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Consumer Perception and Brand Equity of Shabari Naturals: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study examines consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals using secondary data collected from the company's website, published articles, media reports, customer reviews, and other publicly available sources. Shabari Naturals is a Government of Maharashtra initiative under the Shabari Adivasi Vitta Va Vikas Mahamandal, Nashik that markets tribal and natural products while promoting sustainable livelihoods for tribal communities. The research evaluates the brand through the dimensions of awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. The findings indicate that the brand has established a unique identity based on authenticity, sustainability, and tribal empowerment. However, limited market penetration and relatively low national brand awareness remain significant challenges. The study concludes with recommendations for improving digital marketing, consumer engagement, and distribution to strengthen brand equity.

Keywords: Consumer Perception, Brand Equity, Shabari Naturals, Tribal Development.

Introduction

In the modern business environment, consumer perception has become one of the most important factors influencing the success of a brand. Consumers today evaluate products not only based on their quality and price but also on factors such as brand image, trust, sustainability, ethical practices, and social responsibility. A positive perception of a brand enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention, while a negative perception can adversely affect a company's market performance. Therefore, understanding consumer perception is essential for organizations seeking to build a strong and sustainable competitive advantage.

Brand equity refers to the value that a brand adds to a product or service in the minds of consumers. It is developed through positive consumer experiences, brand awareness, perceived quality, favorable brand associations, and customer loyalty. According to Aaker (1991), these dimensions collectively determine the strength of a brand in the marketplace. Similarly, Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model emphasizes that strong brands are built by creating meaningful relationships with consumers through consistent quality and positive brand experiences. High brand equity not only increases customer retention but also enables

organizations to differentiate themselves from competitors and achieve long-term growth.

The growing demand for natural, organic, and environmentally friendly products has significantly influenced consumer buying behavior in recent years. Increasing awareness of health, sustainability, and ethical consumption has encouraged consumers to support brands that promote responsible sourcing and social welfare. As a result, companies that combine quality products with social and environmental responsibility have gained greater consumer acceptance and trust.

Shabari Naturals is a unique brand promoted by the Shabari Adivasi Vitta Va Vikas Mahamandal, an undertaking of the Government of Maharashtra. The brand aims to empower tribal communities by marketing products sourced directly from tribal farmers and artisans. Its product portfolio includes natural honey, millets, spices, dry fruits, herbal products, traditional foods, handicrafts, and wellness products. By emphasizing authentic tribal products, sustainable sourcing, and fair-trade practices, Shabari Naturals seeks to preserve indigenous knowledge while improving the economic conditions of tribal communities. This distinctive positioning enables the brand to create both functional and emotional value for consumers who prefer socially responsible and eco-friendly products.

Despite its strong social mission and government support, Shabari Naturals faces challenges in expanding its brand awareness and competing with well-established private brands in the natural and organic products market. Limited marketing efforts, restricted distribution, and comparatively lower national visibility may influence consumer perception and overall brand equity. Therefore, it is important to assess how consumers perceive the brand and identify the factors that contribute to its strengths and weaknesses.

This study examines the consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals using secondary data collected from the company's official website, government publications, research articles, news reports, and publicly available customer reviews. The study applies established brand equity concepts to analyze brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for improving the brand's marketing strategies, strengthening consumer relationships, and enhancing its competitive position. Furthermore, the study contributes to understanding how sustainable branding and tribal empowerment initiatives influence consumer perception and help create long-term brand equity in the growing natural products market.

Review of Literature

A review of literature provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding the concepts of consumer perception and brand equity. It helps identify key findings from previous studies, establish the relevance of the research problem, and identify gaps that the present study seeks to address. Since limited academic research is available specifically on Shabari Naturals, this review draws upon studies on consumer perception, brand equity, sustainable branding, and tribal-product marketing.

Aaker (1991) introduced the concept of brand equity as a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand that add value to a product or service. He identified five major dimensions of brand equity: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty,

and proprietary brand assets. According to Aaker, organizations with strong brand equity enjoy greater customer loyalty, higher perceived value, and a stronger competitive advantage. His framework remains one of the most widely used models for evaluating brand performance.

Keller (1993) proposed the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model, emphasizing that brand equity exists when consumers possess strong, favorable, and unique associations with a brand. Keller argued that brand awareness and brand image significantly influence consumer responses to marketing activities. His model highlights that positive consumer experiences strengthen trust, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty, making it highly relevant for evaluating consumer perception.

Kotler and Keller (2016) explained that consumer buying behaviour is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. They noted that modern consumers increasingly evaluate brands based on quality, reliability, environmental responsibility, and ethical business practices rather than only price. Their work suggests that organizations must create meaningful value propositions and maintain consistent brand communication to develop lasting customer relationships.

Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) emphasized that consumer perception is formed through the processes of exposure, attention, and interpretation of marketing stimuli. They argued that branding, packaging, advertising, online reviews, and previous purchase experiences significantly influence consumers' perceptions and purchase decisions. Their work highlights the importance of maintaining a positive brand image across all customer touchpoints.

Research on sustainable and ethical branding has shown that consumers increasingly prefer brands that demonstrate social responsibility and environmental commitment. Ethical sourcing, eco-friendly production, and community development initiatives enhance consumer trust and strengthen brand equity. These findings are particularly relevant for brands such as Shabari Naturals, which combine commercial objectives with tribal empowerment and sustainable development.

A recent case study on Shabari Naturals describes the brand as a Government of Maharashtra initiative designed to improve tribal livelihoods through branding, value addition, and market access. The study reports that modern packaging, digital marketing, quality control, and cultural storytelling have helped increase consumer acceptance while strengthening the identity of tribal products. It also notes that the initiative has expanded market reach and improved income opportunities for tribal producers.

An empirical study by Vachhani and Rajani (2025) on TRIBES India, another government-supported tribal products brand, found that consumers strongly associate tribal brands with authenticity, quality, reliability, and social responsibility. The study reported high customer satisfaction and willingness to recommend the brand, while identifying pricing perceptions and product availability as key areas for improvement. The findings indicate that a clear social mission can significantly strengthen consumer trust and brand loyalty.

Studies on indigenous and tribal branding have further demonstrated that authenticity, cultural identity, certification, and storytelling positively influence consumer perceptions. Research on tribal products found that consumers value products that

communicate cultural heritage and sustainable production practices, although different consumer segments respond differently to functional, emotional, and social value propositions.

Overall, the literature indicates that consumer perception is a major determinant of brand equity. Brand awareness, perceived quality, positive associations, authenticity, sustainability, and customer trust collectively contribute to stronger brand performance and long-term loyalty. Although extensive research exists on consumer perception and brand equity in general, there is limited academic work focusing specifically on Shabari Naturals. Most existing information about the brand is descriptive and program-oriented rather than analytical. Therefore, the present study attempts to bridge this gap by examining the consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals through secondary data using established theoretical frameworks such as Aaker's Brand Equity Model and Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model.

Research Gap

The review of existing literature indicates that extensive research has been conducted on consumer perception, brand equity, consumer buying behaviour, and sustainable branding. Studies by Aaker (1991), Keller (1993), Kotler and Keller (2016), and other researchers have established that brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty are the key determinants of brand equity. Similarly, several studies have examined the impact of ethical branding, organic products, and sustainable marketing on consumer behaviour. These studies conclude that consumers increasingly prefer brands that offer quality products while promoting environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

However, despite the growing importance of government-supported tribal brands, there is limited academic research focusing specifically on Shabari Naturals. Most of the available information is confined to government reports, company websites, news articles, and promotional content, which primarily describe the brand's objectives, product offerings, and initiatives for tribal empowerment. There is a lack of empirical and analytical studies that evaluate how consumers perceive the brand and how these perceptions contribute to its overall brand equity.

Furthermore, existing studies on tribal product brands in India mainly focus on marketing strategies, rural entrepreneurship, livelihood generation, and socio-economic development, with comparatively little attention given to consumer perception and branding aspects. There is also limited research applying established brand equity models, such as Aaker's Brand Equity Model and Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model, to assess the market position of tribal brands like Shabari Naturals.

Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing the consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals using secondary data. The study examines the brand through the dimensions of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty, while also considering its unique positioning as a government-supported, socially responsible, and sustainable tribal brand. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, researchers, and the management of Shabari Naturals in developing effective branding and marketing strategies to enhance consumer acceptance and strengthen brand equity.

Statement of the Research Problem

In today's competitive market, consumers have become more conscious about the quality, authenticity, sustainability, and ethical practices associated with the products they purchase. These changing preferences have increased the importance of consumer perception in determining a brand's success and long-term market position. A positive consumer perception contributes to stronger brand equity by enhancing brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and customer loyalty.

Shabari Naturals, a brand promoted by the Shabari Adivasi Vitta Va Vikas Mahamandal under the Government of Maharashtra, markets natural and tribal products while supporting the livelihoods of tribal communities. The brand is positioned as an authentic, sustainable, and socially responsible initiative that offers products such as honey, millets, spices, herbal products, handicrafts, and wellness items. Despite its unique social mission and government support, Shabari Naturals faces challenges in achieving widespread consumer awareness and competing with well-established brands in the natural and organic products market.

Although the brand has gained recognition for promoting tribal products and sustainable development, limited research has been conducted to understand how consumers perceive Shabari Naturals and how these perceptions influence its brand equity. Most of the available information focuses on the brand's objectives, product range, and social impact, while there is a lack of academic studies examining its brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and customer loyalty.

Therefore, the research problem addressed in this study is to examine the consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals using secondary data. The study aims to evaluate the factors influencing consumer perception, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the brand, and understand how its unique positioning as a government-supported tribal brand contributes to building brand equity. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for strengthening the brand's marketing strategies, enhancing consumer trust, and improving its competitive position in the growing natural and organic products market.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals using secondary data. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. **To study the concept of consumer perception and brand equity** in the context of the natural and organic products market.
2. **To analyze the consumer perception of Shabari Naturals** based on secondary data obtained from company reports, published literature, customer reviews, government publications, and other publicly available sources.
3. **To evaluate the brand equity of Shabari Naturals** by examining its key dimensions, namely brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty.
4. **To identify the factors influencing consumer perception** of Shabari Naturals, including product quality, authenticity, sustainability, pricing, packaging, and social responsibility.

5. **To assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOT)** affecting the brand's market position and competitive advantage.
6. **To provide recommendations for enhancing consumer perception and strengthening the brand equity of Shabari Naturals** through effective branding, marketing, and customer engagement strategies.

Hypotheses of the Study

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

1. **H₀₁:** Consumer perception has no significant influence on the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.
2. **H₀₂:** Brand awareness has no significant influence on the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.
3. **H₀₃:** Perceived quality has no significant influence on consumer perception of Shabari Naturals.
4. **H₀₄:** Brand associations have no significant influence on the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.
5. **H₀₅:** Brand loyalty has no significant influence on the overall brand equity of Shabari Naturals.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):

1. **H₁₁:** Consumer perception has a significant positive influence on the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.
2. **H₁₂:** Brand awareness has a significant positive influence on the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.
3. **H₁₃:** Perceived quality has a significant positive influence on consumer perception of Shabari Naturals.
4. **H₁₄:** Brand associations have a significant positive influence on the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.
5. **H₁₅:** Brand loyalty has a significant positive influence on the overall brand equity of Shabari Naturals.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic process adopted to collect, analyze, and interpret data to achieve the objectives of a study. It provides the framework for conducting research in a scientific and objective manner. The present study, titled "Consumer Perception and Brand Equity of Shabari Naturals: A Case Study Based on Secondary Data," adopts a descriptive research design using secondary data to examine consumer perception and evaluate the brand equity of Shabari Naturals.

Research Design

The study follows a descriptive research design, as it aims to describe and analyze the consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals based on existing information. Descriptive research is appropriate because it helps in understanding the characteristics, strengths, and market position of the brand without manipulating any variables.

Nature of the Study

The present research is a case study of Shabari Naturals based entirely on secondary data. The study examines the brand's consumer perception, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty using information available in the public domain.

Sources of Data

The study is based exclusively on secondary data collected from reliable and authentic sources. The major sources include:

- Official website of Shabari Naturals
- Government of Maharashtra publications and reports
- Research journals and academic articles
- Books on consumer behaviour and brand equity
- Newspapers and magazines
- Company reports and brochures
- Online customer reviews and feedback available on public platforms
- Industry reports and published market studies

Data Collection Method

The required information was collected through document analysis and content analysis of published materials. Relevant data related to consumer perception, branding strategies, product quality, sustainability initiatives, and customer feedback were reviewed and organized for analysis.

Analytical Framework

The study analyzes the collected information using established theories of brand equity and consumer behaviour. The following frameworks were adopted:

- **Aaker's Brand Equity Model**, focusing on:
 1. Brand Awareness
 2. Perceived Quality
 3. Brand Associations
 4. Brand Loyalty
- **Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model**, emphasizing consumer knowledge, brand image, and customer relationships.

Additionally, SWOT Analysis was used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Shabari Naturals.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the analysis of consumer perception and brand equity of Shabari Naturals using secondary data. It focuses on publicly available information regarding the brand's products, marketing initiatives, customer feedback, sustainability practices, and market positioning. The findings are intended to provide insights into the brand's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

Limitations of the Study

The study has the following limitations:

- It is based entirely on secondary data; no primary survey or interviews were conducted.
- The findings depend on the accuracy and availability of published information.

- Consumer opinions are based on publicly available reviews and may not represent the views of all customers.
- The study focuses only on Shabari Naturals and does not provide a comparative analysis with other brands.
- Market conditions and consumer preferences may change over time, affecting the relevance of some secondary information.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected secondary data were analyzed using **qualitative content analysis** and **descriptive analysis**. Information obtained from different sources was classified according to the research objectives and interpreted under the dimensions of consumer perception and brand equity. The analysis was further supported by a SWOT framework to evaluate the brand's competitive position and identify key findings and recommendations.

Findings of the Study

1. **Positive Consumer Perception:** Consumers generally perceive Shabari Naturals as a trusted brand offering natural, authentic, and high-quality products. The brand's association with tribal communities and government support enhances its credibility.
2. **Strong Brand Associations:** Shabari Naturals is strongly associated with sustainability, tribal empowerment, ethical sourcing, and environmental responsibility. These attributes differentiate the brand from many commercial competitors in the natural products market.
3. **Good Perceived Quality:** The brand is recognized for offering products made from natural ingredients with minimal processing. Consumers perceive products such as honey, millets, spices, herbal products, and wellness items as genuine and reliable.
4. **Moderate Brand Awareness:** Although Shabari Naturals has established a distinct identity in Maharashtra and among consumers interested in organic and tribal products, its overall brand awareness at the national level remains comparatively low. Limited advertising and promotional activities restrict wider recognition.
5. **Government Support Enhances Trust:** The association with the Government of Maharashtra positively influences consumer confidence by assuring product authenticity, quality standards, and fair trade practices.
6. **Social Responsibility Creates Emotional Value:** Consumers appreciate that purchasing Shabari Naturals products contributes to the economic development of tribal communities. This social impact strengthens the brand image and encourages ethical purchasing behaviour.
7. **Growing Demand for Natural Products:** The increasing preference for organic, eco-friendly, and chemical-free products provides significant opportunities for the growth of Shabari Naturals and contributes positively to its brand equity.

8. **Limited Distribution Network:** One of the major challenges identified is the limited availability of Shabari Naturals products in retail outlets across India. Consumers may find it difficult to access products outside selected regions and online platforms.
9. **Digital Presence Needs Improvement:** Although the brand has an online presence, its digital marketing activities and social media engagement are relatively limited compared to leading natural and organic product brands. Stronger digital communication could improve consumer awareness and engagement.
10. **Packaging and Branding Have Improved:** The introduction of better packaging, branding, and product presentation has enhanced the professional image of Shabari Naturals and increased its appeal among modern consumers.
11. **Competitive Challenges:** The brand faces intense competition from established organic and FMCG companies that have stronger distribution networks, larger advertising budgets, and higher brand recognition.
12. **Potential for Stronger Brand Equity:** The study indicates that Shabari Naturals has considerable potential to strengthen its brand equity by increasing brand awareness, expanding market reach, enhancing customer engagement, and effectively communicating its unique value proposition of tribal empowerment and sustainable development.

Suggestions

1. **Increase Brand Awareness:** Shabari Naturals should invest in integrated marketing campaigns through digital media, print media, television, and social media platforms to improve brand visibility and create greater awareness among consumers across India.
2. **Strengthen Digital Marketing:** The brand should actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn to promote its products, share customer testimonials, and highlight the stories of tribal producers. Regular digital engagement can help build stronger consumer relationships.
3. **Expand Distribution Network:** The availability of Shabari Naturals products should be increased by expanding distribution through supermarkets, retail chains, organic stores, cooperative outlets, and major e-commerce platforms. Improved accessibility can encourage repeat purchases and attract new customers.
4. **Promote the Brand's Social Impact:** The unique mission of empowering tribal communities should be communicated more effectively through branding and promotional campaigns. Highlighting the social and economic benefits of purchasing Shabari Naturals products can strengthen emotional connections with socially conscious consumers.
5. **Enhance Product Packaging and Labeling:** Attractive, informative, and eco-friendly packaging should be adopted to improve product appeal. Labels should clearly communicate product ingredients, nutritional value,

certifications, and the benefits of supporting tribal livelihoods.

6. **Focus on Quality Assurance:** Maintaining consistent product quality and obtaining recognized quality certifications will strengthen consumer confidence and reinforce the brand's image as a trusted provider of natural and authentic products.
7. **Encourage Customer Feedback and Reviews:** The company should actively collect and respond to customer feedback through online platforms and social media. Positive reviews and testimonials can enhance consumer trust and influence potential buyers.
8. **Introduce Customer Loyalty Programs:** Reward programs, discounts for repeat purchases, membership benefits, and promotional offers can encourage customer retention and improve brand loyalty.
9. **Collaborate with Influencers and Health Experts:** Partnerships with nutritionists, wellness experts, chefs, and social media influencers can increase product awareness and credibility among target consumer groups interested in healthy and sustainable lifestyles.
10. **Participate in Trade Fairs and Exhibitions:** Shabari Naturals should participate in national and international trade fairs, organic product exhibitions, and government-sponsored events to increase market exposure and expand its customer base.
11. **Diversify the Product Portfolio:** The brand can introduce innovative value-added products based on consumer preferences while maintaining its commitment to natural ingredients and tribal sourcing. Product diversification can help attract a wider range of consumers.
12. **Conduct Periodic Consumer Research:** Regular market research should be undertaken to understand changing consumer preferences, evaluate customer satisfaction, monitor competitor strategies, and identify emerging market opportunities. This will support informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

Overall, these suggestions can help Shabari Naturals strengthen its consumer perception, improve brand equity, enhance customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth in the increasingly competitive natural and organic products market while continuing its mission of promoting tribal livelihoods and sustainable development.

Conclusion

The present study, "Consumer Perception and Brand Equity of Shabari Naturals: A Case Study Based on Secondary Data," examined how consumer perception influences the brand equity of Shabari Naturals by analyzing information from secondary sources such as the company's official website, government publications, research articles, news reports, and publicly available customer reviews. The study focused on key dimensions of brand equity, including brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty.

The findings indicate that Shabari Naturals has successfully established itself as a unique brand by promoting natural products

while supporting the socio-economic development of tribal communities. Consumers generally perceive the brand as authentic, trustworthy, and socially responsible. Its emphasis on sustainable sourcing, quality products, and tribal empowerment has created positive brand associations and strengthened consumer confidence. These attributes differentiate Shabari Naturals from many conventional brands operating in the natural and organic products market.

However, the study also reveals that the brand faces several challenges. Although it enjoys a positive image among existing consumers, its overall brand awareness remains limited, particularly outside Maharashtra. Restricted distribution channels, comparatively lower promotional activities, and limited digital marketing have constrained the brand's ability to reach a wider customer base. In a highly competitive market dominated by well-established organic and FMCG brands, improving visibility and accessibility is essential for enhancing brand equity.

The study concludes that consumer perception plays a significant role in shaping the brand equity of Shabari Naturals. Positive perceptions regarding product quality, authenticity, sustainability, and social responsibility contribute to stronger brand value and customer trust. To strengthen its market position, the brand should focus on expanding its distribution network, increasing digital marketing efforts, enhancing customer engagement, and effectively communicating its unique value proposition of tribal empowerment and sustainable development.

Overall, Shabari Naturals possesses considerable potential to emerge as a leading natural and sustainable brand in India. By leveraging its distinctive identity, maintaining consistent product quality, and implementing effective branding and marketing strategies, the brand can enhance consumer perception, build stronger brand equity, and achieve sustainable long-term growth while continuing to create meaningful economic opportunities for tribal communities.

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