

## **BRAND ASSOCIATION AS AN INFLUENCER OF BRAND IMAGE OF FMCG BRANDS IN HYDERABAD**

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### **Abstract**

*Building a strong and positive brand image in consumers' intellects requires instituting and sustaining positive associations. Brand association is one such powerful aid that can shape and influence brand image. Creating and maintaining positive associations is vital for instilling a strong and favourable brand image in the minds of consumers. The current study dives into the aspects of brand association that lead to intangible benefits in the form of brand image as intended by the marketers, confining to specific Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) brands in Hyderabad vicinity. Enterprises often invest in branding strategies to intentionally shape these associations through marketing, communication, and overall brand management. Brand association contributes to the development of a brand's personality. For example, if a brand is associated with attributes like innovation, friendliness, or eco-friendliness, consumers are likely to perceive the brand as having those characteristics, shaping the overall personality of the brand. The term refers to the mental connections consumers make between a brand and certain attributes, characteristics, or values. These associations can significantly impact how consumers perceive and interact with a brand. Consumer perception of a brand is heavily influenced by brand associations. If a brand is consistently associated with positive attributes, consumers are more likely to have a favourable overall perception of the brand. Positive brand associations can facilitate brand extensions and expansion into new markets or product categories. Positive brand associations, such as quality, reliability, and trustworthiness, can enhance the overall perception of a brand. Consumers are more likely to trust and choose a brand with positive associations, leading to a favourable brand image. The study carried out with the data provided by 206 members is an attempt to uncover the relatedness between brand association and brand image and how the former can greatly influence the latter.*

**Keywords:** Brand Association, Brand Image, Consumer Perception, FMCGs, Brand Attributes.

### **1. Introduction**

Fast-Moving Consumer Good (FMCG) brands operate in a highly competitive market where consumer choices are plentiful. In this landscape, building a strong and positive brand image is crucial for success. Brand association is a key determinant of brand image in the FMCG industry. Brand association refers to the mental connections and perceptions consumers link with a particular brand. The profound influence of brand association on the image of FMCG brands perception is examined in this article. Consumers' perception of a brand is often shaped by the associations they have with it. These associations can be linked to various elements, including product features, values, emotions, and experiences. In the FMCG sector, where products are often commoditized, brand association becomes a key differentiator. For instance, a consumer may associate a specific detergent brand with the idea of cleanliness, purity, and environmental friendliness, creating a positive image. FMCG stands for Fast-Moving Consumer Goods. These are products meant for everyday

consumption, bought frequently that have a relatively quick turnover and are sold at a low cost. FMCG products are non-durable goods, meaning they are consumed relatively quickly and are repurchased. Examples of FMCG could be packaged food items (beverages, cereals, snacks), personal care products (shampoo, toothpaste, soap), household cleaning products (floor cleaners and detergents), and over-the-counter drugs. FMCG brands are increasingly recognizing the importance of emotional connections with consumers. Brand association plays a pivotal role in fostering such connections. When consumers associate a brand with positive emotions, trust, and reliability, they are more likely to develop loyalty. For example, a brand that is associated with family values and traditions may pulsate more with consumers seeking products that align with those values. FMCG brands create brand associations through celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing. Celebrities and influencers act as powerful agents, transferring their positive image onto the brand they promote. If a popular personality endorses a FMCG product, consumers may associate the brand with the celebrity's characteristics, values, and lifestyle. This association can significantly influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions.

Brand association is not only about individual experiences but is deeply rooted in cultural and social contexts. FMCG brands often leverage cultural symbols, trends, and societal values to create associations that collaborate with their target audience. Brands that align themselves with contemporary societal and environmental concerns, can establish positive associations that contribute to a favourable brand image. While positive brand associations can enhance brand image, negative associations can have the opposite effect. FMCG brands need to be mindful of potential risks, such as product recalls, controversies, or negative publicity, which can tamper the brand's image. Faster and explicit handling of such situations is crucial to lower the impact on brand association and, consequently, brand image. In the dynamics of FMCG sector, where consumer choices abound, brand association emerges as a critical influencer of brand image. FMCG brands must strategically craft positive associations through emotional connections, celebrity endorsements, cultural alignment, and consistent product quality. My study focuses on understanding and harnessing the power of brand association of FMCG brands, which can not only differentiate themselves in the market but also build lasting connections with consumers, ultimately contributing to long-term success.

## **2. Literature Review**

Brand image could be defined as a brand that is brought to the consumer's mind by the brand association (Keller, 1993). Brand image can be also defined as consumer's thoughts and feelings about the brand (Roy and Banerjee, 2007). Aaker (1991) asserts that brand image could be a set of association which is significant to the consumers. Based on Bearden and Etzel (1982) as well as Park and Arinivasan (1994) arguments, brand image is closely related to the uniqueness of a particular product classification. According to Hsieh and Li (2008), strong brand image does create a superior brand message of a particular brand over the rivalry brand. Consequently, customer's behaviour will be affected and determined by brand image (Burmam et al., 2008). Consumers employ a product's brand image in deriving overall perceptions of the specified product, a product with higher brand image may be inferred by consumers as product of superior quality and value (Richardson et al. 1994).

Furthermore, Jacoby et al. (1971) conduct experiment research and have discovered that consumers' perception of quality and value are significantly affected by brand image.

After consumers, the second most important element for a firm is their brand (Alhaddad, 2014a). The researcher focused on the several other variables which influence the Brand Equity to increase the organization's revenue. The main purpose of the organizations to focus on the Brand Equity is to check how it is important for the firms and how Brand Association, Brand Image and Brand Loyalty influence the Brand Equity as it did in the past. Also to measure Brand Equity the performance and the Brand awareness also its dimension (Severi & Ling, 2013). But we want to check the brand Equity on Brand Awareness, Brand Image and Brand Loyalty.

The Brand association might be made through the help of benefits, attitudes and attributes (Severi, Ling, & Nasermoadeli, 2014). Brand association is liked the thing which strongly connected with the brand performance (Atilgan, Aksoy, and Akinci 2005). Brand association plays its role and collect data as an instrument to measure the brand extension (Severi & Ling, 2013). The definition of brand association is very well known by the consumer and it already in their thoughts and increasing brand awareness for consumer will directly increase consumer attention towards the specific brand (Emari, Jafari, and Mogaddam 2012). Brand Association can also create the brand loyalty of the particular brand (Severi & Ling, 2013). To create the brand association, customer should have the knowledge of brand first (Jayswal and Vora 2019). The Brand association create path for consumer to purchase more and increased the value of the firm along with it as well. The brand association impacts many more different advantages that helps for the particular brand (Atilgan et al. 2005).

The value of a brand lies in what consumers have experienced and learned about the brand. The resulting brand associations held in a consumer's memory constitute the brand image, and affect their behavior. Brand associations are thereby important building blocks of customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993, Keller, 2003, Krishnan, 1996), and marketers should aim to optimize the attributes and benefits that the brand is associated with by the consumers, satisfying their core needs and wants (Keller, 2003, Park et al., 1986). Such strongly held, favorably evaluated associations that are unique to the brand and imply superiority over other brands will be critical for a brand success (Broniarczyk and Alba, 1994, Thelen and Woodside, 1997). Hence, brand associations will have implications for many marketing mix actions, such as (re-)positioning and (re-)design of a brand (Kaul and Rao, 1995), and extending a brand to other product categories (Czellar, 2003).

Associations between brands and attributes are often directional (Anderson, 1983, Holden and Lutz, 1992, Farquhar and Herr, 1992, Krishnan, 1996): the association is from the brand to the attribute and/or the other way around. For example, the brand equity of BMW is affected by the extent to which positive features like safety and sportiness are evoked by that car brand. On the other hand, whether or not certain cues or attributes enhance brand recall in a purchase or consumption setting contributes to the equity of the brand. Insights in the communalities and asymmetries of these bi-directional associations can direct towards recommendations for brand managers. Holden and Lutz (1992) stated that when measuring

advertising effectiveness, one has to assess effects on attributes evoked by the brand as well as on attributes that are likely to evoke the brand. Farquhar and Herr (1992) showed that the dual nature of brand associations is an essential part of determining the limits of a brand's stretch. Hence, when assessing brand image, one should consider both brand-to-attribute and attribute-to-brand associations. Brand association refers to the mental connections or links that consumers make between a brand and specific attributes, values, or characteristics. These associations are formed through a combination of a brand's marketing efforts, communication strategies, product experiences, and overall brand presence in the market. These associations can be explicit or implicit and are developed over time through various interactions and experiences with the brand. Brand associations significantly influence how consumers perceive and respond to a brand. Associations can be related to various aspects of a brand, including product features, brand personality, emotions, symbols, endorsements, and more. They can be functional (related to product attributes) or symbolic (related to what the brand represents). The sum of all associations forms the brand image, influencing how consumers perceive the brand. A strong and positive brand image is essential for building trust and loyalty.

**Brand Personality:** Brands are often anthropomorphized, and consumers attribute human-like qualities to them. Brand associations contribute to the development of a brand's personality, whether it's seen as friendly, innovative, reliable, or adventurous. **Brand Equity:** Positive brand associations contribute to brand equity, which is the overall value and strength of a brand in the marketplace. Brand equity influences consumer choices and can lead to competitive advantages. In summary, brand association is a fundamental concept in branding that involves creating positive, memorable connections between a brand and specific attributes. These associations are vital for shaping consumer perceptions, building brand equity, and influencing purchasing decisions. Strategic brand management involves actively managing and reinforcing these associations over time.

## **2.1 Research Gap**

It is difficult to understand what customers really look into in forming an impression of a product and its manufacturer. Current research focuses on how brands strategically create and manage associations. It varies based on the associations that users develop in regard to FMCG brands. The brand image may not always remain the same and may change from time to time by the associations such as quality and performance of the product, values, emotions and endorsements connected to a brand. My study focuses on the probable brand associations that influence brand image which could help the marketers in evaluating the aspects that create a positive and prospective brand image.

## **2.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the ever-evolving landscape of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), where consumers are inundated with choices, the role of brand association in shaping brand image stands as a critical yet underexplored area of research. While the significance of brand association in consumer decision-making is acknowledged, there exists a notable gap in our understanding of the intricate dynamics and specific factors that govern this influence in the FMCG sector. By addressing these problems, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding

of the interplay between brand association and brand image in the FMCG sector, offering valuable insights for academics, marketers, and brand managers.

### 2.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the influence of brand association on brand image of FMCGs in Hyderabad
2. To identify the elements in developing brand associations leading to brand image of FMCG brands.

### 2.4 Hypotheses

**H1:** There is significant influence of brand association on brand image of FMCG brands in Hyderabad.

**H2:** There is significant relationship between brand association elements and brand image of FMCG brands.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Territory of the Study

The study is taken up in Hyderabad city, providing a focused analysis of the FMCG sector in this geographical area.

### 3.2 Sampling Design

Non-probability convenience sampling is used to ensure applicability and ease of data collection duly maintaining representation from various population demographics.

### 3.3 Sampling Unit

The buyers residing in Hyderabad City who are purchasers and users of FMCG products.

### 3.4 Sample Size

A sample size of 206 respondents has been finalized to have an adequate data size for analysis.

### 3.5 Source of Data

Primary data has been collected through a structured closed-ended questionnaire formulated to extract related insights from the targets of study.

### 3.6 Statistical Tools

Pearson Chi-square and Correlation are applied to measure relationships, Regression analysis to identify the impact, and standard descriptive measures like Mean and Standard Deviation for data summarization and analysis. These tools collectively dispense a comprehensive understanding of the brand image dynamics of FMCG brands in Hyderabad.

## 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table-1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Category	Responses	Frequency	%	Total
Gender	Male	117	56.79	206
	Female	89	43.21	
Age	20-30	48	23.30	206
	30-40	62	30.09	
	40-50	57	27.67	
	50-60	39	18.94	
Education	Under Graduate	23	11.16	206



	Graduate	78	37.86	100%
	Post Graduate	71	34.47	
	Others	34	16.51	
<b>Income</b>	Less than 25,000	47	22.81	206 100%
	25,001-50,000	80	38.83	
	50,001-75,000	37	17.96	
	75,001-1,00,000	31	15.05	
	More than 1,00,000	11	5.34	
<b>Occupation</b>	Student/Not Working	41	19.90	206 100%
	Public Employee	28	13.59	
	Private Employee	87	42.23	
	Self-Employed	34	16.50	
	Business	16	7.76	

**Interpretation:** Table 1 illustrates the demographics of respondents in the study on brand association’s influence on image of FMCG brands in Hyderabad. The participants' gender breakdown shows that 43.21% are female and 56.79% are male. Diverse age groups are found: the 20–30, 30–40, 40–50, and 50–60 age groups have 23.30%, 30.09%, 27.67%, and 18.94% of each age group, respectively. 11.16% of undergraduates, 37.86% of graduates, 34.47% of post-graduates, and 16.51% of "Others" fall under the education group. 22.81%, 38.83%, and 17.96% of the population, respectively, make less than Rs.25,000, Rs.25,001–50,000, and 50,001–75,000. Diversity in occupations comprises 19.90% students and unemployed people, 13.59% governmental servants, and 42.23% private sector workers. This brief demographic summary sheds light on the various respondent demographics influencing brand image.

**Table-2: The demographic influence of brand association on brand image**

			Very High	High	Mode rate	Low	No		
Gender	Male	F	35	26	28	17	11	117	χ <sup>2</sup> =25.955  p=0.000<0.05 Significant
		%	29.91%	22.22%	23.93%	14.53%	9.4%	100.0%	
	Female	F	24	21	23	13	8	89	
		%	26.96%	23.59%	25.84%	14.6%	8.99%	100.0%	
	Total	F	59	47	51	30	19	206	
		%	28.64%	24.6%	26.7%	16.4%	4.3%	100.0%	
Age	20-30	F	16	11	10	9	2	48	χ <sup>2</sup> =67.352  p=
		%	33.33%	22.91%	20.83%	18.75%	4.16%	100.0%	
	30-40	F	18	15	15	11	3	62	
		%	29.03%	24.16%	24.16%	17.74%	4.83%	100.0%	

	40-50	F	15	13	12	8	9	57	0.000<0.05 Significant		
		%	26.31	22.80	21.05	14.03	15.79	100.0			
	50-60	F	10	8	14	2	5	39			
		%	25.64	20.51	35.89	5.13%	12.82	100.0			
	Education	Under Graduate	F	6	8	5	2	2		23	$\chi^2 = 99.631$  p= 0.000<0.05 Significant
			%	26.08	34.78	21.73	8.69%	8.69%		100.0	
Graduate		F	15	22	11	18	12	78			
		%	19.23	28.20	14.10	23.07	15.38	100.0			
Post Graduate		F	13	25	11	16	6	71			
		%	18.30	35.21	15.49	22.53	8.45%	100.0			
Others		F	9	8	8	4	5	34			
		%	26.47	23.53	23.53	11.76	14.70	100.0			
Income per Month (in Rs.)		< 25,000	F	6	13	12	9	7	47	$\chi^2 = 110.896$  p= 0.000<0.05 Significant	
			%	12.76	27.65	25.53	19.14	14.89	100.0		
		25,001-50,000	F	18	17	16	19	10	80		
			%	22.5%	21.25	20%	23.75	12.5%	100.0		
	50,001 – 75,000	F	9	7	8	8	5	37			
		%	24.32	18.91	21.62	21.62	13.51	100.0			
	75,001 – 1,00,000	F	8	7	8	6	2	31			
		%	25.8%	22.58	25.8%	19.35	6.45	100.0			
	> 1,00,000	F	2	3	3	2	1	11			
		%	18.18	27.27	27.27	18.18	9.09%	100.0			
	Occupation	Student/ Not Working	F	9	12	11	7	2	41		$\chi^2 = 110.603$  p=
			%	21.95	29.26	26.83	17.07	4.87%	100.0		
Public Employee		F	5	4	6	7	6	28			
		%	17.85	14.28	21.43	25%	21.43	100.0			
Private Employee		F	19	22	16	16	14	87			
		%	21.83	25.28	18.39	18.39	16.09	100.0			

	e		%	%	%	%	%	%	0.000<0.05 Significant
	Self Employed	F	9	8	8	7	2	34	
		%	26.47%	23.53%	23.53%	20.58%	5.88%	100.0%	
	Business	F	4	3	4	3	2	16	
		%	25%	18.75%	25%	18.75%	12.5%	100.0%	
	Total	F	59	47	51	30	19	206	
%		28.64%	24.6%	26.7%	16.4%	4.3%	100.0%		

**Interpretation:** The data analyzed above depicts that there is high influence of brand association on brand image as the  $\chi^2$  values denote the significance of various demographics that affect the brand image. Around 74% male and 68% female, nearly 70% of the samples of all ages, 68% on an average of varied education background, 66% of different income groups and occupations agree upon the relevance between brand association and brand image. The P values for the above demographics are lesser than 0.05 which indicates the strong nearness between the two. Overall, three fourth of the respondents are favourable to the above statement and one-fourth expressed contrary opinion.

**Table-3: Correlation**

**Interpretation:** It can be inferred from the above that there is a proximity of brand association with brand image as the Correlation value 0.717 reflects a remarkable intersection of the two.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.964	6	17.988	44.889	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	152.055	199	.753		
	Total	206.019	205			
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Association						

**Table-4: ANOVA**

		Brand Image	Brand Association
Pearson Correlation	Brand Image.	1.000	0.717
	Brand Association.	0.717	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Brand Image.	.	0.000
	Brand Association.	0.000	.
N	Brand Image.	206	206
	Brand Association.		



**Interpretation:** According to the ANOVA table, Sig Value p value=0.000, the model is highly significant. Brand association (Sig value 0.000) was less than 0.05 at a 5% significance level or a 95% confidence interval, Since H1 proposes, that there is influential association between brand association and brand image of FMCGs, it is deemed true. As a result of rejecting the Null Hypothesis, it may be stated that brand association has an influence on brand image. The resultant regression equation is  $Y$  (Brand Image) =  $2.032+(0.753)$  brand association.

**Table-5: Elements of Brand Association Resulting in Brand Image**

Brand Association Elements	Very High Influence		High Influence		Moderate Influence		Low Influence		No Influence		Total F
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Product Features	78	37.86%	44	21.35%	55	26.69%	16	7.76%	13	6.31%	206
Brand Personality	57	27.67%	62	30.09%	46	22.33%	22	10.68%	19	9.22	206
Brand Equity	51	24.75%	44	21.35%	68	33.01%	32	15.53%	11	5.33%	206
Emotions	38	18.44%	58	28.15%	61	29.61%	31	15.05%	18	8.73%	206
Brand Ambassadors	82	39.80%	37	17.96%	56	27.18%	22	10.68	9	4.37%	206

**Interpretation:** It is evident from the data over top that the product features account to 84%, brand personality to 79%, brand equity to 78%, emotions to 75% and brand ambassadors account to 85% in forming associations with the brand. Product features and brand ambassadors are the forerunners in developing brand associations

**Table-6: Descriptive Statistics**

Brand Association	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Product Features	206	3.48	.819
Brand Personality	206	5.45	.838
Brand Equity	206	2.48	.629
Emotions	206	3.88	.935
Brand Ambassadors	206	4.22	.962

**Interpretation:** The statistical reflections in the table unveil that all the values fall in the expected range which means, all the elements shown above more or less contribute in equal proportions in nurturing brand associations and furthering brand image.

**Table-7: Components of Brand Association**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.724	.123	13.311	.000
	Product Features	.134	.026	4.868	.000

	Brand Personality	-.003	.037	-.064	.625
	Brand Equity	-.007	.031	-.240	.811
	Emotions	-.166	.031	-5.337	.000
	Brand Ambassadors	.370	.029	12.536	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Association in Building Brand Image					

**Interpretation:** Table-7 indexes the coefficients of a regression model examining the influence of brand association on brand image. The constant in the model is 1.724, and its significance level is 0.000, indicating a significant intercept. It is understood from the values (0.026, 0.031, 0.029) that the product features, emotions and brand ambassadors are prominent in creating brand associations. In outline, the results exhibit a significant relationship between brand association and brand image.

**5. Findings**

**1. There is a great influence of brand association on brand image of FMCGs in Hyderabad:** A strong relationship has been identified between brand association and brand image of fast-moving consumer goods in Hyderabad. The demographic and statistical analyses revealed that brand association is a big influencer of brand image which is crucial in shaping the image of FMCG brands in the target markets.

**2. There exists a positive relationship between brand association and brand image:** The former and the latter are intertwined in such a manner that they co-exist in the minds of the intended audiences and they deeply root the emotions connected with FMCG brands.

**3. Brand association is a composition of multiple elements:** The customers associate themselves with a brand through product features, brand equity and personality, emotional connections attached to the brand, and brand ambassadors.

**4. Product features, brand ambassadors and product features** are the forerunners in developing brand associations leading to brand image of FMCG brands.

**6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study on brand association as an influencer of brand image of FMCG brands stresses upon the orientation of shaping and managing consumer perceptions. The findings emphasize that a strong and positive brand association significantly contributes to the overall brand image, impacting consumer trust, loyalty, and purchase decisions. To foster brand image, it is recommended that FMCG brands focus on maintaining positive associations, implementing innovative marketing strategies, fostering consumer engagement, and being adaptable to evolving market dynamics.

It has been evident from the study that brand associations are pivotal to instilling an intangible brand image in the furtherance of the brand equity, so that the buyers turn loyal to the brand in the long run. Subsequent to the findings of the study, it is an imperative to continually cornerstone on improving product features, touching the emotional points of the customers, endorsing celebrities as brand ambassadors, so as to retain a prominent and enduring position in consumer’s minds. By implementing the above, FMCG brands can strengthen their current brand image and also position themselves in a unique way for sustained success in a highly competitive market. As consumer preferences continue to

evolve, brands that proactively manage and shape their brand associations will prosper in the ever-changing scenario of the FMCG arena.

### 7. Scope for Further Study

Consequent to the study made by me, it is presumed that researchers understand how to apply new tests in future research. They can investigate how brand associations vary across different cultures and regions and stress upon the cultural factors that influence consumer perceptions of FMCG brands and how these associations impact brand image on a global scale. The future researchers can also examine the role of social media in shaping brand associations and brand image of FMCG brands. They may proceed with a different sample size by choosing other cities for the study.

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