of the customer or the business. On the one hand, some academics think that the secret to brand equity is the consumer's subjective view of the brand; such as attitude, assessment, contentment, etc. Although brand characteristics and attributes will have an impact on the decision to purchase, it is based on consumers' deeper perceptions of the brand's image. Brand image continues to have a significant influence on consumer choices despite changes in lifestyle and information processing. Contrariwise, some academics contend that market share, market value, and cash flow should all be taken into account when assessing brand equity. Additionally, current studies consider both financial and non-financial performance to be a representation of brand equity. Brand premium and market share are examples of financial performance; non-financial performance is defined as brand recognition, reputation, loyalty, and association. This study explores the relationship between brand image and brand equity by looking at consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward the footwear products and brand after brand equity has been analyzed from both the consumer and non-financial performance perspectives.

Problem Statement

Though footwear product is a low involvement product, customer spent as much time and effort as possible to make decision to purchase as it is matter of taste and personality of a customer. There are so many factors associated with footwear product that influence the purchase decision. Such as brand name, product quality, style and design, price, durability, comfort etc. Customers always feel safe and secure while using a reputed brand than the less or non-reputed branded products. That's why customers may seek information regarding the product and brand actively or passively. So, there are also some kinds of risk and uncertainty associated with the decision. In this study researcher tries to analyze the impact or brand image on customers buying behavior. The rationale of the study is to identify the effect of brand image on customers purchase decision of footwear products in Bangladesh.

Consequently, the confined objectives of the present study are: (i) to identify the customer preference of footwear brands in Bangladesh, (ii) to understand the major motivating factors for buying a footwear product, (iii) to find out the most influential source for creating

awareness among probable customers for this category, and (iv) to classify the customers based on the emotional-rational decision dominance and risk taking ability.

Literature Review

The main differentiating point for a product is brand. The ability to build, maintain, and promote a brand is a professional marketer's most distinguishing quality so that the customers view a brand as an integral component of every product, and a strong brand can increase a product's worth (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013). Keller is among the first to define the relationship between the customer and the brand. According to (Aaker, 1991) Brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty are the four primary components of brand equity. A set of assets and liabilities connected to a brand name and symbol that are added to or deducted from the value of the good or service offered may be referred to as brand equity. Customers are better able to understand and process information, which boosts their trust when making purchases and has an impact on user experience standards. Companies today employ a wide range of tactics to draw in new clients, keep hold of old ones, and set their products apart from those of rivals. Accentuating the "brand name" of the product is possibly the most significant and effective tactic to affect consumer behavior in product selection (Akkucuk & Esmaeil, 2016). Consumer behavior is a reflection of all of the decisions made by consumers over time with regard to the acquisition, consumption, and disposal of goods, services, activities, experiences, people, and ideas (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2008). Consumer buying behavior, defined as the purchasing habits of individuals and households who make purchases for their own use. Consumer behavior is also described as the study of how people, groups, and organizations choose, purchase, utilize, and discard products, services, ideas, or experiences to satiate their needs and wants. by (Kotler et al. 2005), The development and maintenance of the brand image is a requirement for brand management (Park et al., 1986). All goods and services may theoretically be demonstrated by utilitarian, symbolic, or innovative components, which would help build the brand's reputation. Till now researchers have not come to a agreement to define brand image on single platform. From the evidence of different literature, five categories of definitions of brand image have been found. These are blanket definition, emphasize symbolism, meanings or messages, personification, and cognitive or psychological dimensions (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). Creating an ideal brand image is very helpful for marketers of the product because this will influence how consumers will evaluate the anticipated brand alternatives. The strength of the brand association, the benefits of the brand association, and the distinctiveness of the brand association are the three variables that contribute to brand image (Riaz, 2015). Keller coined customer-based brand equity (CBBE), which refers to the diverse responses to the branding campaign from consumers with varying levels of brand awareness. In other words, the base and sources of brand equity are brand image and brand awareness (Keller, 1993). A good brand image could be created by establishing a strong and distinctive brand association with customers' perceptions of the brand through marketing campaigns (Keller, 2003). According to Lassar et al. (1995), brand equity is a result of consumer trust in a product or service. They are more likely to be willing to spend a premium price for something if they have more faith in the brand. Because there are so many brands on the market, buyers often base their purchases more on the brand Image than the actual products. Additionally, customers would choose a brand when its image matches their perception of themselves (Martineau, 1957). Customer satisfaction is significantly influenced by brand image, particularly in the E-banking, landline, mobile, bank, and supermarket industries (Gronholdt, Martensen and Kristensen, 2000). According to Chang et al. (2005), the four elements of store image are infrastructure, convenience, service, and sales activities, and they all have a direct bearing on consumer satisfaction. The dominance of brand image in determining consumer satisfaction in the hospitality sector was also empirically demonstrated

by Chitty et al. (2007). Additionally, if customers' self-image and the brand's image were in sync, customer satisfaction and brand preference would increase (Jamal and Goode, 2001).

Numerous researches on the influence of brand image on purchase choices are conducted in various areas. For instance, Watson et al. (2015) looked at how brand image affected the German clothing market. The results provide credence to the idea that brand image influences customer purchasing decisions positively. Ager's (2011) research supports the beneficial influence of brand image on consumer choice. The study came to the conclusion that there was a favorable relationship between the brand perception and the decision to purchase an Apple iOS smartphone (Amron, 2018). Latwal & Sharm (2012) found that the brand equity dimensions and purchase intentions have a direct causal relationship, although one of the brand equities dimensions, brand awareness, has little bearing on those intentions. The study makes the suggestion that marketers carefully take the elements of brand equity into account when developing their strategy. Moses et al. (2016) analyzed the relationship between brand image and consumer buying behavior of footwear product in two different regions in India. Here researcher elaborated four elements brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty and found more and less significant relationship between them in two different regions. The result of numerous studies shows a substantial and positive relationship between brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty in terms of purchase intention in the field of fashion industry (Khan et al., 2015), FMCG industry (Fouladivanda et al., 2013), cellular phone industry (Chi et al., 2009), fabric and garments industry (Malik, et al., 2013), sony cyber-shot digital camera (Thammawimutti & Chaipoopirutana, 2005) etc. from the diversified area of the world. Perceived quality also positively influences brand loyalty, which in turn will have an impact on brand awareness and buy intention (Chi, et al., 2009). Customers frequently face greater risks when selecting high-tech electrical devices in today's dynamic market environment. By reviewing the above literature, it is found that different uses different dimensions and indicators for measuring brand image. Moreover, most of the literatures are based on developed countries. There are very few evidences form developing countries. Thus, this study finds both study and methodological gap which is explained in the next session.

Methodology:

With regard to the study topic, the main emphasis is being placed on the effect of brand image on consumer purchase behavior when buying footwear. This paper uses consumer behavior research to examine the effect of brand image on consumer purchase behavior. So, the descriptive and quantitative research type has been chosen to analyze the relationship. In this study, the collection of significant data had been gathered by the researcher from the primary sources. After the data collection, data is evaluated thoroughly and analyzed to conduct the particular research study. The research is done through observation and collection of data through questionnaires directly. The questionnaire is carefully designed to meet the requirement of the research. Some of the questions are taken from previous literature and some questions are set structured. The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part includes demographic information. The second part is mainly focused on questions related to the factors that influence the attitude of the people on habit of using footwear products. The secondary data is gathered from books and research publications to support or refute gathered findings in order to analyze from a deeper perspective. Some articles were picked as secondary data in order to have a more comprehensive perspective and to keep better understanding about the impact of brand image on customer purchase behavior. Data were collected form 300 respondents by both face-to-face communications and online survey from the different part of Bangladesh. A non-probability sampling technique has been adopted to extract the more

accurate results. Survey was conducted among the diversified profession and age group people. The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software was used for summarizing and illustrating the collected data systematically. Factor analysis is done to identify the most influential factor for purchasing footwear products and brand on the basis on eigen value by using principle component analysis (PCA).

Role of uncertainty in decision making:

Berger and Calabrese (1975) discussed the uncertainty reduction theory. This approach was first introduced in the literature on communication and then embraced by various fields, including marketing. The main tenet of this theory is that individuals should participate in information gathering activities in order to better manage and predict other person's attitudes. The relationship between customers and brands can be explained by applying the uncertainty reduction theory. Customers will look for more information to better comprehend the high-tech product brand. Numerous studies have shown that emotion significantly affects consumer behavior (Bagozzi, Gopinath & Nyer 1999; Lerner, Small & Loewenstein 2004; Pullman & Gross 2004).

		Tolerance to Uncertainty	
		High	Low
Decision Dominance	Rational	Product Analyst	High Stake Gamblers
	Emotional	Comfort/Consistency Seekers	Impulse Buyers

Source: <http://www.thepertgroup.com>

Figure-1: Customer classification based on emotional-rational decision and tolerance to uncertainty and risk.

The above uncertainty reduction model is examined for use in marketing in the paper "Uncertainty Reduction Theory in Marketing: Risk and Uncertainty in Purchase Decisions" by Pept Consulting Group. As indicated in Figure-1, Pept Group divides its customer base into four distinct segments based on this model's two variables of degree of uncertainty tolerance and consumer emotion. A little number of studies has looked at the elements that influence footwear product purchases and how brand perception affects those decisions. This article studies the sources of influence and purchasing motivation needed to engage customers with a footwear product. Based on how the customers responded to uncertainty, an effort was made to group the customers into four clusters. The above model is used to identify the customers group in this study.

Analysis and Findings:

Respondent's background:

Table-1 demonstrates the whole summary of demographic data of the respondents. Among the respondents 98 respondents were female and 202 respondents were male which represents the percentage as 32.67% and 67.33% respectively (Figure-2). In case of age most of the respondents (58.67%) lies between 18-35 years age group. Figure 3 shows that 33% people belongs to 18-25, 26% people belongs 26-35, 22% people belongs to 36-45, 11% belongs to 46-55 and the rest 8% belongs to 55+ age group. In regards to the occupation of the participants most of them are students (38.67%). The rests are the businessman (11.67%), public job (19.33%), private job (24.67%). Others 5.67% did not specify their occupation. Most

of the participant's educational qualification is undergraduate (42%) and postgraduate (45.33%). Others are SSC (4.33%), HSC (5.33) and others (3%).

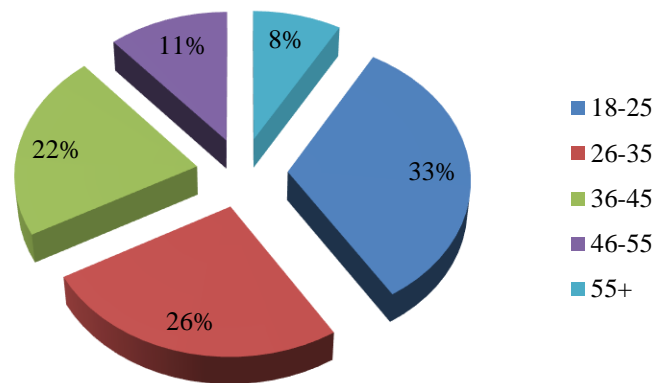


Figure-2: Age distribution of the respondents

Table-1: Summary of demographic descriptive data of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage
18-25	98	32.67	32.67
26-35	78	26.00	58.67
36-45	65	21.67	80.33
46-55	34	11.33	91.67
55+	25	8.33	100.00
Gender			
Male	98	32.67	32.67
Female	202	67.33	100.00
Occupation			
Student	116	38.67	38.67
Business	35	11.67	50.33
Public Service	58	19.33	69.67
Private Service	74	24.67	94.33
Others	17	5.67	100.00
Education			
SSC	13	4.33	4.33
HSC	16	5.33	9.67
Undergraduate	126	42.00	51.67
Post-graduate	136	45.33	97.00
Others	9	3.00	100.00

Customer's preference of footwear brands:

Respondents are asked to express their favorite footwear brand which they usually used to use. They spontaneously responded regarding their brand. Among them about 32% responded Bata, 26% responded Apex, Bay 7% and Lotto 11% as their favorite brand. The market of local brands and China brands is also remarkable. About 17% and 6% respondents like local brands and China brands respectively (Figure-3). This scenario says that the customers of the footwear market are very much aware about the brand or brand conscious.

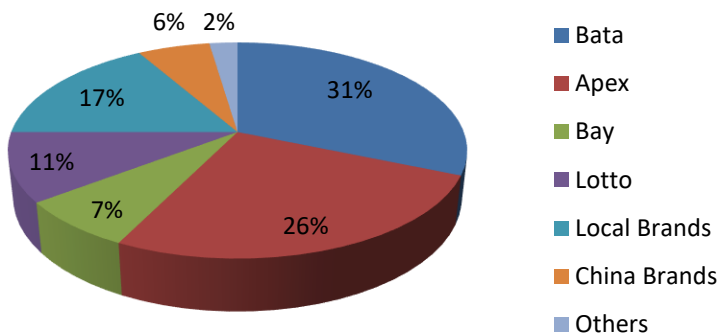


Figure-3: Brand preference of the respondents

Factor Affecting footwear brand/product purchase:

In factor analysis, the underlying dimensions or factors that account for the correlation between a group of variables are identified. The underlying factors that affect consumers' preferences for footwear products are found through factor analysis in this study. The variables are grouped using principal component analysis. A factor is comprised of all variables having a factor loading of more than 0.5. In this work, the factor structure is clarified using varimax rotation. Only the factors with eigen values higher than one are taken into consideration. The data variance is shown by the eigen value.

Table-2: Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.543	19.563	19.563	2.543	19.563	19.563	2.503	19.255	19.255
2	1.803	13.870	33.433	1.803	13.870	33.433	1.783	13.716	32.971
3	1.676	12.893	46.326	1.676	12.893	46.326	1.726	13.278	46.249
4	1.557	11.978	58.304	1.557	11.978	58.304	1.567	12.055	58.304
5	0.883	6.793	65.097						
6	0.808	6.216	71.312						
7	0.762	5.862	77.174						
8	0.596	4.585	81.759						
9	0.566	4.354	86.113						
10	0.495	3.808	89.921						
11	0.457	3.516	93.437						
12	0.441	3.393	96.829						
13	0.412	3.169	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principle Component Analysis.

From the table-2 we can see that four factor are derived whose eigen value is greater than one, which can cumulatively explain 58.304% of variance within the variables. In the rotated component matrix (table-3), factors are arranged into four groups with their factor loading. Among the factor loading those which have the value equivalent to 0.5, are grouped under their respective factors. Among the four factors Factor-1 has an eigen value of 2.543 and explains 19.563 percent of total variance. The eigen value of the second, third and fourth factor are 1.803, 1.676 and 1.557 respectively. The total variance accounted for by all the four factors was 58.304 percent which ensures the validity of the study.

Table-3: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
The product must be popular brand	.353			
Brand name is important for me	.779			
Other user recommended on its quality	.556			
I wait for the opinion on other consumer	.532			
Before buying product I checked the product feature	.528			
I follow which product have high promotional offer		.574		
I think my buying behavior reflect your social status		.541		
Seek a lot of information actively		.541		
I buy this product which I have using experience			.596	
I choose product depending on their utility/comfort			.729	
I buy the product which offers reasonable price			.463	
I buy product which will give value for money				.447
I buy the latest design product				.627

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The first factor (F1) can be defined as 'Brand Attractiveness'. This factor consists of variables like popular brand, importance of brand, quality, opinion of other customer and products features. This factor explains 19.563 percent of total variation due to all the variables. The second factor (F2) is named 'Brand Awareness' which consists of 3 variables promotional activity, social status and seek information. This factor explains 13.87 percent of variation. The third factor (F3) is 'Brand Performance'. This factor consists of past experience, utility/comfort and reasonable price. This factor explains the 12.893 percent of the total variance. The fourth factor (F4) is named "Brand Adaptability". This factor explains 11.978 percent of variation. Factor-4 includes 2 variables like value for money and latest design. It signifies that each variable perfectly co-relates with itself but has no co-relation with other variables considered. It can be inferred from the study that the factor 'brand attractiveness' determines most effective resources towards building a positive brand image which influence one fifth of the purchase decision of footwear products.

Influential sources of information:

Respondents are asked about the sources of information that influence the purchase decision of footwear brand. Respondents rated the five sources in accordance to their experience. These sources are friends, family members, expert opinion on television and newspaper, online review and advertisement. The figure -4 explains the influential sources to be aware about and purchase the footwear products. From the figure we can see that Friends and family members are the most influential source to the footwear customers. Besides online review is also influencing the customers purchase decision.

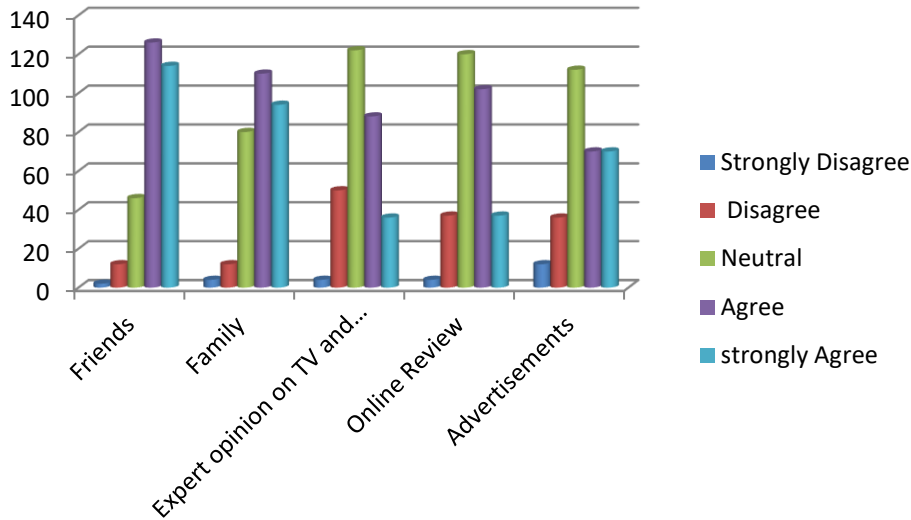


Figure-4: Influential media source to respondents

Customer Classification:

It is necessary to identify the customer whether they take purchase decision of footwear product rationally or emotionally. And also, whether the customers are willing to take risk regarding the price and quality. In these two dimensions respondents were asked two questions: how they take decisions (emotionally or rationally) and do they seek or search information (yes or no) before taking purchase decision. Researcher found that about 59% of the respondents take decision rationally while purchasing footwear products. The rest 41% take emotional decision (Figure-5). Similarly, in case of vulnerability to uncertainty 65% of respondents seek and search information before purchase. The rest 35% do not seek information before purchasing footwear products (Figure-6). The table-3 depicts the full scenario of the respondents on four categories. Figure-7 demonstrates the types and respective percentage.

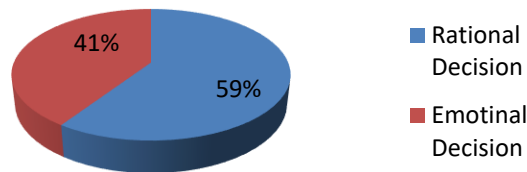


Figure-5: Decision dominance of the respondents

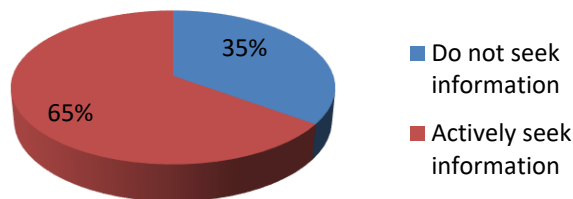


Figure-6: Tolerance to risk of the respondents

Table-4: Decision dominance and risk tolerance ability matrix

	Rational Decision	Emotional Decision	
Actively seek Information	122 (Product Analyst)	73 (Consistency Seeker)	195 (65%)
Do not seek information	56 (High Stake Gambler)	49 (Impulse Buyer)	105 (35%)
	178 (59.33)	122 (40.67)	300

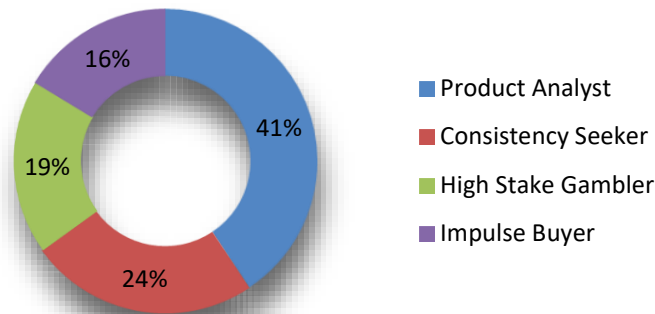


Figure-7: customer segments on the basis of their decision making and risk-taking ability

From the figure it can be seen that the majority of customers are product analysts (41%), which means that they will actively research products before making a decision to buy footwear products, and their choice to do so is considered rationally. So before making a purchase, they will evaluate several products. People in the segment of comfort/consistency seeker (24%), will research a product in-depth before making a purchase, but their choice is usually driven by emotion. If a product or brand can persuade people on an emotional level, they will buy it. High stakes gamblers (19%) are the types of customers who make logical decisions before making a purchase but are not actively seeking out information. Customers who take impulse decision (16%) to purchase tend to make emotional selections and do not actively seek out product information.

Conclusion

The above study draws a clear conclusion on various aspects on brand image and consumer behavior. Firstly, the customers of the footwear brand are very much aware and conscious about the brands. But most of the customers recognize only the famous and well-known brands like Bata and Apex. In this case the marketer of the others brands has to put emphasize on their brand promotion. Secondly, the factors are considered for the study influence the purchase decision positively, which altogether comprises a 'positive brand image'. The factors are categorized in to four groups among them 'brand attractiveness' category singly can explain the one fifth of the variation. Rests are also effective for decision making. Thirdly, the media or the source of information, friend's and the family member's opinion and suggestions influence the customers purchase decision. Besides, online review and promotional activities are also influential media to the customers. Hence, the marketer needs to cultivate some opinion leader, should launch some king of viral marketing and buzz marketing to attract more customers. Fourthly, the marketers should know how the customers make purchase decision. In this study customers are classified into four categories on the basis of their decision-making style and risk-taking ability. Here it found that most of the customers are product analyst and consistency seeker, that means customers take purchase decision rationally and emotionally both and search alternative products and brand and seeks a lot of information. Thus, marketer should be careful regarding the availability of the information. It can be concluded that the

positive brand image, wide range of product information and variation and peer groups opinions influence the likability to purchase footwear products. Beside rational decision, emotions is also playing a vital role to take purchase decision.

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