

SMART

Journal of Business Management Studies

(A Professional, Refereed, International and Indexed Journal)

Vol-18 Number-2

July - December 2022

Rs.500

ISSN 0973-1598 (Print)

ISSN 2321-2012 (Online)

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Founder - Publisher and Chief Editor



**SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AND ADVANCED RESEARCH TRUST
(SMART)**

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (INDIA)

www.smartjournalbms.org

**CONCEPTUALIZATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER
BRAND HATRED: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

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Abstract

Brand hate can place a company at peril and hence it is imperative for a company to understand their customers and satisfy their needs accordingly. Individual personality, social influences, corporate social responsibilities were studied, to find out their impact on the consumer. The purpose of this paper was to find out the various factors behind brand hate in detail. This study used primary data, collected from Indian metro cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. Results indicated that brand hate was instigated by factors such as 'Consumer disenchantment', 'Consumer recognition', 'Societal-corporate disparage', 'Indigent corporate philanthropy', 'Unviable practices', and 'Delinquency'. Companies need to take care of various factors and parameters in order to avoid brand hate anytime and to adopt systems and mechanisms to deal with consumer brand hatred.

Keywords: *Brand hatred, Consumer disenchantment, Brand relationship, Social-corporate relationship and Brand delinquency*

JEL Code : *M0, M1, M2, M3, M4 and M5*

Paper Received : *07.12.2021*

Revised : *02.05.2022*

Accepted : *16.05.2022*

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1. Introduction

Consumers remember negative experiences with a company or its product more than the positive ones (**Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006 and Kanouse, 1984**). There are a wide range of aspects of brands, which are studied and researched and nowadays one such aspect is consumer brand hatred. There are a number of researches available on brand love and brand loyalty but research on brand hate is limited. Companies are giving significant importance to this phenomenon of brand hatred because this aversion could critically affect their brand image. Researchers have recently conceptualised and studied consumer phenomenon such as brand disgust, brand divorce, anti-branding, brand opposition, brand avoidance etc. Consumer brand relationship is not a transactional but a relationship based on faith and confidence (**Fournier, 1998; Fournier et al., 2012**). Handling negative brand relationships can be very difficult and challenging for any company (**Kucuk, 2008; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009**).

As social media platforms are emerging day by day, it is getting easier for any consumer to express negative feelings towards a brand over various platforms (**Grégoire et al., 2009**) and consumer empowerment is one of the reasons behind this (**Dessart, 2016; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009**). In Psychology, hate is a very complex emotion and it covers anger, contempt, distancing, disgust, antipathy, devaluation, rejection, repel, outrage, and such other negative emotions (**Sternberg, 2005**). When a consumer develops extreme negative emotion towards a brand and targets the brand, indulging in anti-branding activities, then it is defined as 'Brand Hate' (**Kucuk, 2016**). Brand hate, over a long period, could result in feelings of unhappiness, disgust towards that brand or a

company. According to **Hegner (2017)**, negative experiences, discordance, injustice, biased treatment, inconsistency between expectations and reality and many more, trigger the feeling of hatred towards a brand. Brands or companies that indulge in unethical and unfair practices, face consumer hatred more frequently than others, who provide satisfactory services to their consumers. According to **Zarantonello et al. (2016)**, brand hate leads to negative word of mouth advertisement, which destroys its image in the market and society. Brand hate results in consumers complaining about its products and services, refraining from using its products and services and sharing their negative experience with others (**Romani et al 2012**). A consumer always retaliates when a brand fails to meet his expectations (**Funches et al. 2009**). Brand hatred results in financial losses to a company and erodes its customer base. While some studies focus on negative behavioural results, some focus on negative emotional psychology. This paper aims to conceptualise this brand hatred and find out the various factors, triggering brand hatred. The study has empirically assessed the antecedents of brand hatred in this study.

2. Review of Literature

Hate comprises various complex negative emotions like repulsion, anger, fear, disgust, contempt and many more (**Sternberg, 2003**). **Aumer-Ryan and Hatfield (2007)** found disagreeable personality as the reason behind brand hate. Gossip, betrayal, disrespect, inequality also trigger hatred. **Johnson et al. (2011)** also discovered revenge and shame as reasons behind brand hatred. **Zarantonello et al. (2016)** suggested that a consumer develops an attack, avoid or confront approach while having hatred towards a brand. **Alba and Lutz (2013)** found that when a consumer develops emotions of disgust towards a product or

services of a company, it can lead towards brand hatred. **Bryson et al. (2013)** found negative and unethical corporate social performances as the reason for the brand hatred. When a brand fails to fulfil its promise to a consumer, then it triggers brand hatred (**Schallehn et al. 2014**).

According to **Opotow et al., (2005)**, moral exclusion is based on concepts of gender equality, environmentalism, coexistence and human rights. Consumers also get emotional towards brand competition and develop brand hatred towards the competitor (**Dalakas and Melancon, 2012**). Brand hatred is caused by failed expectations and emotional hurt. When a consumer feels betrayed, it can trigger brand hatred (**Grégoire et al. 2009**). Love and hate have complex relations to each other (**Jin et al. 2017**). Every brand is perceived to reflect a certain image, values, beliefs and ideologies in a society and industry (**Holt, 2004, 2006**). Many consumers hate and punish brands that are socially irresponsible and which employ unethical practices to satisfy customers (**Sweetin et al., 2013**). Religion and political choices also shape consumer brand preferences (**Khan et al., 2013**). Stronger brand relationships get saturated in the long run if companies do not perform ideologically and socially well, which often leads to brand criticism (**Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010**). Brand hate triggers revenge and avoidance on the part of consumers towards the company (**Grégoire et al., 2009**). **Romani and Dalli, 2012** demonstrated that brand hatred leads to public complaining and criticizing the company everywhere. Consumers also indulge in private complaints to close circles of friends, family and others, to alert them against a brand or a company (**Funches et al., 2009**).

3. Statement of the Problem

Success and failure of any brand is entirely dependent on the customers. They are makers as well the breakers of a brand. When they are well satisfied with the services of a brand, they develop positive feelings towards such a brand but on the contrary, they develop feeling of hatred towards such a brand if they are not satisfied with overall services. This study is explorative and descriptive, directed towards exploring and understanding the key components responsible for the development of hatred, among customers, towards a brand.

4. Need of the Study

This study presents the key components accountable for creating the feeling of hatred among the consumers towards a brand. These components, in turn, would help to understand the possible course of actions, that can be adopted and administered to counter the feeling of hatred among the consumers and replace it with the feeling of satisfaction.

5. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to analyse the key components, kindling hatred among the consumers, towards a brand.

6. Hypothesis of the Study

NH-1: There is no relationship between **Consumer hatred towards the brand**, taken as the dependent variable and **Consumer disenchantment, Consumer recognition, Societal-corporate disparage, Indigent corporate philanthropy, Unethical practices, Delinquency**, treated as independent variables.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Sample Selection

For selecting the sample respondents, the convenience sampling technique was used. In

this study, 550 respondents were identified from across cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi and Kolkata in India. Five-point Likert Scale (that ranges from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree), was adopted, as used by **Cronia & Taylor (1992)**.

7.2 Sources of Data

This study was based on primary data. Structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Data, after proper validation, were used for several multivariate analyses, to obtain the objective of the study and all the factors of brand hatred were studied in detail.

7.3 Period of the Study

The study was undertaken during the period of May, 2021 to July, 2021.

7.4 Tools used in the Study

SPSS 21.0 software was used for the study. Multivariate analysis was applied to get the results.

8. Data Analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures the sampling adequacy. As per the **Table-1**, the KMO value was 0.793, that was greater than 0.5 and hence it was decided to proceed with the factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates the strength of relationship among the variables and tests the null hypothesis. From the **Table-1**, it can be seen that Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, as the significant value was less than 0.05 (0.000). Considering both the tests together, they provided minimum required standards, which need to be fulfilled before conducting the factor analysis. In the **Table-2**, under Total Variance Explained, every factor expressed a quality score, termed as eigenvalue, under the heading 'Total' of 'Initial Eigenvalues'. Parameters were considered for further study because they only represented the

true value. It can be seen that Factor 1 could account for a variance of 7.805, which was 24.39 per cent of the total variance, Factor 2 accounted for a variance of 5.153, which is 16.103 per cent of the total variance, Factor 3 accounts for a variance of 4.135, which was 12.922 per cent of the total variance, Factor 4 accounted for a variance of 3.056, which was 9.55 per cent of the total variance, Factor 5 accounted for a variance of 2.618, which was 8.182 per cent of the total variance, and Factor 6 accounted for a variance of 1.964, which was 6.137 per cent of the total variance, and thus, the first six factors combined could account for 77.284 of variance.

As per the **Figure-1**, the study can take factors whose Eigenvalues were greater than one. An Eigen value represents the amount of variance associated with the factor. Rotated component matrix represents the correlation between factors and variables. It can be seen from **Table-3**, that Factor 1 recorded high coefficient for the variables, product or service failure caused brand hatred, Critical incidents often triggered brand hatred, Past negative experience could be one of the reasons of brand hatred,. Performance failure caused brand hatred. A disappointed consumer will be inclined towards brand hatred. An intense negative emotion caused brand hatred. Threat to the consumer can lead towards brand hatred. If a brand failed to fulfil its promises then it leads to brand hatred. Unfulfilled expectation caused brand hatred. Therefore, this factor may be labelled as "**Consumer disenchantment**". Factor 2 recorded high coefficient for the variables. Contravention of consumer rights could lead to brand hatred, Power struggle between brand and consumer can lead towards brand hatred. Negative word of mouth advertisement could lead to brand hatred, Anti-

branding activities can lead to brand hatred, Brand hatred happens due to brand high switching cost or monopoly. Anger, fear, disappointment, shame, disgust could cause brand hatred, False representation to public and consumer lead to brand hatred, Brand dilution can be the reason for brand hatred. Therefore, this factor may be labelled as “**Consumer recognition**”. Factor 3 reported high coefficient for the variables. Brand dilution can be the reason for brand hatred. Social identity mismatch could cause brand hatred. Religious and political ideology could lead to brand hatred. Ideological mismatch could lead to consumer brand hatred. Consumer personality affected the brand hatred. Policies and programmes against the society developed brand hatred. Therefore, this factor may be labelled as “**Societal-corporate disparage**”. Factor 4 recorded high coefficient for the variables. Unfair treatment or injustice could lead to brand hatred. Misleading public via false advertisement and such activities created brand hatred. Poor corporate social performance could lead to brand hatred. Forging competitors’ products, in order to stay ahead, caused brand hatred. Therefore, this factor may be labelled as “**Indigent corporate philanthropy**”. Factor 5 reported high coefficient for the variables. Poor sustainability by a brand caused brand hatred. Consumers hate a brand because of its business philosophy. Many times unethical practices of the brand caused brand hatred. Therefore, this factor may be labelled as “**Unethical practices**”. Factor 6 reported high coefficient for the variables. Brand hatred happens to a brand which does not comply with business standards. Brand hatred happens to a brand that reflects dominant power. Therefore, this factor may be labelled as “**Delinquency**”. **Table-4** presents the model summary R or multiple correlation coefficients, to measure the

quality of prediction of the dependent variable. In the Table, R-square value was 0.449, which indicated 44.9 per cent of the total variation in the dependent variable and overall satisfaction can be explained by the independent variables, ‘**Consumer disenchantment**’, ‘**Consumer recognition**’, ‘**Societal-corporate disparage**’, ‘**Indigent corporate philanthropy**’, ‘**Unethical practices**’, and ‘**Delinquency**’. **Table-5** presents the results of ANOVA. According to the Table, regression model could predict the dependent variable significantly well and its value was statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05 (that is 0.000). Hence H1 was rejected. According to **Table-6**, it can be ascertained whether independent variables contributed to the study or not. The regression equation was formed as given below:

$$\text{Customer hatred towards the brand} = 3.173 + 0.279*(\text{Consumer disenchantment}) + 0.322*(\text{Consumer recognition}) + 0.381*(\text{Societal-corporate disparage}) + 0.294*(\text{Indigent corporate philanthropy}) - 0.135*(\text{Unethical practices}) + 0.131*(\text{Delinquency})$$

9. Findings of the Study

The factors, ‘**Consumer disillusionment**’, ‘**Consumer recognition**’, ‘**Societal-corporate disparage**’, and ‘**Indigent corporate philanthropy**’, did have substantial influence on consumer dislike. In other words, a variety of unpleasant experiences with a brand, such as deceptive promotions, a gap between the company’s objective and amenities offered, unethical activities, exploiting customers, and other factors could cause individuals to become hostile to a brand, leading to brand switching or rejection. On the other hand, factors such as, ‘**Unethical practices**’, and ‘**Delinquency**’, exercised only little impact on the hatred among

the customers, which implied that incompetency to work and failure to comply with their objectives, did not bother customers much. Therefore, brands need to keep a check over their products and services, to comply with the needs and demands of their customers, in order to gain their trust and loyalty in return.

10. Suggestions

Companies need to take care of various factors and parameters, in order to avoid brand hatred anytime and they should adopt systems and mechanisms, to deal with consumer brand hatred. Companies should organize activities to clear any consumer grievances.

11. Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that businesses who want to minimize the hatred among customers, must promote their social and corporate activities. Their contribution to the society is required on the part of these brands to convert hatred into love. Further, they must keep the gap between the promises made to customers and the actual services delivered to them as little as possible. Customers' antipathy towards a brand grows because of unethical tactics and exploitation being carried out by them, to outdo their competitors. In short, they must incorporate effective strategies and approaches to mitigate customer resentment. In addition, further research must be initiated into a specific group of customers, a specific sector, or a given brand's overall happiness with its customers. Further research can also be focused on consumer perceptions and attitudes, which will aid various brands and corporations, in evaluating and adopting creative approaches, to reduce brand hatred among their customers.

12. Limitation of the Study

The study was done only in Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, and Mumbai. Many challenges were

faced during the survey as some consumers were hesitant about filling the questionnaire.

13. Scope of Further Research

This study can be done in other cities of India and can be extended to rural parts as well, to understand different aspects of consumers' hatred towards a brand.

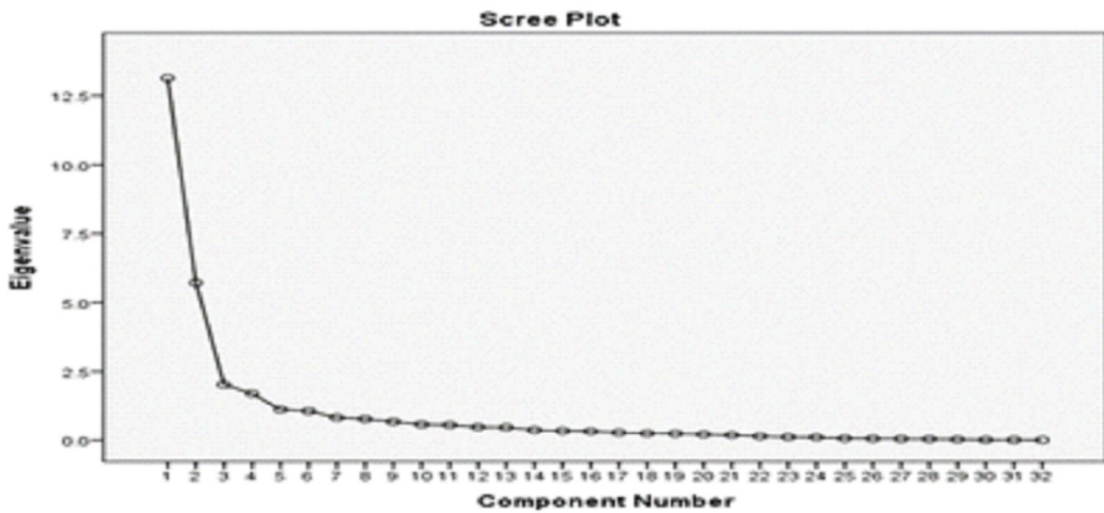
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Figure-1: Results of Scree Plot (EFA)



Source: Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0

Table-1: Results of KMO and Bartlett's Test (EFA) of Factors Affecting Consumer Brand Hatred

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.793
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	23098.684
Df	496
Sig.	0

Source: Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0

**Table-2: Results of Total Variance Explained (EFA) of
Factors Affecting Consumer Brand Hatred**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.13	41.05	41.058	13.139	41.058	41.058	7.805	24.39	24.39
2	5.71	17.85	58.909	5.712	17.85	58.909	5.153	16.103	40.493
3	2.01	6.29	65.201	2.013	6.292	65.201	4.135	12.922	53.414
4	1.69	5.29	70.495	1.694	5.294	70.495	3.056	9.55	62.964
5	1.11	3.48	73.978	1.115	3.483	73.978	2.618	8.182	71.146
6	1.05	3.30	77.284	1.058	3.306	77.284	1.964	6.137	77.284
7	0.82	2.57	79.859						
8	0.77	2.41	82.276						
9	0.67	2.12	84.399						
10	0.58	1.82	86.219						
11	0.56	1.74	87.967						
12	0.48	1.51	89.485						
13	0.47	1.48	90.972						
14	0.37	1.17	92.143						
15	0.34	1.08	93.224						
16	0.32	1.02	94.25						
17	0.28	0.87	95.124						
18	0.25	0.78	95.912						
19	0.24	0.77	96.682						
20	0.21	0.67	97.36						
21	0.19	0.59	97.958						
22	0.14	0.45	98.415						
23	0.11	0.36	98.782						
24	0.10	0.32	99.11						
25	0.06	0.21	99.321						
26	0.05	0.18	99.506						
27	0.04	0.15	99.661						
28	0.04	0.13	99.798						
29	0.02	0.08	99.886						
30	0.01	0.04	99.934						
31	0.01	0.04	99.974						
32	0.00	0.02	100						

Source: Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0

Table-3: Results of Rotated Component Matrix^a (EFA)

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Product or service failure causes brand hatred	0.861					
Critical incidents many times forces towards brand hatred	0.858					
Past negative experience is one of reasons of brand hatred	0.856					
Performance failure causes brand hatred	0.854					
A betrayed consumer will be inclined for brand hatred	0.830					
An intense negative emotion causes brand hatred	0.823					
Threat to the consumer can lead towards brand hatred	0.761					
If a brand fails to fulfil its promises than it leads towards brand hatred	0.754					
Unfulfilled expectation causes brand hatred	0.737					
Loyal customers develop brand hatred when they feel cheated	0.575					
Contravention of consumer rights lead to brand hatred		0.867				
Power struggle between brand and consumer can lead towards brand hatred		0.835				
Negative word of mouth leads for brand hatred		0.770				
Anti-branding activities can lead towards brand hatred		0.721				
Brand hatred happens due to brand high switching cost or monopoly		0.693				
Anger, fear, disappointment, shame, disgust causes brand hatred		0.671				
False representation to public and consumer lead to brand hatred		0.665				
Brand dilution can be the reason for brand hatred		0.582				
Social identity mismatch causes brand hatred			0.810			
Religious and political ideology leads towards brand hatred			0.775			
Ideological mismatch leads towards consumer brand hatred			0.760			
Consumer personality affects the brand hatred			0.733			
Policies and programmes against the society develops brand hatred			0.706			
Unfair treatment or injustice leads towards brand hatred				0.766		
Misleading public via false advertisement and such activities creates brand hatred				0.722		
Poor corporate social performance leads to brand hatred				0.677		

Table-3 contd.,

Poor sustainability by a brand causes brand hatred					0.873	
Consumer hate a brand because of its business philosophy					0.832	
Many times unethical practices of the brand causes brand hatred					0.590	
Brand hatred happens to a brand which does not comply with business standards						0.753
Brand hatred happens to a brand that reflects dominant power						0.733

Source : Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0

Table-4: Results of Regression Model Summary of Factors Affecting Consumer Brand Hatred

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.670 ^a	0.449	0.443	0.86

Source: Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0

Table-5: Results of ANOVA^a of Factors Affecting Consumer Brand Hatred

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	326.868	6	54.478	73.637	.000 ^b
Residual	401.723	543	0.74		
Total	728.591	549			

Source: Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0

Table-6: Results of Coefficients (Regression Analysis) of Factors Affecting Consumer Brand Hatred

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.173	0.037		86.507	.000
Consumer disenchantment	0.321	0.037	0.279	8.745	.000
Consumer recognition	0.371	0.037	0.322	10.113	.000
Societal-corporate disparage	0.439	0.037	0.381	11.966	.000
Indigent corporate philanthropy	0.339	0.037	0.294	9.222	.000
Unviable practices	0.156	0.037	0.135	4.246	.000
Delinquency	0.15	0.037	0.131	4.098	.000

Source: Primary Data computed using SPSS 21.0