

Consumers' Attitude Segmentation For Effective Market Communication: A Case Study Of Soft Drinks

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Abstract: The fate of any product is ultimately determined by consumers' attitude to it. This study based on primary data attempts to stratify the demand side of the market on the basis of the intensity of consumers' feelings for a brand and its variant. Our hypothesis results indicate that consumers' attitude to the parent brand is not related to its variants. The study recommends the need to set different communication objectives for each brand's market segment with varying intensity of advertising and promotional appeals.

Keywords: Segmentation, consumers' attitude, communication objective, product variants

Introduction

Market segmentation is a necessity if corporations are to effectively address their market with relevant need-based products. It is, therefore, profitable for effective marketing effort is to isolate the consumers in the overall market into segments that can be addressed with need-based products relevant to each market segment. Differentiated versions of the basic products that reflect the

slight variation in consumers' tastes and lifestyles and accompanied with varying intensity of advertisement and sales promotion hold the potential for increasing corporation profit. Segmentation studies are designed to discover the needs and wants of specific groups of consumers, so that specialized goods and services can be developed and promoted to satisfy each group's needs (Sciffman and Kanuk, 2007). A market segment can be defined as "a group of present and potential

customers with some common characteristics which is relevant in explaining (and predicting) their response to suppliers marketing stimuli" (Dubois, Czellar and Laurent, 2005). Effective market segmentation enables an organization to build market niche and competitive advantage as it enhances firms ability to integrate consumers real need with their own intellectual capability to satisfy consumers need the probing and partitioning effort involved in segmentation can assist "companies in better achieving strategic and tactical objective as they are utilized in prioritising market segment opportunities" (Marco, 2001). Consequently, "a rational and more precise adjustment of the product and marketing effort to consumer requirements" [Smith, 1956] can be achieved.

The identification of market segments is a key aspect of marketing. Properly defined marketing programme should be built around the unique needs of each market segment. The importance of various attributes is one way of defining customer needs for a given product. Segmenting customers on the basis of their most important attributes is called benefit segmentation (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 2004). Furthermore, marketing as we have come to understand it as it focus on the consumers. Segmentations based on the developments on the demand side of the market provides discrete labels for grouping which organize managerial thinking and facilitate communication by providing concrete characterizations of consumers wants within the market. Marketing resources can thereby be effectively allocated. For example, advertising appeals can be more easily coordinated and media plans developed to minimize waste through excess exposure. However, market segmentation for them to

be relevant and beneficial to the corporation is best based on the understanding of consumers' behavior and the factors that influence it: Attitude, family and culture. Attitude for one is an important factor of consumer behavior and a useful market segmentation variable. It has been argued that 'consumers' purchases are governed by their attitude towards a product and its alternatives" (Mowen 1998). The fact that attitude is "relatively stable and enduring predisposition to behave" (Leon and Leslie, 1991) makes it a useful segmentation variables.

This paper intends to provide useful insight into consumers' attitude towards soft drinks. A variant of soft drink that has the most depth (versions of the basic product) is our empirical tool. The paper further seek to segment and identify a range of attitudes for these drinks and then make suggestions for desirable communication strategies to achieve profitable sales result. The study provides a useful comprehensive framework for management to guild their thinking in setting communication objectives and generating and developing advertisement messages for the product. The fact that brand attitude is the pillar upon which corporation profit rests and that attitude based consumer segmentation will ensure that product development effort and communication investment is well directed and focused for result provides justification for this study.

Litrature Review

Attitudes, particularly the cognitive component are the basis for market segmentation strategies such as benefit segmentation and for new-product development strategies (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). Attitude is

an inner feeling expressed by a person's favorable or unfavorable disposition to some objects. Attitudes form the core of our likes and dislikes for certain people groups' situations, object and intangible ideals. Dubois, Czellar and Laurent (2005) defined attitude as a "predisposition to act in a certain way towards some aspect of one's environment including other people". Leon and Leslie [1991] and Dubois, Czellar and Laurent (2005) suggest that attitude is learned predisposition to behave is a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object. Attitude as a concept is very central to the entire field of social psychology it is such a distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary in social psychology and "theories and methods associated with its explanations and measurement have largely evolved from the work of social psychologists" Aaker and Kevin, 1990]. However, because of its practicability the concept has found wide applications in marketing especially in consumer behavioral researches and advertisement management.

Attitude is one of the most important concept marketers used to understand consumers. Indeed, companies expend considerable funds in an aspect to influence attitude through advertisement, sales promotion and other types of persuasions. By influencing consumer attitude marketers hope to influence purchase behavior. An attitude is learnt and its formation has consistently been related to learning: classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning and cognitive learning theory. Katz (1960) as also identified the function of attitude to include utilitarian, ego defensive, knowledge and value expressive function. However, to increase the usefulness of attitude construct requires management

to develop a "clearer understanding of the causal determinant of the attitude formation and change" (Olso and Mitchel, 1981). Management need to comprehend variables that affect consumers' attitude towards their product and how to shape attitude to achieve to achieve efficiency in the sale of their products. By probing portioning consumer based on attitude management "learns the attributed that consumer's value in brand offering and conditions to portray so as to gain targets attention through advertising. The outcome of an effective consumer's attitude segmentation will be segments that are "identifiable, substantial, accessible, stable, actionable and differentiable "(Nimal, Brown, Nkandawire, Folda, Bose, and Creel, 2009; Kotler, 1994). On this basis can appropriate and effective media plans be developed that will minimize waste through excessive exposure.

Consumers' attitudes are formed in several ways, depending on the particular hierarchy of effects in operations (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). The sources of these attitudes are important for marketers as bases for segmentation. For example, highly brand-loyal consumers may have an enduring, deeply held positive attitude towards an object and this involvement may be difficult to weaken (Tan and Lo, 2008). The belief underlying the benefit segmentation approach is that the benefits people are seeking in consuming a given product are the basic reasons for the existence of true market segments. This approach thus attempts to measure consumer value systems and consumers' perception of various brands in a product class (Dubois, Czellar and Laurent, 2005). Belief segmentation could be useful for selecting advertising copy, media, commercial length, packaging and new product design.

Research Hypothesis

This study is aimed at identifying consumers' attitudinal pattern with respect to carbonated waters [soft drinks] and then stratified the market on the strength of consumers' product attitude in order to facilitate focused and effective communication with the market. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H1a: there is no significant difference in the pattern of consumers' attitude to these four brands.

H1b: there is a significant difference in the pattern of consumers' attitude to this four brands.

The attractiveness of the strategy of offering differentiated versions of a basic product is not only to attract the patronage of buyers of widely diverged tastes and preferences but also to increase the efficiency of advertising and promotional expenditures. It is assumed that the level of "affect" which consumers have in the parent brand (Fiske and Pavelchak, 1986; Broush and Loken, 1991), consumers brand or category knowledge (Murphy and Medin, 1985) will gender favorable consumers attitude associated with the parent or basic product in its variants, that is, transfer of attitude in respect of the parent brand to its versions.

Hence, we further hypothesized that:

H2b: Consumers' attitude to the parent brand is related to consumers' attitude to the brands variants.

H2b: consumers attitude to the parent brand are not related to attitude to its variants.

Methodology of Data Collection and Analysis

Attitude is bound up in individuals; common wisdom, therefore, dictates that

individuals are in the best position to express their dispositions or attitudes for or against a product. In this light empirical data for this study was gathered through questionnaires. Questionnaire administrations were not restricted to the serving points because attitudes are relatively stable and easy to recall when such good comes for considerations" (Leon et al, 1991). In addition, the consumption of soft drinks is wide spreading in the country. It is used at homes, offices or work places, on the street, traffic locations etc. it is, therefore, impossible to research the whole population of the consumer. Rather respective sample dedicated by time, financial and logistic constraints was included I the sample with questionnaire administered to bring the sample size to two hundred and eight six (286). The study adopts accidental sampling method in selecting respondents. Respondents were asked to rate each brand on a seven point liker-scale according to the intensity of their products versions as attitude is viewed "as a person's overall evaluation of a concept" (Olson and Grunnert, 1999). This rating was then partitioned into attitude segment using visual display to suggest the required communication objectives and strategies for each segment. In addition the two hypotheses formulated were tested with the chi-square and F-test statistic. The tests were carried out at 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis and Findings

Respondents expressed attitude (table 1) gave the percentages of those expressing positive attitude, that is, ratings 5,6 or 7 to be 90.9%, 80.4%, 66.6% and 69.9% for the R, L P and G variants of the drink respectively. Those who could be taken as indifferent on

neutral ratings, that is, 4 (table 1) represents 3.8%, 4.9%, 6.3% and 8.4% of the respondents; while those in varying degrees, felt

negative 1, 2 or 3 point scores stand at 5.2%, 14.7%, 27.2% and 21.7% for brand R, L, P, G respectively.

Table 1: Respondents Attitude For Each Brand

Attitude segments	R	L	P	G
7	120 (69.75)	60 (69.75)	51 (69.75)	48 (69.75)
6	98 (81.5)	70 (81.5)	74 (81.5)	84 (81.5)
5	42 (68.75)	100 (68.75)	65 (68.75)	68 (68.75)
4	11 (16.75)	14 (16.75)	18 (16.75)	24 (16.75)
3	7 (15.25)	21 (15.25)	13 (15.25)	20 (15.25)
2	7 (27)	16 (27)	57 (27)	28 (27)
1	1 (7)	5 (7)	8 (7)	14 (7)
Total	286	286	286	286

Results of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

H1a: there are no significant differences in the pattern of consumers' attitude to these four brands.

H1b: there are no significant differences in the pattern of consumers' attitude to these four brands.

The calculated F- value is 0.004 while the critical value at alpha of 0.05 is $F_{3, 24} = 3.01$ since the calculated F- value is less than the tabulated F- value we do not reject the null

hypothesis and hence concluded that consumer attitude to this four brands, (the parent brand and its variants) follow the same pattern. Put differently, the consumers' attitudes to each of these brands appear not to show significant difference from one another. This is indicative of successful market effort on the part of the company which seems to have swayed consumers' response to each of the offering in the direction of overwhelming positive consumer attitudes. This is a desirable state companies will strive to attain and maintain.

Table 2: ANOVA

source	Sum of squares	df	MSS
Between samples	14.29	3	4.76
Within samples	32319.14	24	1346.63
Within total	32333.43	27	

Hypothesis 2:

H2a: Consumers' attitude to the parent brand s related to consumers attitude to the variants.

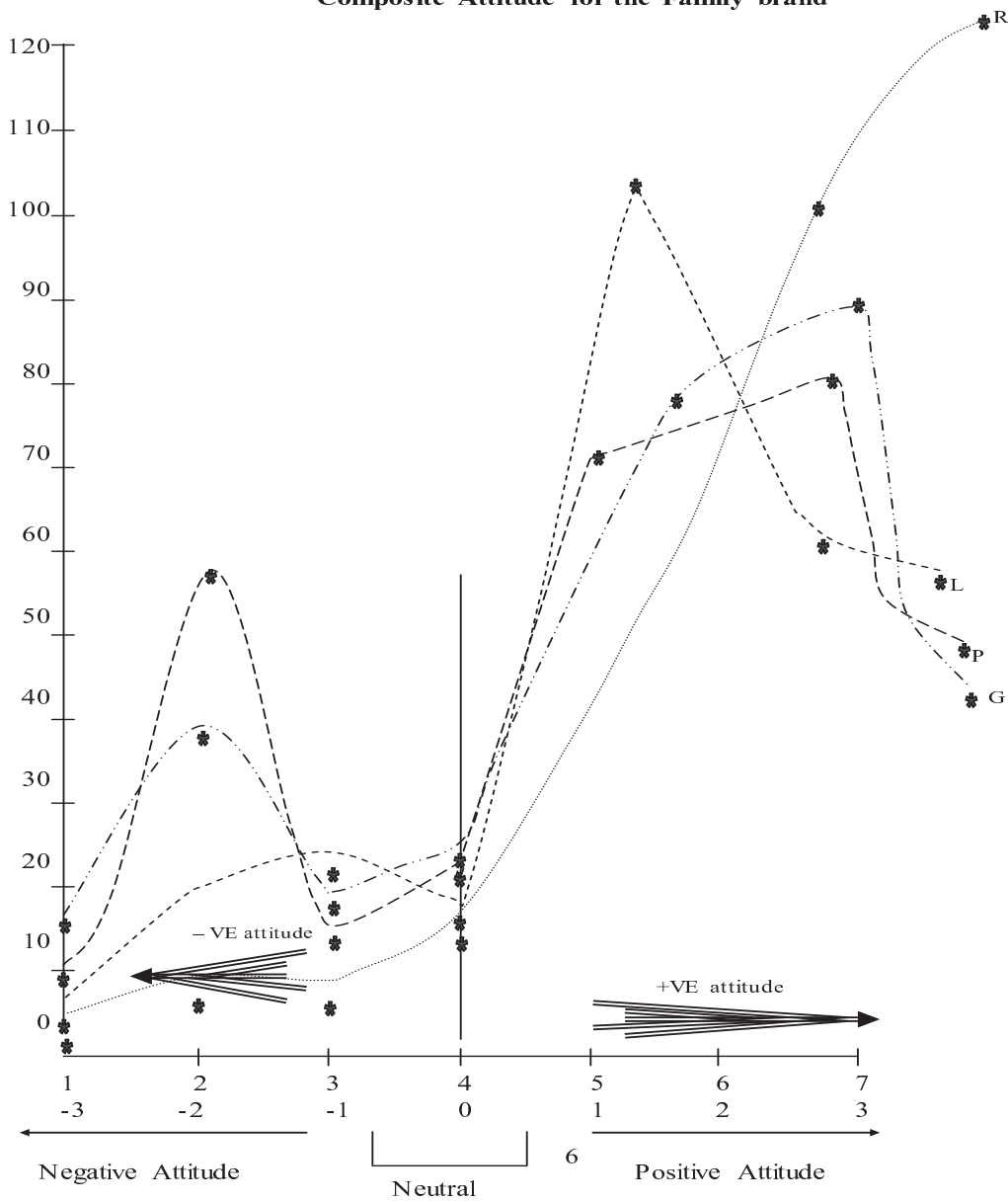
H2b: consumers attitude to the parent brand are not related to attitude to its variants.

Hypothesis two is not upheld seeing the calculated chi-square of 173.34 is greater than the critical value of chi-square at alpha of 0.05= 28.87 (table). On the strength of this we conclude that consumers attitude to the parent brand are not related to attitude towards

variants. This findings questioned earlier studies which suggest that “transfer” and “complement” are the more important in explaining attitude towards extensions (Reast, 2005; Van Riel, Lemminto and Ouwersloot, 2001). This provides a justifiable ground to segment attitude for each brand (parent brands and the

variants) so that communication objectives can be set and advertising and promotional effort be focused on attaining the objective defined for each segment. Partitioning this respondents into attitude segments suggest seven attitude segments (graph) for each of the brand.

Composite Attitude for the Family brand



References

Segment 1: this segment has a strong dislike for the brand. Consequently they will seek to avoid each of these brands. The extremeness of their dislike naturally makes them to reject the brand and probably soft drinks.

Segment 2 & 3: this segment range from mild dislike to an almost strong dislike for the version considered. They are unlikely to buy the drink and may even reject it if offered freely.

Segment 4: this segment is made up of Individuals who are indifferent to each version of the drink. They, having no strong preference or attachment to these brands and will easily shift their purchases between other brands including competitors' product. To them there is no significant difference between any of the brand and others. This segment represents potentials that can be induced to develop positive attitude

Segments 5: this segment showed mild likeness for each of the variants depth of their likeness for each brand will motivate them to, with their own money, buy the brand if the brand rated 7 by them is not available.

Segment 6: these individuals may not be completely loyal to each of he brand but will definitely prefer this brand if choice is permitted. They will buy the brand over others but may not completely loyal to it.

Segment 7: this segment represents those respondents of relatively heavy users. They are fully satisfied with the brand rated 7 and probably are strongly loyal to it.

Overall the graph of these attitude segments for each of these drinks, except for the chap taste brand [brand P can be said to be positively skewed (graph). These attitude

expressions, however, have implications for advertisement objectives, messages and intensity of communication.

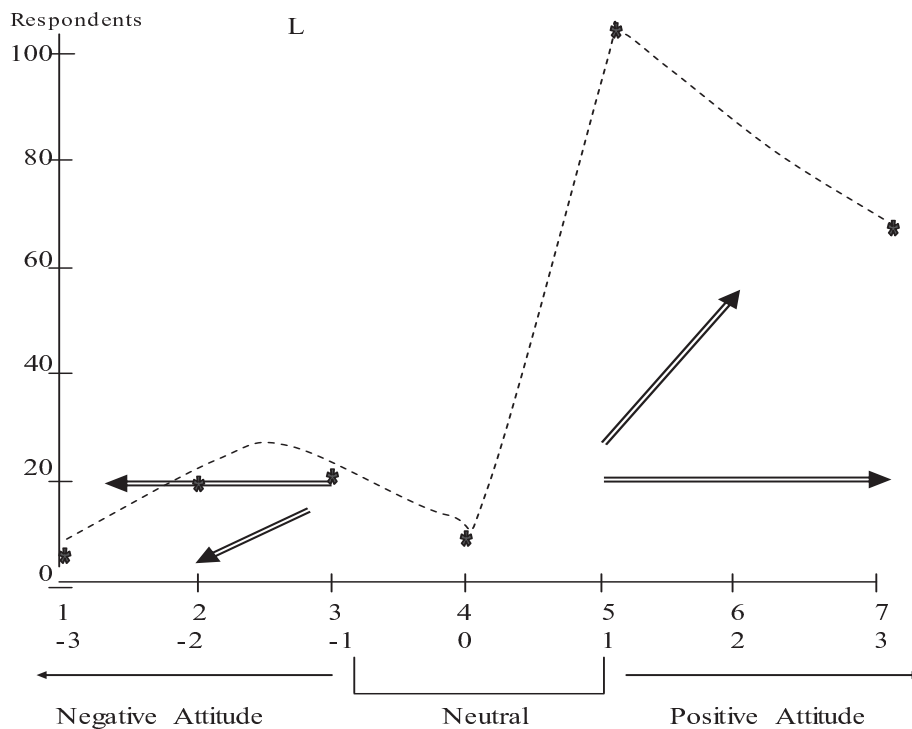
Discussions and Conclusion

Findings for this study indicates that consumers holds different attitude to this drink with the basic product (orange taste) enjoying the most favorable evaluation. This attitude segmentation provides us a framework to guild our thinking in respect of the kind and the objective of communication required for each of the product versions. This is necessary because the study finds that consumers attitude to the parent brand are not related to consumers' attitude to the brand variants. This suggests the need to apply earlier studies in line of "transfer" and "compliment" with care when advertisement and promotion effort is to be planned for in the soft drink industry. For each of the brands, therefore, the communication objective for the segment holding negative attitude is to create positive attitude, especially in the segment holding extra stream negative attitude, that is, to change or reverse this attitudes to become positive. The frequency of communication with this segment should be high. And, their attitude can positively affected by altering consumers' perception of the components of the multi-attribute model (that is, either the belief or evaluative component) as it relates to components (belief or evaluative component) that must be influenced to ring about or increase positive attitude. It is suggested that carbonated drinks (soft drinks) bottlers applying this study should devote effort at knowing current consumers beliefs about their brand(s) and its attribute discovering consumers' beliefs or product/attribute

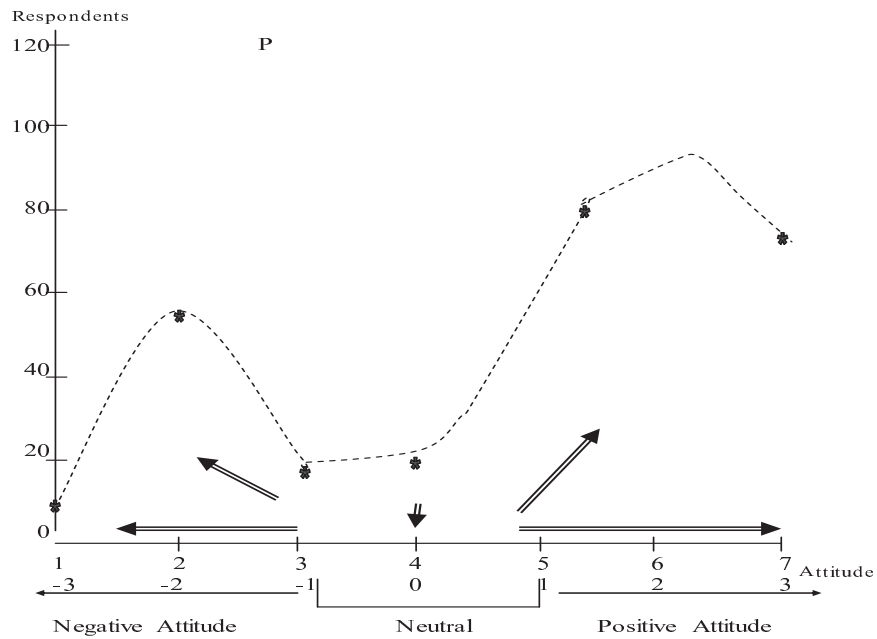
evaluations is an asset if such knowledge is employed in advertising to change consumers' product belief or improve their evaluations. A deeper focus might reveal the need to, for example, to add and emphasize in the market communication new salient belief about these drinks or link more positive high order consequences to some of the product attributes. Those who are neutral to any of these brands are the immediate potential consumers that can be led to develop positive attitude to these drinks. Indeed, each can be advertised with motivational themes derived from the analysis of the characteristics of this segment. The objective is to build the brand image and tilts the consumers to positively evaluate the brand and become loyal to it. Communication effort could be focused on making the existing favorable belief

more pronounced or salient and, or improve the evaluation of strongly held belief about these drinks. It is somewhat useful to extend this idea to all the segments: analyze the characteristics of each attitudinal segment to determine its basic motivational structure. Stressing social appeal by showing valued people having 'good time' with the brand will be a potent tool to moving the neutral segment to develop positive attitude to these products. This is derived from the fact that attitudes are formed not only through direct usage experience but also through contact with family, friends or associating a product with admired celebrity. This is the part of attitudinal conditioning which explains attitude formation by the way in which evaluations are transferred between stimuli if these stimuli have been paired frequently.

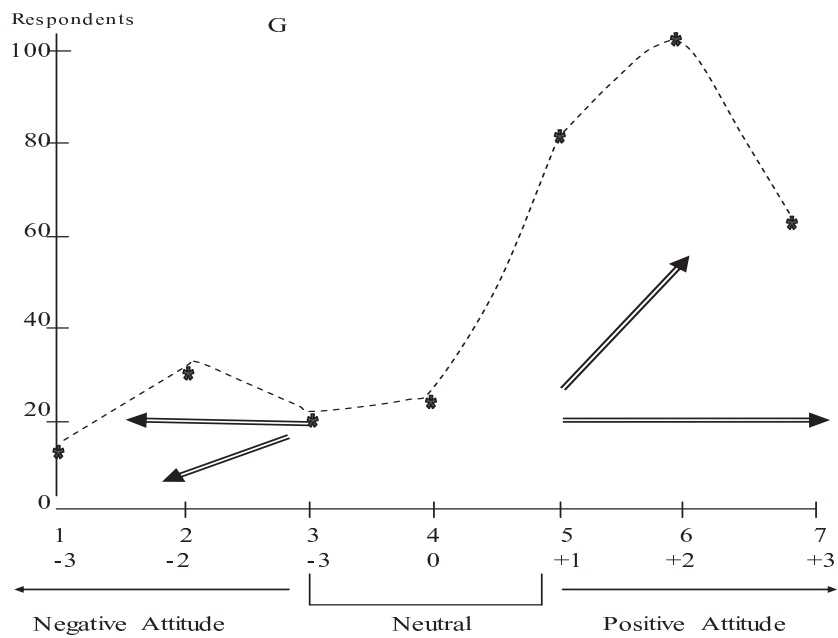
Attitude Segment for brand 'L' (A Variant of Brand R)



Attitude Segment for brand 'P' (A Variant of Brand R)



Attitude Segment for brand 'G' (A Variant of Brand R)



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