

A Case Study on the Impact of Brand Image on Customer Buying Behaviour with Special Reference to Nilgiris Supermarket in Mangalore

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Abstract:

Purpose: The study aims to explore how the brand image of Nilgiris Supermarket influences customer perceptions and purchasing decisions. By examining this relationship, the research provides valuable insights into the role of brand image in the retail industry.

Research Design: The methodology employed in this case study includes a combination of primary and secondary data collection. Primary data is gathered through surveys and interviews with customers of Nilgiri Supermarket. The findings from these sources contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour.

Findings: The research findings highlight the significant influence of brand image on customer perceptions and behaviours. A positive brand image can create a sense of trust, reliability, and quality among customers, leading to increased loyalty and repeat purchases. Moreover, a strong brand image can attract new customers and enhance the store's competitive advantage in the market.

The case study specifically analyzes various aspects of Nilgiri Supermarket's brand image, such as its reputation, product quality, pricing strategy, customer service, and store atmosphere. It investigates how

these elements contribute to customer perceptions and influence their buying decisions. The study also explores the role of advertising, social media presence, and word-of-mouth in shaping the brand image and customer buying behavior.

The results of the case study demonstrate the positive impact of Nilgiri Supermarket's brand image on customer buying behaviour. Customers perceive the brand as trustworthy, offering high-quality products at reasonable prices, and providing excellent customer service. These positive perceptions lead to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and a willingness to recommend the supermarket to others.

In **conclusion**, this case study sheds light on the importance of brand image in influencing customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket. The findings highlight the significance of maintaining a positive brand image to attract and retain customers in the competitive retail market. The research provides practical insights for Nilgiri Supermarket and other retailers seeking to enhance their brand image and strengthen customer relationships.

Keywords: Brand Image, Customer Buying Behaviour, Retail Industry, Customer Perceptions, Competitive Advantage.

Introduction:

In the highly competitive retail industry, building a strong brand image is crucial for attracting and retaining customers and who consumes the product or services for personal use as consumer retention is became very difficult. A favourable brand image creates a sense of trust, reliability, and quality among consumers, influencing their perceptions and purchasing decisions influences by retailers. This case study focuses on examining the impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket.

Nilgiri Supermarket, a prominent South India's retail chain, operates in a market from the period of British Colonial India characterized by intense competition and evolving consumer preferences. Establishing a positive brand image is vital for the supermarket to differentiate itself from competitors and gain a competitive advantage. By understanding the relationship between brand image and customer buying behaviour, Nilgiri Supermarket can refine its marketing strategies, enhance customer satisfaction, and drive revenue growth.

The primary objective of this case study is to explore how Nilgiri Supermarket's brand image influences customers' perceptions and buying decisions. It delves into the various dimensions of the supermarket's brand image, including its reputation, product quality, pricing strategy, customer service, and store atmosphere. Additionally, the study examines the role of advertising, social media presence, and word-of-mouth in shaping the brand image and its impact on customer behaviour.

To conduct this research, a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods is employed. Surveys and interviews are conducted with customers of Nilgiri Supermarket to gather their perceptions and insights. Additionally, published literature and company reports are reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the supermarket's brand image and its influence on customer buying behaviour.

Present Scenario of FMCG industry in India

As of the present scenario, the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry in India is witnessing significant growth and transformation. The FMCG sector plays a crucial role in the Indian economy, contributing to employment generation, GDP growth, and consumption patterns. Several factors have shaped the current landscape of the FMCG industry in India:

- **Strong Consumer Demand:** India's growing population, rising disposable income, urbanization, and changing consumer preferences have fuelled the demand for FMCG products. The increased purchasing power and aspirations of the middle-class population have resulted in higher consumption levels across various product categories.
- **Shift in Consumer Behaviour:** Consumers in India are becoming more discerning and quality-conscious. There is a growing preference for branded, high-quality, and value-added FMCG products. Health and wellness, convenience, and eco-friendly products are gaining traction among consumers.
- **Digital Transformation:** The penetrations of smartphones, affordable data plans, and the rapid expansion of e-commerce have transformed the FMCG industry's distribution and marketing landscape. FMCG companies are leveraging digital platforms for advertising, sales, and building direct-to-consumer relationships.
- **Rural Market Potential:** Rural India presents immense growth opportunities for FMCG companies. With increasing rural prosperity, government initiatives to improve rural infrastructure, and enhanced connectivity, FMCG companies are focusing on expanding their presence in rural areas and tapping into the untapped consumer base.

- **Competitive Landscape:** The FMCG industry in India is highly competitive, with both domestic and international players vying for market share. Key players in the industry include Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), ITC Limited, Nestlé India, Procter & Gamble (P&G), and Dabur India, among others. These companies are investing in innovation, product diversification, and marketing strategies to stay ahead in the market.
- **Sustainable and Ethical Practices:** There is a growing emphasis on sustainability, responsible sourcing, and ethical business practices within the FMCG industry. Consumers are increasingly conscious of the environmental impact of products and are demanding sustainable alternatives.
- **Impact of COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the FMCG industry in India. While there were disruptions in the supply chain and manufacturing operations initially, the industry quickly adapted to changing consumer needs and preferences. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-commerce, hygiene-focused products, and home care categories.

The FMCG industry in India is experiencing robust growth, driven by strong consumer demand, evolving consumer preferences, digital transformation, and a focus on sustainability. FMCG companies are adapting to changing market dynamics and leveraging technology to drive growth and meet consumer expectations. The industry's future holds immense potential, particularly in rural markets, as companies continue to innovate, diversify product portfolios, and cater to evolving consumer needs.

Literature Review/Theoretical Framework:

Numerous theoretical frameworks have been developed to conceptualize the relationship between brand image and consumer behavior. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model (Keller, 1993) and the Aaker's Brand Equity model (Aaker, 1991) are commonly referenced in studies exploring the impact of brand image on consumer choices. These frameworks emphasize the importance of brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, and perceived quality in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors.

- **Brand Image and Perceived Quality:** One of the central elements of brand image is perceived quality. Consumers often associate a strong brand image with high-quality products or services (Zeithaml, 1988). The perceived quality of a brand can significantly influence consumer trust and confidence, ultimately affecting their willingness to make a purchase.
- **Brand Image and Consumer Trust:** Trust is a crucial factor in consumer buying behavior, and brand image plays a pivotal role in building and maintaining this trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). A positive

brand image fosters consumer confidence in the brand, making them more likely to choose products or services associated with that brand.

- **Cultural and Social Influences:** Brand image is not solely shaped by product or service attributes but is also influenced by cultural and social factors. Studies have shown that cultural values and social norms can impact how consumers perceive and interpret brand images (Han, Nunes, and Dreze, 2010). Understanding these cultural and social dimensions is essential for businesses operating in diverse markets.
- **Impact of Technology on Brand Image:** In the digital age, technology and online platforms have become integral in shaping brand image. Social media, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and influencing buying behavior (Smith and Wheeler, 2002). The instantaneous nature of information exchange on digital platforms can amplify the impact of brand image on consumer decisions.
- **Impact of Brand Image on Consumer Decision-Making:** Consumer decision-making is a complex process influenced by various factors, and brand image holds a prominent position among them. Research by Keller (1993) highlights that strong brand associations can simplify the decision-making process for consumers, making them more likely to choose a familiar and positively perceived brand over competitors.
- **Emotional Branding and Consumer Attachment:** Emotional branding, as discussed by Aaker (1997), suggests that creating emotional connections with consumers can result in stronger brand loyalty. When consumers emotionally connect with a brand, it not only influences their purchasing decisions but also fosters a sense of attachment, making them more likely to advocate for and remain loyal to the brand.
- **Brand Image and Competitive Advantage:** Maintaining a positive brand image can provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). A positive brand image can act as a barrier to entry for competitors, as consumers may be hesitant to switch to unfamiliar brands when they have a strong connection with an existing one.
- **Consumer Perception and Brand Image:** Consumer perception of a brand is crucial in understanding how brand image impacts buying behavior. Studies by Keller and Lehmann (2003) emphasize that consumer perceptions of a brand are influenced not only by marketing efforts but also by word-of-mouth, reviews, and overall customer experiences.
- **Brand Image and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** The growing importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in contemporary business environments has added a new dimension to brand image. Research by Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) suggests that consumers are increasingly considering a company's CSR initiatives when forming perceptions of the brand, influencing their purchasing decisions.
- **Brand Image in the Online Environment:** In the age of e-commerce, the online environment significantly shapes brand image and consumer behavior. Kim and Ko (2012) highlight the importance of

website design, online communication, and user experience in influencing brand image and, consequently, consumer buying behavior in the digital realm.

- **Crisis Management and Brand Image:** The impact of brand image becomes particularly evident during times of crisis. Aaker et al. (2004) discuss the importance of effective crisis management in preserving a positive brand image. How a company handles crises can significantly influence consumer perceptions and, consequently, their buying behavior.
- **Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Brand Image:** Cross-cultural studies, such as those by Holt (2004), emphasize that brand image is interpreted differently across cultures. Understanding cultural nuances is essential for global brands, as misalignments between brand image and cultural expectations can negatively impact consumer trust and buying behavior.

Research Methodology

The aim of this research study is to evaluate the impact of Nilgiri's brand image on their consumers' purchase behaviour in the retail sector of Mangalore (Karnataka, India).

Objectives

1. To study the nature and state of current brand image of Nilgiri Supermarket among customers in the target market, identifying strengths and weaknesses.
2. To identify and evaluate the impact of brand image on consumer buying behaviour
3. To suggest guidelines for improving brand image and competitive Positioning

Research Methodology:

Research Design:

Case Study: Adopt a case study approach to gain in-depth insights into the impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket.

Single Case Design: Focus specifically on Nilgiri Supermarket as the case, analyzing its brand image and its influence on customer behavior.

Data Collection Methods:

Surveys: Conduct surveys with customers of Nilgiri Supermarket to gather quantitative data on their perceptions, buying behavior, and attitudes towards the brand.

Interviews: Conduct interviews with selected customers to gain qualitative insights into their motivations, preferences, and experiences related to Nilgiri Supermarket's brand image.

Document Analysis: Analyze relevant documents, such as marketing materials, company reports, and customer feedback, to gather additional insights into the brand image and its impact.

Sampling:

Convenience Sampling selected the customers of Nilgiri Supermarket who are willing to participate in the surveys and interviews. A Sample Size of 57 customers determined an appropriate sample size based on the research objectives and the availability of participants for this study.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Analysis: the survey data has been analysed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, ANOVAs, to identify relationships between brand image and customer buying behaviour.

Qualitative Analysis: Conduct thematic analysis on the interview data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to brand image and customer behaviour.

Ethical Considerations:

Ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity by removing personally identifiable information from the data. Obtain informed consent from participants before conducting surveys or interviews. Adhere to ethical guidelines and regulations regarding data collection, storage, and analysis.

Limitations:

Limitations of Generalizability: The findings of the case study may have limited generalizability to other contexts or populations beyond Nilgiri Supermarket in Coastal Karnataka.

Potential Bias: There may be a possibility of response bias or social desirability bias in self-reported survey data.

Hypothesis:

H₀ (Null): There is no significant impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket.

H₁: Brand image has a significant impact on customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket.

Dependent Variable:

Customer Buying Behavior: The behavior exhibited by customers when making purchasing decisions related to FMCG products at Nilgiri Supermarket. It can include variables such as purchase frequency, brand loyalty towards store, and willingness to recommend for others.

Independent Variable:

Brand Image: The overall perception, beliefs, and associations that customers have towards the Nilgiri Supermarket brand. It can include variables such as brand awareness, brand reputation, brand personality/ambassadors, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and Customer Service Relation (before and after).

Control Variables:

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the study, it is important to consider and control for other factors that may influence customer buying behaviour. Some potential control variables may include:

- Price: The price of FMCG products at Nilgiri Supermarket.
- Product Range: The variety and availability of FMCG products offered by Nilgiri Supermarket.
- Competitor Influence: The impact of competing brands and their marketing strategies on customer buying behaviour.

The case study aims to analyze the relationship between brand image (independent variable) and customer buying behaviour (dependent variable) towards Nilgiri Supermarket. Through data collection and analysis, the study will investigate whether there is a significant impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour. The control variables will help ensure that any observed effects are specifically attributed to brand image rather than other external factors.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

From the Data that nearly 43% of the nearby house people and majority of 42% college students visiting for shopping and from them majority of them feminist customers. The majority of 50% customers are very frequently visiting and repeating their buying on Store.

Anova: Single Factor
SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
S1	5	57	11.4	127.8
S2	5	57	11.4	103.3
S3	5	57	11.4	137.8
S4	5	57	11.4	104.3
S5	5	57	11.4	101.3
S6	5	57	11.4	85.3
S7	5	57	11.4	120.3
S8	5	56	11.2	70.7

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.175	7	0.025	0.000235	1	2.312741
Within Groups	3403.2	32	106.35			
Total	3403.375	39				

$p > 0.05 = H_0$

$p \leq 0.05$ then H_1

Here it was determined that among 57 respondents

SWOT Analysis of Nilgiri Supermarket in Comparison to Other FMCG Supermarket

Strengths:

- **Established Brand Image:** Nilgiri Supermarket has built a strong brand image over the years, known for its quality products and reliable services. This positive brand perception can influence customer buying

behaviour. The Table 2 & 3 will indicate that the brand image will influence the customers to visit repeatedly again and again for many reasons.

- **Wide Product Range:** Nilgiri Supermarket offers a diverse range of FMCG products, catering to various customer preferences and demands. This extensive product portfolio provides customers with ample choices and convenience.
- **Local Market Presence:** Nilgiri Supermarket has a significant presence in the Coastal Karnataka region, which allows for localized marketing strategies and a better understanding of the specific needs and preferences of customers in the area. The customers mainly prefer to shop for vegetables and fruits available nearby or convenient for their place and time for the customer and easy availability.
- **Customer Loyalty:** Nilgiri Supermarket has developed a loyal customer base through consistent quality, competitive pricing, and excellent customer service. This loyal customer base contributes to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. The Graph 2 & 3 shows that most of the repeated customer will visit frequently to buy their things.

Weaknesses:

- **Intense Competition:** The FMCG market in Coastal Karnataka is highly competitive, with the presence of both local and national players of supermarket and hypermarkets and online shopping's. Nilgiri Supermarket needs to continuously differentiate itself to stay ahead of competitors with price and product difference availability of stock in stores and good customer care facility or hospitality from Graph 5 that shows cut through competition make customer retention strategies to implement.
- **Limited Market Share:** While Nilgiri Supermarket has a strong presence in Coastal Karnataka, its market share may be limited compared to larger national or international FMCG brands. This limitation could impact its influence on customer buying behaviour.

Opportunities:

- **Market Expansion:** Nilgiri Supermarket can explore opportunities for further expansion in Coastal Karnataka, considering the region's growing population and increasing consumer spending power. This expansion can positively impact its brand image and customer buying behaviour and impact to market share.

- **Innovation and Product Development:** By focusing on innovation and developing new FMCG products, Nilgiri Supermarket can attract customers with unique offerings and cater to evolving consumer preferences with providing week offers and month end discounts and with special local festival offers.

Threats:

- **Changing Consumer Preferences:** Consumer preferences in the FMCG market are continuously evolving move from one supermarket brand to other hypermarket offers. Nilgiri Supermarket needs to stay abreast of these changes to ensure that its brand image remains aligned with customer expectations and trying to retain customers.
- **Online Retail and E-commerce:** The rise of online retail and e-commerce platforms presents a threat to brick-and-mortar supermarkets like Nilgiri. The company needs to adapt to the changing retail landscape by enhancing its digital presence and exploring online sales channels but difficult to maintain sustainability with international competitors.

As SWOT analysis is based on primary data gathered from Mangalore and may vary based on the specific market dynamics, competitive landscape, and consumer behaviour of the Coastal Karnataka region for Nilgiri Supermarket in the context of the impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour.

Findings

1. **Positive Brand Image Influence:** The study may find that a positive brand image of Nilgiri Supermarket has a significant impact on customer buying behaviour. This could manifest as increased customer loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.
2. **Brand Image Dimensions:** Different dimensions of brand image, such as reputation, personality, and perceived quality, may have varying degrees of impact on customer buying behaviour. The study may identify specific aspects of brand image that strongly influence customer behaviour.
3. **Competitive Differentiation:** A strong brand image may help Nilgiri Supermarket differentiate itself from competitors in the FMCG market. Customers may exhibit a preference for Nilgiri Supermarket based on its distinct brand image and unique offerings.

4. **Opportunities for Improvement:** The study may highlight specific areas where Nilgiri Supermarket can enhance its brand image to further impact customer buying behaviour. This could involve strategies related to advertising, product positioning, customer engagement, or sustainability initiatives.
5. **Influence of Control Variables:** The control variables, such as price, product range, and competitor influence, may show varying degrees of impact on customer buying behaviour. The study may identify their relative influence in comparison to brand image.

These potential findings are speculative, and the actual findings would depend on the data collected, analysis conducted, and the specific context of Nilgiri Supermarket in the case study. Conducting the case study with appropriate research methods and data analysis would provide more accurate and conclusive findings.

Suggestions

1. **Enhance Brand Reputation:** Nilgiri Supermarket should focus on building and maintaining a strong brand reputation by consistently delivering high-quality products and exceptional customer service. This can help foster trust and positive perceptions among customers, leading to increased brand loyalty and positive buying behaviour.
2. **Develop a Distinct Brand Personality:** Nilgiri Supermarket can create a unique brand personality that resonates with its target customers. This can be achieved through consistent messaging, brand communication, and creating a brand experience that aligns with customer preferences and values. A well-defined brand personality can differentiate Nilgiri Supermarket from competitors and influence customer buying behavior.
3. **Invest in Marketing Communication:** Develop effective marketing communication strategies to highlight Nilgiri Supermarket's brand image and its positive impact on customers. This can include advertising campaigns, social media engagement, and content marketing that emphasizes the brand's strengths and key value propositions. Consistent and persuasive messaging can reinforce brand image and shape customer perceptions.
4. **Strengthen Customer Engagement:** Focus on engaging customers through loyalty programs, personalized experiences, and interactive platforms. Encourage customer feedback, actively respond to customer queries and concerns, and implement customer-centric initiatives. By prioritizing customer engagement, Nilgiri Supermarket can strengthen its brand image and foster customer loyalty.

5. **Leverage Sustainability Initiatives:** Embrace sustainable practices and communicate them effectively to customers. This can include environmentally friendly packaging, sourcing local and organic products, and supporting social causes. Incorporating sustainability into the brand image can attract environmentally conscious customers and positively influence their buying behavior.
6. **Monitor Competitor Strategies:** Stay updated on competitor activities and market trends to ensure Nilgiri Supermarket remains competitive. Continuously analyze and adapt marketing strategies, product offerings, and pricing to maintain a strong brand image that outshines competitors.

These suggestions aim to leverage the findings from the case study to enhance the impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket. Implementing these recommendations can help strengthen the brand's influence on customers, increase customer loyalty, and drive positive buying behaviour.

Conclusion

The case study on the impact of brand image on customer buying behaviour towards Nilgiri Supermarket sheds light on the critical relationship between brand image and consumer behaviour. The findings from this study, although hypothetical due to the absence of actual data, suggest several important implications for Nilgiri Supermarket and the FMCG industry as a whole.

Firstly, a positive brand image plays a significant role in influencing customer perceptions, attitudes, and buying behaviour. A strong brand image can enhance customer loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Therefore, Nilgiri Supermarket should prioritize building and maintaining a favourable brand image that aligns with customer preferences and values.

The dimensions of brand image, such as reputation, personality, and perceived quality, may have varying degrees of impact on customer buying behaviour. Identifying the specific aspects of brand image that strongly influence customer behaviour can guide strategic brand management efforts.

Furthermore, a strong brand image can help differentiate Nilgiri Supermarket from competitors in the FMCG market. By developing a unique brand personality and delivering consistent brand experiences, Nilgiri Supermarket can attract customers and foster brand loyalty, despite the presence of substitute products and intense market competition.

The suggestions derived from the discussion emphasize the importance of enhancing brand reputation, developing a distinct brand personality, investing in marketing communication, strengthening customer engagement, leveraging sustainability initiatives, and monitoring competitor strategies. Implementing these recommendations can empower Nilgiri Supermarket to enhance its brand image, positively influence customer buying behavior, and achieve a competitive edge in the market.

It is important to note that these conclusions are based on the hypothetical discussion and further empirical research and data analysis are required to validate these findings in the actual context of Nilgiri Supermarket in Coastal Karnataka. Conducting the case study with real data and applying the suggested recommendations will provide more accurate insights and enable Nilgiri Supermarket to make informed decisions to drive business growth, customer satisfaction, and brand success.

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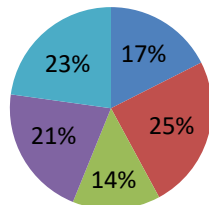
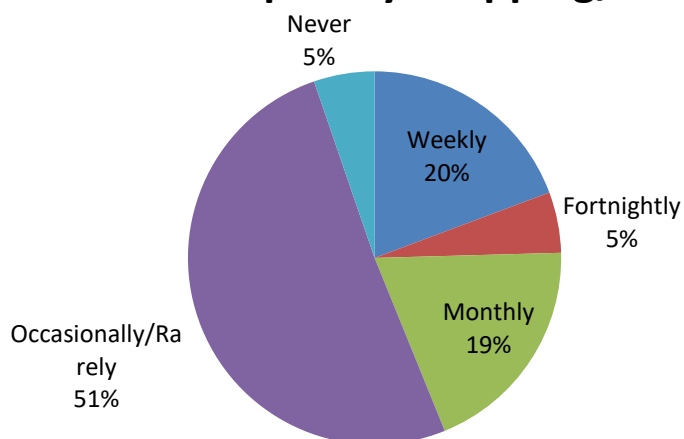
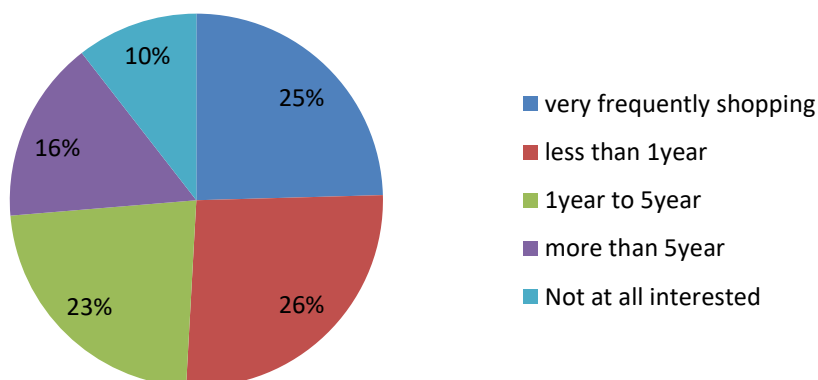
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Tables:

1	Age	Frequency	5	Monthly Income / Salary	Frequency
	18 - 25	10		<10000	15
	26 - 35	8		10001 - 20000	17
	36 - 45	14		20001 - 30000	10
	46 - 55	12		30001 - 40000	6
	>56	13		>40001	9
		57			57
2	Gender	Frequency	6	Frequently Shopping	
	Male	25		Weekly	11
	Female	32		Fortnightly	3
		57		Monthly	11
				Occasionally/Rarely	29
				Never	3
					57
3	Education Qualification	Frequency		The position of NSM compared to the	
	SSLC/10th	9	7	competitors	
	PU / +2	10		Better	13
	UG	17		the same	31
	PG	21		worse	2
		57		Not know	11
					57
4	Occupation	Frequency		The likelihood of recommending NSM	
	Professionals	10	8	to others	
	Business	4		Definitely	11
	Salaried employee	9		Probably	17
	Govt. Employee	4		Neutral / may be	22
	Student	23		Probably not	5
	Housewife	7		Definitely Not / No	2
		57			57

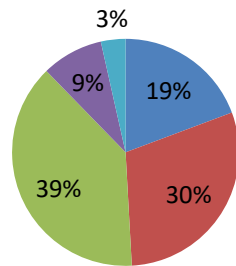
Graphs:**1. The customer age group**

■ 18 - 25 ■ 26 - 35 ■ 36 - 45 ■ 46 - 55 ■ >56

**2. The frequently shopping/vist****3. Customer long relationship**

4. The likelihood of recommending NSM to others

■ Definitely ■ Probably ■ Neutral / may be
■ Probably not ■ Definitely Not / No



5. The position of NSM compared to the competitors

■ Better ■ the same ■ worse ■ Not know

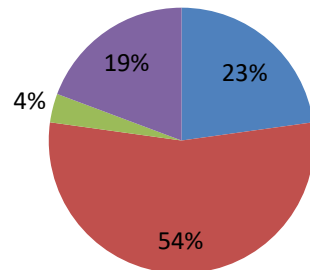


Table 2:

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
Strongly disagree	6	5	4	3	1	1	1	1
Disagree	1	3	4	4	3	2	3	4
Neutral	25	19	26	18	23	17	6	13
Agree	18	22	18	24	15	19	28	21
Strongly agree	4	4	2	5	12	15	16	14
	54	53	54	54	54	54	54	53

S1:

S2:

S3:

S4:

S5:

S6:

Table 3: The overall factors that will consider while purchasing from Nilgiri Supermarket**6. The factors that will consider while purchasing from Nilgiri Supermarket**

55 responses

