Dublin Business School

MBA DISSERTATION

AN INVESTIGATION ON BRAND LOYALTY OF SOFT DRINKS IN IRELAND

Submitted by: ANEESH KARIPPERY FRANCIS
Student Number: 1715214
Supervisor: CHANTAL LADIAS
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DECLARATION

I, AneeshKarippery Francis declare that no portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of these or any other university or other institute of learning. Further, all the work in this dissertation is entirely my own, unless referenced in the text as specific source and included in the bibliography.

Signed: --AneeshKarippery Francis--
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Brand loyalty is when people choose to buy selectively one brand in a particular product category. It consists of a consumer’s commitment to repurchase or otherwise continue using the brand and can be demonstrated by repeated buying of a product or service or other positive behaviours such as word of mouth advocacy. This occurs when customers feel that they have a product at the right quality for the right price. All companies are looking for brand loyalty because it saves them time and money. This research paper focuses on soft drinks. It investigates the reason, how and why customers are being loyal to the soft drink brands. It reports the results of brand loyalty of 100 Irish customers.

This study explores brand loyalty behaviour on soft drinks and examines key brand loyalty factors: brand name, product quality, price, style, store environment, promotion and service quality. Consumers are classified into two categories by their degree of brand loyalty: hard-core loyal customers and brand switchers. The study concludes that brand name, style and promotion are the key brand factors which can distinguish hard-core loyal customers and brand switchers. Brand name and style have more influence on the brand loyalty of hard-core loyal customers, while promotion influences more on that of brand switchers. Product quality is perceived by both groups as the most important factor affecting their brand loyalty. This research also results the reasons why a loyal customer is switching to other brands (brand loyalty of sportswear in Hong Kong, vol.5, 2006).
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
1.0: Introduction

The title of dissertation is an “Investigation on brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland”. This study is mainly trying to explore the importance of the brand loyalty of consumers in the success of modern business organizations. The research is also trying to find out the factors influencing the brand loyalty of the consumers and analyses the reasons why consumers are continuously switching from one brand to other. The paper analysing the consumer behaviour, the buying process, branding and brand awareness along with the brand loyalty as they are interrelated with each other. This research is important though the branding and brand loyalty plays a vital role in the present business world. In the present scenario, most of the consumers are branding conscious. They believe a branded product will be rich in its quality and durability. Branded products are also became status symbols among the large number of customers now a days (European Journal of Communication, June 2003). In such situation, multi-national business organizations must identify or understand the brand preferences of customers and the factors affecting the brand loyalty of customers for surviving in a very competitive business world. A business organization which has the clear understanding about the perceptions and preferences of customers on a brand can only satisfy their expectations on a product and maintain or secure the customer’s loyalty on their brands (Pamela .L. Alreck, Robert B. Settle.1999). This research is also relevant to many business as many of the business from western countries are started their activities in Asian countries especially in India and china and vice versa. So understanding a clear idea about the markets of different countries will enable the business to use an appropriate strategy for maximising their revenue and will help them to make strategic decisions (Dana L.Alden, Jan-Benedict E. M. Steenkamp and Rajeev Batra. Jan- 1999)

The main reason for choosing this topic is the importance of branding and brand loyalty prevailing in the modern business world. The research is done in Ireland because; Ireland commercial industry is giving more importance for branding of products and services. Ireland can claim to have been one of the first countries to consciously manage its brand image. State involvement in branding the country as a tourist destination dates back over 50 years and theIDA began advertising the country as a location for overseas investment in the late 1960s (John Fanning, 2006, importance of being branded). The research is based on the soft drinks because the soft drink industry has a very strong presence in Ireland. Most of the
Irish customers are regular users of soft drinks. The regular customers might be loyal to particular brands of soft drinks. The Ireland soft drink industry consists of a lot of strong soft drink brands. So the competition is fierce in soft drink market. Well established brand names continue to contribute investment and time in upholding brand identity, preserving brand loyalty and developing new soft drink product lines so as to occupy more market share. Marketing managers realize the rising trends of brand switching and recognize the customer retention as an easier and more reliable source of superior performance (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Therefore it is important for marketers to acquire more knowledge in brand loyalty. Research using factors on brand loyalty to distinguish hard-core loyal customers and brand switchers has not yet been explored. Thus the aim of this research is to understand the level of brand loyalty of Irish customers on soft drinks and to distinguish brand loyal consumers and brand switchers in the Ireland soft drink market. From this study, we can provide useful information to brand companies for developing their competitive branding strategies.

This paper has four sections. First it depicts a theoretical background of brand loyalty, its factors, and put forth a conceptual model to demonstrate the relationship of the variables. Then it describes research hypothesis, methodology on research instrument design and data collection. A survey questionnaire is administered to collect data from Irish customers. Subsequently, we base on our findings to classify respondents into brand loyal customers and brand switchers and to distinguish consumers by different factors of brand loyalty. Finally concludes with a discussion of our recommendation on strategies for soft drink marketers and future research directions.
1.1: Reason for the Research

In the modern era, soft drink industry is showing intensive growth and development all over the world. Especially in Ireland, soft drink plays a vital role in the Irish market. Soft drink industry in Ireland is in the path of quick development and expansion. The soft drink industry is very rich with enormous number of product lines, brands and brand expansions. It’s an industry that gives a significant contribution to the economy in terms of finance, trade and employment opportunities. Moreover it is a highly sustainable source of income because of the influence of soft drinks on Irish customers.

This research is important though the branding and brand loyalty plays a vital role in the present business world. In the present scenario, most of the consumers are branding conscious. They believe a branded product will be rich in its quality and durability. Branded products are also became status symbols among the large number of customers now a days (European Journal of Communication, June 2003). In such situation, multi-national business organizations must identify or understand the brand preferences of customers and the factors affecting the brand loyalty of customers for surviving in a very competitive business world. A business organization which has the clear understanding about the perceptions and preferences of customers on a brand can only satisfy their expectations on a product and maintain or secure the customer’s loyalty on their brands.

The Ireland soft drink industry consists of a lot of strong soft drink brands. So the competition is fierce in soft drink market. Well established brand names continue to contribute investment and time in upholding brand identity, preserving brand loyalty and developing new soft drink product lines so as to occupy more market share. Marketing managers realize the rising trends of brand switching and recognize the customer retention as an easier and more reliable source of superior performance (Reichheld&Sasser, 1990). Therefore it is important for marketers to acquire more knowledge in brand loyalty. It is because of these reasons that a research on the brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland has been found relevant and imperative (Introduction, An investigation on brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland, 2013).
1.2: Research Focus

In the present scenario, Ireland is a potential market for soft drinks. The presence of soft drink industry is very strong in Ireland and it is in the path of intensive development. The soft drink industry in Ireland is very rich with enormous number of brands and brand expansions. The soft drink sector achieved active support from government, beverage council of Ireland and customers because it is proactively engaged in achieving healthy life styles along with the product innovation and partnerships with government and other relevant stakeholders (The beverage council of Ireland position paper). However it is a doubtful and moreover a matter of concern whether a business source capable of generating high revenues for the state and the country has been utilized to the fullest of its capacity (research on Kerala tourism, Jan 2013, Lumianna Mathew, Dublin business school).

The main aspect of this research is the loyalty of Irish customers towards the brands of soft drinks. This study analyses how a consumer is being loyal to a particular brand of soft drink. The research is mainly concentrating on two types of consumers according to the degree brand loyalty. They are hard core brand loyal and brand switchers (David A. Aaker, 1996, Building Strong Brands). The research is also trying to find out the factors influencing the brand loyalty which are differentiates brand loyal customers and brand switchers and analyses the reasons why consumers are continuously switching from one brand to other. The research could additionally serve as a source of information for the soft drink companies for developing their competitive branding strategies. Additionally the research also analyses the issues related with the soft drink industry in Ireland and the future prospects for development and growth.
1.3: Research Questions

The following questions are a part of the research from which the research objectives originate:

1. **How a consumer being loyal to a particular brand of soft drinks?**

   The research is focused on the brand loyalty of Irish customers on soft drink brands. To analyse the loyalty of consumers towards soft drink brands, it is very important to understand how a consumer is being a brand loyal from a common buyer by discussing the factors influencing brand loyalty and causes leads to brand switching.

2. **What are the factors influencing brand loyalty?**

   The study is discussing the brand loyalty on soft drinks by classifying customers into hard-core loyal customers and brand switchers. There are some factors of brand which will motivate or demotivate the customers. Motivated customers will be brand loyal. Unsatisfied customers will switch to other brands. So the clear perception on the variables of brand loyalty is essential for the research.

3. **How the factors on brand loyalty distinguish brand loyal consumers and brand switchers?**

   The research is analysing the brand loyalty of two groups of customers. They are hard-core brand loyal consumers and brand switchers. The customers are being brand loyal or brand switcher because they are affected by different variables on brand loyalty. The factors of brand loyalty such as brand name, product quality, price, style, store environment, promotion and service quality are influencing customers according to their
attitudes and preferences on branding (brand loyalty of sportswear in Hong Kong, vol.5, 2006). Analysing which factors affecting a consumer to be brand loyal or brand switchers is vital to meet the objectives of the research.

4. What are the factors to be focused to enhance or develop the brand loyalty on soft drinks?

Brand switching is a great challenge for the soft drink industry in the present competitive soft drink market. The increasing number of new market entrants, high volume of promotions from soft drink brands and severe competition among soft drink brands resulted in the massive loss of brand loyal customers and hike in the number brand switchers. To maintain the profitability and growth, soft drink companies must retain and increase the brand loyalty of customers on their brands. By analysing the factors influencing the brand loyalty, the soft drink companies can formulate competitive branding strategies to be successful in achieving brand loyalty on their brands.

1.4: Research Objectives

On a broad basis, objectives of this research would be the following:-

- To carry out an in depth research on brand loyalty of Irish customers on soft drink brands.
- To distinguish brand loyal consumers and brand switchers in the Ireland soft drink market by analysing factors of brand loyalty.

The specific objectives of the study would be:-

- To analyse the factors of brand loyalty.
• To find out the factors of brand loyalty which are influencing customers to be brand loyal or brand switcher.

• To discuss about the Ireland soft drink industry and the challenges faced by the industry in the present scenario.

1.5: Recipients of the Research

The recipients of this research study would be the following:-

1. Dublin Business School
2. Professor – John staunton
3. Dissertation Supervisor – Chantal Ladias
4. Students of marketing management and business.
5. Readers who are interested in knowing of the Ireland soft drink industry.
6. Students of management studies interested in knowing the practical applications of modern management tools.

1.6: Background and Suitability of the Researcher for the Research

The researcher of this project is a South Indian with a Bachelor’s degree in business administration, specialized in marketing, human resource management and finance from a reputed university and currently doing MBA. The researcher is doing a part time job as a sales assistant in Irish retail outlet along with the studies. The experience as a sales executive in retail outlet and customer service made the researcher to understand the customer preferences and attitudes towards brands. The researcher have seen that the most of Irish customers are very much loyal to the soft drink brands by analysing day to day sales of soft drinks from the shop and the repeated buying behaviour of customers on the same soft drink brands. This assumption has made the researcher to be more sensitive to this topic. This study will help in finding out the factors of brand loyalty which are influencing a customer to be brand loyal or brand switcher. The results of this research will help the soft drink companies to formulate competitive branding strategies to maintain or develop the brand loyalty of
customers on their soft drink brands. This research will also help in gaining a better knowledge and understanding of the issues that the Ireland soft drink industry is currently facing. Researcher’s knowledge of marketing and branding would help him to find out the factors which are affecting brand loyalty of consumers on soft drink brands. This research is also bound to work as an insight to enhance researcher’s skills and understanding of marketing and brand management practically.

1.7: Learning Style

The researcher in this case is using a practical style of learning with a fair amount of emphasis on interaction and communication with customers who are buying soft drinks. The first step was to make an in depth knowledge on branding and brand loyalty by the application of traditional marketing theories. For primary data, the researcher mainly depended on questionnaire, telephonic interview and face to face interview. The secondary data sources were books, journal, magazines and internet.

1.8: Time Tabling and Cost Issues

The time span of the research is around three months. This is inclusive of the time starting from identifying the research problem, defining the research objectives and actually conducting the research to drafting and finalising the report. It also includes the time that was allocated to the collection of data from various sources like the beverage council of Ireland and the local customers of soft drink brands. The research is basically a collection of data from various sources and analysis of the same. Hence there are no major costs to be incurred except the compliments given to customers who were ready to answer the questionnaire of the research, and lastly for making a hard copy of the report and the research results collected and analysed. (Babu P. George, Tony L. Henthorne, (2007).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1: Introduction

The main aim of doing review of literature is to avoid rediscovering the knowledge that has been reported already (Fisher 2007:78). In this session, the literature in relation to the dissertation topic is discussed, assessed and criticised.

The literature review on brand loyalty on soft drinks in Ireland comprises of a study and a critical review of the academic journals, research papers and various other sources of literature related to the topic. This chapter contains different sections, firstly the focus on brand and how brand was evolved. With in this area the researcher examined theoretical background of brand; factors influence consumer perception of a brand. However, as marketing was too vast an area to study in this dissertation, the attention concentrated on brand loyalty along with brand equity, brand awareness, brand quality and brand association. It also describes about the behaviour of consumer for making purchases, as consumer behaviour, what are the factors affecting consumer behaviour. The chapter concludes with a detailed study of decision making process and the buying decision process of customers for selecting a particular brand along with the literature on soft drink industry in Ireland.

This chapter discusses each of these parts in minute detail and the pattern followed is presentation of information, both qualitative and quantitative, the findings of research done by other famous practitioners and finally a close assessment of these conducted by the researcher (research on Kerala tourism, Jan 2013, Lumianna Mathew, Dublin business school).

2.2: Branding

Branding plays a vital role in marketing and experiencing a dramatically shift in this era. The tradition of brand was that, a name associated with one or more products in a product line that is used to identify the source of character of items (Kotler 2000, p.396). According to American marketing association (AMA), “brand is a name, term, sign or symbol or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate it from those of competitors”. Branding is an added value to the offerings of a manufacturing organization by naming them. It is about making a promise to the ultimate consumers about the fulfilment of their needs by satisfying their
expectations on the offerings of a particular business organization. (Kellogg on Branding-2005).

2.2.1: Brand preference

Customers are the major factors affecting the stability of a business. Brand preference can be defined as the measure of brand loyalty of a customer towards a particular product in the presence of competitor’s product, but customer will accept substitutes of that product if that particular brand is unavailable.

Customers are selecting a particular brand because of promotions. Sales promotion doesn’t affect the post promotion brand preference. However, depending upon the characteristics of the sales promotion and the promoted product, promotions can either increase or decrease preference for a brand. (Kalwaniarticle 2000) explains about the brand choice of customers with customer’s price expectation as the mediating construct consist of two modelling procedures. In the first stage it say about the expected price of a customer about a product and the second procedure says about the brand preference depend upon the brand’s retail price. Author test the hypothesis of losses and gains in the retail price from expected price. The result of the research is that the expected price is not only dependent but it is also affected by the frequency of brand promotion, economic condition, customer characteristics and the type of store. These things can be used in the research in the way, influence of brand retail price to make a customer as loyal and researcher can find out what is the expected price of a particular branded product for a customer and to what extend the brand promotion have an impact on brand loyalty of a customer.

In an article written by Orth and Kahle explains the intrapersonal variation in consumer susceptible to normative influence in brand preference. In this author found individual prefer brands based on the brand benefits and individual who gives more internal values and more complex social identities gives less emphasis on social brand benefits. By using these intrapersonal variations, the researcher can find out what kinds of benefits are expected by a customer from their preferred brand.
2.3: Brand

“A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of any of these, intended to identify the goods and service of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (Keller, 1993). The brand and branding are as old as known civilisation (Moore and Reid, 2008). According to them there are two key roles played by brands. The first role is a conveyor of information (origin and quality); of brands. The second role is a conveyor of image or meaning (status/power, value) of brands. “A product is what the factory makes: a brand is what customer buys” (Berenstien, 2003).

The name ‘brand’ originated from the Germanic word ‘brand’ which referred to the mark made by burning a mark with a hot iron. Its usage was first noted in 1552 (The oxford dictionary). In the initial phase, a brand was used as a mark of identification for animals, but its original inspiration to help customers easily differentiate products, came from craftsmen who it to mark handcrafted goods in order to recognise their source (keller, 1993).

2.3.1: The theoretical background of brand

Until late in the 20th century, branding was associated with consumer goods and services. Today this is widely used to describe anything connected with identity and reputation (Barrow and Mosley, 2006). Brands of modern civilization involve both the informational characteristics of the ancient proto-brands and the more complex image characteristics of modern brands including status/power.

Today in the 21st century, the HBS definition seems to best describe a brand:

“The brand is a company, it is the product, it is the company’s reputation, it is the company’s philosophy, it is the company’s weapon and shield and it is the distinguishing feature of the company and its product”

Today, in an era with advanced technology and heavy competition in every field, there are few differences between competing offers. The unique selling proposition (USP) is no longer valid and being replaced by the emotional selling proposition (Aitchison, 1999). This is treated as an opportunity to influence a customer’s emotion to achieve a brand differentiation. Conventional branding believes the ultimate aim is distinction from the competition (Fan,
A successful brand believes the ultimate aim of branding is to gain a favourable position in the minds of consumers and distinction from the competition. A good brand is believed to bring financial value in terms of higher sales or premium prices. Most people cannot evaluate the relationship between price and quality for many products, then we can assume that brand perception is the answer (Thjmore, 2008).

The main objectives of branding are to dominate the market (to reduce and eliminates competition; to increase customer loyalty and to raise the entry barriers (Fan, 2005). Branding is now used in many sorts of contexts; politicians, pop stars, and sports stars all have a form of brand identity. Having a branded product or service will help to market a product as there is trust in the brand. It would be safe to say that nowadays branding is a necessity; it is an investment for any company.

2.3.2: Factors influence consumer perceptions of a brand

Perception is defined as the process by which information is received, selected, organised and interpreted by an individual (Kotler 2005). Some of the factors that influence consumer perceptions of a brand include,

- **Quality**: consumer always gives importance to quality while choosing brand. It is essential part of a brand.
- **Price**: price, place and brand are three significant aspects while deciding consumers to buy a daily product.
- **Society**: every consumer has that nature of seeking advice from each other about a new product or brand. These word of mouth communications have a strong influence on consumers buying behaviour (Kotler, 1999).
- **Advertising**: through advertising the marketer can create awareness among customers. Advertisement is a prominent form of communication. If the advertising, promotions and packaging hold an expected positioning strategy over a period of time, then the brand could be strong (Aker 1991)
- **Packaging**: this process is very important to influence a customer. A nice package/design of product/brand attracts customers. Packaging is a form of advertisement in the logic that it attracts consumer, describing and selling the product (Kotler 1999).
• **Convenience**: easy access to brand/product in store is important when buying low involvement product.

### 2.3.3: Brand equity

Most scholars defined brand equity as an additional value that a brand to a product or service. Brand equity is complex matter and can be considered as intangible. ‘A brand is a set of brand assets and liability linked to a brand, it is name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers’ (David W. Cravens 2006).

The advantage of brand equity is that it enables mangers to consider specifically how their marketing activities improve the value of brand in the minds of the customers (Cravens, 2006). Further, Cravens claimed that with in the marketing literature, a consumer based brand falls into two groups: consumer perception (brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality) and consumer behaviour (brand loyalty, willingness to pay higher price). Both suggested groups are examined later in this study.

**Brand reorganisation from the consumer point of view: Aaker’s Brand Equity model**

Brands are images associated with the logos, words and other kind of symbols. They are projected by our minds when we come into contact with a product or a company. Once these have been ‘stored’, these inner images shape our attitude-positive or negative towards a company and its products and services. In purchase situations, this store experience retained in image helps consumers to make decisions (Aker, 1991).

A well-known brand can easily help a customer to make a purchasing decision, as the brand can be perceived as “convenient summary” of the product, for the product, for example the customer’s feeling and knowledge of the product. (Romaniuk et al 2007) suggested two approaches which can be used to achieve brand differentiation. The first is when the consumer perceived that a brand offers something those others brand do not: the second is through brand superiority, where the consumer knows other brands have the same attributes, but perceive one brand to be better that the others.
(Meenghan et al. 1995) summarised the brand function for the customer into three levels:

Convenience (Low level) – eases the decision making. Consumers are facing a range of alternative products and are likely to pay more if they heard about the brand and its added values. The brand awareness helps with the decision. Consumers are more likely to buy the branded products if they know it fulfils their expectations.

Guarantee (high level) branding operates here as an offer of better quality or unspoken guarantee.

Personal statement (highest level) brands operate at their highest level when the choosing of particular brand shows that the customer is also making a personal statement.

To better understand the connection between customer and brand, researcher going to use Aaker’s Brand Equity Model (1991) which divides the assets of brand equity into five dimensions. These categories can be considered as the cornerstones and crucial ingredient for enhancing brand equity. It is fundamental for marketers to create a strong link between these five dimensions in order to gain consumer’s trust. This model is the standard template for researchers and spans the entire spectrum of brand equity.

2.3.4: Brand awareness:

A well-known brand is more valuable than a non-brand, or a lesser-known brand. (Pelsmacker et al. 2004) stated that the consumers have more faith in well-known brand. Brand awareness also leads to more customer interest and can enhance the effectiveness of making communications.

Aaker (1991) argued that the brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to classify the brands membership within a specific product class. The connection between the product and product class is the key component for the successful brand. The brand with the highest recognition rate in product class has a huge advantage in terms of the benefits from its promotional activities.

Brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall performance (Keller, 2003). Brand recognition relates to the consumer’s ability to conform the brand when given only a cue. Brand recall refers to the consumer’s ability to retrieve the brand when given the product
category. Further, the author stated that brand awareness plays an important role in consumer decision making for three reasons:

Firstly, it is important that the consumer thinks about the specific brand at the point of purchase. Secondly, brand awareness can affect decisions about brands, even if there are essentially no other brand associations. Cited in Keller (1993), the ‘likelihood’ model of petty and cacioppo suggested that consumer makes choice on brand awareness considerations when they have low involvement, which could results from either a lack of consumer motivations or a lack of consumer ability. The third reason suggested by keller is that brand awareness affects consumer decision making by influencing brand associations in the brand image. The author further stated that a necessary condition for the creation of the brand image is that a brand has been established in memory.

2.4: Brand loyalty

Companies invest considerably in strategies to ensure that they develop brand loyalty among their customers, thus giving them a competitive advantage in the market share.

(De Chernatiry et al 2003) defined brand loyalty as a measure of a consumer’s attachment to a specific brand is a function of several factors such as perceived quality of the brand, its perceived value, its image and the commitment the consumer feels towards it.

Customer’s satisfaction is positively linked to customer loyalty:

A satisfied customer is likely to stay with the company and continue to buy from the company over a long time. A satisfied customer is more likely to tell others about their positive experience, which would be generate new accounts for the company (Naumann et al 2009). In agreement, (Egan 2008) proposed a simplified model - Return on relationship:

Customer satisfaction > customer retention > company profitability

However we can assume that the consumer satisfaction is not always a predictor of brand loyalty. A customer who consistently chooses the same brand is the perfect customer and having a numerous customers of this kind creates a dominate position for the company. Customer loyalty is linked to a cost saving strategy, as it is estimated that the cost of attractive new customers can be six times bigger than the cost of retaining existing customers.
Brand loyalty is a key consideration when placing a value on a brand that is to be bought or sold, because a highly loyal customer base can be expected to generate very predictable sales and profit stream. In fact, a brand without a loyal customer base usually is vulnerable or has value only in its potential to create loyal customers (John Fanning, 2006).

Further, the impact of brand loyalty on marketing costs is often substantial: it is simply much less costly to retain consumers than to attract new ones. A common and expensive mistake is to seek growth by enticing new customers to the brand while neglecting existing ones. The loyalty of existing customers also represents a substantial entry barrier to competitors in part because the cost of enticing customers to change loyalties is often prohibitively expensive (David A Aaker, 1996).

### 2.4.1: Levels of Brand loyalty

There are several levels of brand loyalty. Each level represents a different marketing challenge and a different type of asset to manage and exploit. All may not be represented in a specific product class or market (J N Kapferer, 4th edition, 2004).

![Figure 1 - levels of brand loyalty](image)
The bottom loyalty level is the non-loyal buyer who is completely indifferent to the brand. Each brand is perceived to be adequate and the brand name plays little role in the purchase decision. Whatever is on sale or convenient is preferred. This buyer might be termed a switcher or price buyer.

The second level includes buyers who are satisfied with the product or at least not dissatisfied. Basically, there is no dimension of dissatisfaction that is sufficient to stimulate a change especially if that change involves effort. These buyers might be termed habitual buyers. Such segments can be vulnerable to competitors that can create a visible benefit to switching. However, they can be difficult to reach since there is no reason for them to be on the lookout for alternatives.

The third level consists of those who are also satisfied and, in addition, have switching costs. Costs in time, money, or performance risk associated with switching. To attract these buyers, competitors need to overcome the switching costs by offering an inducement to switch or by offering a benefit large enough to compensate. This group might be called switching-cost loyal.

On the fourth level we find those that truly like the brand. Their preference may be based upon an association such as a symbol, a set of use experiences, or a high perceived quality. However liking is often a general feeling that cannot be closely traced to anything specific; it has a life of its own. Segments at this fourth level might be termed friends of the brand because there is an emotional/feeling attachment.

The top level is committed customers. They have a pride of discovering and/or being users of brand. The brand is very important to them either functionally or as an expression of who they are. Their confidence is such that they will recommend the brand to others. The value of the committed consumer is not so much the business he or she generates but, rather, the impact upon others and upon the market itself. A brand that has a substantial group of extremely involved and committed customers might be termed a charismatic brand. The ultimate committed customer is the Harley Davidson rider who wears the Harley symbol as a tattoo or the beetle owner of the 1960s who flaunted the funkiness of the car.(Managing Brand equity, David A Aaker, p.40, 1991)
2.4.2: Maintaining and Enhancing Brand Loyalty

Changing brands requires effort, especially if the decision involves substantial investment or risk. Further, positive attitudes towards an incumbent brand are likely to develop which will not only justify but enhance prior decisions. People do not like to admit that they were wrong. It is much easier to rationalize prior decisions. In truth an enormous inertia exists in consumer choice. The familiar is comfortable and reassuring (Kotler, Keller, Brady, 2004).

Consider the efforts of Coca-Cola to popularize “new coke”. The large and loyal group of “real” coke users rebelled. They wanted their product back! And they ultimately carried the day: the withdrawn original coke formula reappeared. Although this time it was forced to bear the dubiously distinctive name Coke Classic. There are some basic rules which will help the companies to maintain or develop their brand loyalty.

- Treat the customer right
- Stay close to the customer
- Brand Loyalty Measure/Manage customer satisfaction
- Create switching costs
- Provide extras

Figure 2 – Creating and Enhancing Brand Loyalty (David A. Aaker, 1991)

Treat the customer right

Tom peters talks about the “secret” to the success of Maytag. They deliver washing machine that works. It washes clothes. The point is that a product or service that works or functions as expected provides a basis for loyalty, a reason not to switch. Again, customers need reasons to change. The key to keeping them often is simply to avoid driving them away. The interaction with the customer must be positive. Customers must be treated as any person would like to be treated: with respect.
Stay close to the customer

The companies that have strong customer cultures find ways to stay close to the customer. Worthington steel company sends its production people to meet customers who are using the product, so they realize that real people with real concerns are depending upon the quality. Focus groups can be used to see and hear real customer voice concerns. Just the act of encouraging customer contact can help send signals to both the organization and the customers that the customer is valued.

Measure/Manage customer satisfaction

Regular surveys of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction are particularly useful in understanding how customers feel and in adjusting products and services. These surveys need to be timely, sensitive and comprehensive, so that the firm can learn why overall satisfaction is changing. For customer satisfaction measures to have impact they need to be integrated into day today management. Marriott hotels, for example, use weekly measures of guest satisfaction to identify current problems and stimulate responsive programs.

Create switching costs

One way to create switching costs is to create a solution for a customer problem that may involve redefining the business. McKesson installed computer terminals for their drug retailers, and basically provided them with inventory control and automated ordering services. By doing this they created enormous switching costs for the retailer, and transformed the entire drug wholesaling business. Another approach is to reward loyalty directly. The airlines’ frequent flyer clubs have become a way to reward and keep customers.

Provide extras

It is often relatively easy to change customer behaviour from tolerance to enthusiasm just by providing a few extra unexpected services. A mint on a pillow, an explanation of a procedure, or a sample from a bakery can really make a good impression. The sales people who help customers throughout the store, often write letters to customers, and go to extra ordinary lengths to accommodate customer’s needs are examples (David. AAaker, 1991, Managing Brand Equity, p.51, 52).
2.4.3: Types of brand loyal consumers

Four categories of consumers can be distinguished according to brand loyalty (Evans et al., 1996):

- **Hard-core loyal customers**
- **Brand switchers**
- **New users**
- **Non users**

Non-users tend not to be loyal to any brand and as for new users, they are not so familiar with any brand at all. These two categories are not to be the main focus in this study and therefore they will be excluded in this research study. Only hard-core consumers and brand switchers will be focused in this study. Marketers often pay attention to identify the characteristics of brand-loyal consumers and the degree of brand loyalty of consumers so that they can directly and effectively focus their marketing and promotional strategies on these consumers who share similar characteristics among the large population.

**Hard-core loyal customers**

A consumer repeatedly purchases a particular brand regardless of the premium price of that brand has charged, is considered a hard-core loyal customer (Evans et al., 1996). This loyalty involves the last stage of purchase, in which consumers do not accept substitutes if they have approached the brand (Copeland, 1923). Price variations for consumers’ favorite brands may only affect their purchase quantity but not their brand choice decision. They stick with the brand rather than switch. Thus, these loyal consumers do not need frequent advertising or price promotion store mind them (Yim & Kannan, 1999).

**Brand switchers**

One single brand does not necessarily satisfy all consumers’ needs, so certain consumers tend to buy other brands as well. Brand switchers refer to customers who use two or more brands when a single brand does not satisfy all their needs (Evans et al., 1996). Brand switching may occur in case of new product introduction and dissatisfaction on usual brand. Consumers can find a substitute brand that can fulfill their needs. Some marketers will target on the brand switchers because they think that brand switchers have higher market potential (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).
2.4.4: Factors of brand loyalty:

To create brand loyal customers and to retain them, it is essential to understand the major factors that influence brand loyalty among them. The research focuses on the seven brand loyalty factors: brand name (Aaker, 1996; Cadogan & Foster, 2000; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978), product quality (Frings, 2005; Garvin, 1988; McCormick & Scorpio, 2000), Price (Cadogan & Foster, 2000; Ryan et al., 1999), Style (Abraham & Littrell, 1995; 1971), Store environment (Evans et al., 1996; Milliman, 1982), Promotion (Czerniawski & Maloney, 1999; Evans et al., 1996, 1971), and service quality (Mittal & Lassar, 1996).

Brand name

Famous brand name can disseminate product benefit and lead to higher recall of an advertised benefit than a non-famous brand name (Keller et al., 1998). There are many unfamiliar brand names and alternatives available in the market place. Consumers may prefer to trust major famous brand names. Hard-core loyal consumers trust their favourite brand names and consistently repurchase these brands. Those prestigious brand names and their images attract consumers to purchase the brand (Aaker, 1996), affect repeat purchasing behaviour, and reduce price-related switching behaviours (Cadogan & Foster, 2000; Czerniawski & Maloney, 1999). On the other hand, brand personality provides links to the brand’s emotional and self-expressive benefits for differentiation.

Brand quality

Consumers may repeat purchase the single brand or switch around several brands due to the tangible quality of the product sold. The components of product quality of soft drink brands are taste, ingredients, colour, packaging, etc. Taste is the crucial aspect in the soft drink selection. Taste of soft drinks is different according to the content of different flavours. Customers will prefer according to their wish. The second and important quality factor is the ingredients and the content of soft drinks. In the present scenario the customers are healthy conscious. They will try to make sure the soft drink content which they are going to buy is healthy or not.
Price of the brand

Price is probably the most important consideration for the average consumer. Price serves as the strongest loyalty driver (Ryan et al., 1999). Consumers with higher brand loyalty are less price-sensitive (Cadogan & Foster, 2000). Purchase intention of consumers cannot be easily affected by price if they have built brand loyalty into the brand. These consumers are willing to pay a premium price for favoured brands. In addition, they may have strong beliefs in price and value of their favourite brands so that they can compare and evaluate price with alternative brands (Evans et al., 1996; Keller, 1998). Consumers’ satisfaction can also be built by comparing price with perceived costs and values. If the perceived values of the product are greater than cost, consumers will purchase that product.

Style

Now style has a great influence in the brand loyalty of customers. Especially in the soft drink industry, the consumers are attracted and influenced by visual appearance of soft drink brands. Style of soft drink brand includes the colour, design, details and logo of packaging and the shape of bottle. The concepts and views on style of soft drink brands are different to each customer. Most of the Irish customers prefer Coca Cola not only because of its taste but also its style of packaging and attractive colour. Most of Irish youth prefers Lucozade because of its sporty and trendy packaging.

Store environment

Retail stores are relatively closed environments. Positive attributes of the store, which include store location, store layout and in-store stimuli, affect brand loyalty to some extent. Store location and number of outlets are crucial in altering consumers’ shopping and purchasing patterns. If consumers are highly accessible to stores during their shopping trip and are satisfied with the store’s assortment and services, these consumers may become loyal afterwards (Evans et al., 1996). Thus, store atmosphere is one of the factors involved in consumer decision making. The stimuli in store, such as the characteristics of other shoppers and salespeople, store layout, noises, smells, temperature, shelf space and displays, signs, colours, and merchandise, (Abraham & Littrell, 1995), which may influence, affect consumer decision making and satisfaction towards the brand (Evans et al., 1996; Greenberg et al., 1983). In-store stimuli also influence the...
degree of how long consumers stay in the store, how many products consumers come into visual contact with, and what routes consumers travel within the store (Evans et al., 1996). On the other hand, music played in the background of the stores affects attitudes and behaviour (Milliman, 1982). The slow-beat music selection leads to higher sales volumes as consumers spend more time and money.

**Promotion**

Promotion is a component in marketing mix which is a kind of communication with consumers. Promotion includes the use of advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, and publicity. Advertising is a non-personal presentation of information in mass media about a product, brand, company or store. It greatly affects consumers’ images, beliefs, and attitudes towards products and brands, and, in turn, influences their purchase behaviour (Evans et al., 1996). Advertisements can help establishing ideas or perceptions into consumers’ minds, and differentiating products against other brands. Thus, good advertisements can attract brand switchers and create brand loyalty. Moreover, effective communication can persuade and motivate consumers to think about and undertake action to purchase the product the advertisement promoted (Czerniawski & Maloney, 1999). Brand switchers may turn into loyal consumers towards the brand. Eventually, the success comes when the marketer employs effective promotion strategies.

**Service quality**

Service quality is a kind of personal selling and involves direct interactions between a salesperson and a potential buyer. Consumers shopped at specific stores because they like the service provided and they are assured of certain service privileges. Salesperson performances stimulate bonding through trust among sales representatives and consumers, and will affect consumers’ perception towards the store or brand (Cadogan & Foster, 2000; Leung & To, 2001). The impacts of salesperson-consumer relationships will generally result in long-term orientation of consumer towards the store or brand. Trust in salespersons appear to relate to overall perceptions of the store’s service quality, and results in consumer total satisfaction to the stores at the end. Additionally, personalization (i.e. reliability, responsiveness, personalization, and tangibles)
significant influence on consumer experience and evaluation of service, in turn, affect the brand loyalty of consumers (Mittal & Lassar, 1996; To & Leung, 2001).

### 2.4.5: Brand Loyalty model

Reviewing the extant literature on brand loyalty, a research model was constructed to better explain on the two major consumer types. The two different consumer types will have different perceptions towards the factors of brand loyalty. When consumers are satisfied by the aforesaid factors that affect their brand loyalty, brand loyalty will be reinforced.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of customers</th>
<th>Different perceptions towards factors of Brand Loyalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard core loyal consumers</td>
<td>Brand name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand switchers</td>
<td>Product quality</td>
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**Figure 3, Research Model of Brand Loyalty and Consumer Types (David Jobber, 2007)**
2.5: Brand quality

Perceived quality is the consumer’s judgement about the overall product. This is not necessarily based on the actual product features. (Aaker, 1991) argued that perceived quality is essential in enhancing brand equity in the long term. The biggest advantage of perceived brand quality is that a company can charge a premium price. (Aaker 1991) ultimately claimed that perceived quality has a direct influence on the purchasing decision and on brand loyalty.

A brand, which consumers perceived to be of superior quality than others brands, makes it easier for the marketer to change the price premium. (De Chernatony et al 2003) pointed out two factors that need to be taken into account when the brand quality is considered. First, is that perceived quality rather than actual quality is what counts. Consumers are often unable to evaluate the quality of a brand and use clues to assess its performance. The second factor is that quality is assessed by consumers on a relative basis. They evaluate brands against other brand. The authors suggested that consumers should be interviewed regularly to enable managers to understand how their brands are perceived. Also marketers need to work continuously to improve brand quality, as the markets become more mature and competitors try harder to emulate the leader.

2.6: Brand Associations

According to (Aaker 1991), a brand association is anything in a person’s memory linked to specific brand.

The brand association structured can be conceptualised in different ways: associations can be hard, i.e. tangible/functional attributes such as speed or user friendliness. Associations can also be soft, such as trustworthiness, fun or excitement. Associations can also be derived from the corporate image of the company’s product.

According to (Keller 1993), brand associations can be classified into three major categories of increasing scope: attributes, benefits and attitudes.
Attributes are defined as descriptive features that characterise product or service- what a consumer thinks that product or service is, or has.

Benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes that is what consumers think the product or service can do for them

**Image and positioning**

(Aaker 1991) defined that brand image as a set of associations that are organised in a consequential order. Each association are like a piece of puzzle and all associations categorized into one group communicate a meaning that the consumer can identify according to his/her preferences.

**Symbols and Logotypes**

The symbol is the key to differentiate between brands. The crucial factor for the successful logo or symbol is ability to link the company’s and the brand’s corecompetencies into a symbol that distinguishes the company. As (Aaker 1991) stated, the symbol itself is not valuable, the consumer perception of symbol/logotype is important.

**Other proprietary assets**

These vary depending upon products, market and situation for example: trademarks and patents, strong distribution relationships and corporate integrity.
2.7: Consumer behaviour

Several authors have described the meaning of consumer behaviour. The field of consumer behaviour studies how individuals, groups and organisations select, buy, use and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experience to satisfy their needs and desires (Kotler, 2003, p.182). Second view is defined as the decision process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using, or disposing of goods and services (Loundon and Bitta, 1993, p.5).

2.7.1: Factors influencing consumer behaviour

(Kotler 2003) present the stimulus-response model below for starting point for understanding consumer behaviour. Marketing and environmental stimuli enter the buyer’s consciousness. The buyer’s characteristics and decisions processes lead to certain purchase decisions. Consumer’s buying behaviour is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors (Kotler, 2003 p.183)

![Diagram of consumer behaviour model](Figure.4, Model of buyer behaviour,(Kotler, 2003))

Cultural factors

Culture refers to a set of values, ideas, artefacts and other meaningful symbols that helps individuals to communicate, interpret, and evaluate as member of society (Engel et al, 1995, 2003).
p611). (Loudon 1993) has defined culture as the distinctive way of life of a group of people, their complete design for living. According to (Engel et al 1995) culture provides people with a sense of identity and understanding of acceptable behaviour within society. Sense of self and space, communication and language, dress and appearance, food and feeding habits, time consciousness, relationships, values and norms, beliefs and attitudes, mental process and learning and work habits are more influenced by the culture.

**Social factors**

Consumer behaviour is influenced by such social factors as reference groups, family, and social roles and statuses. Reference groups expose an individual to new behaviour and lifestyles, and influence attitudes and self-concepts; they create pressures for conformity that may affect actual product and brand choice (Kotler, 2003). Although family is the smallest groups in society, it is the most important factors in buyer’s behaviour. Family members are the part of primary group that influence a person in purchasing (Kotler, 2003, p.188). In addition, it is obviously seen that a person participates in many groups such as clubs, family and organizations in accordance to human-beings’s characteristics. Role and status are the position of a person in each group. According to kotler (2003), the activities of a person which are expected to perform are a role and each role carries a status.

**Personal factors**

A buyer’s decisions are also influenced by personal characteristics including age and stage in life cycle, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, and personality and self-concept (Kotler, 2003, p.190).

People purchase different goods and services over a lifetime relating to age and stage in the lifecycle. For example, baby food is needed in the early years, most foods in the growing and mature years, and special diets in the later years. Occupation and economic circumstances also influence consumption pattern. Computer is designed according to the occupational groups such as engineers, brand managers, and graphic designers. Disposable income, savings and interest rates are greatly involved in economic circumstances that influence buying behaviour. People in the society might lead different lifestyles even though if they are from same sub culture, social class and occupation. It will affect a person’s buying
preferences. Each person has his or her own personality and self-concept characteristics that influence purchasing behaviour.

Psychological factors

There are four main psychological factors having impact on a person’s buying choices: Motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes.

Motivation

(Kotler 2003) states that, needs are divided into biogenic and psychogenic. Biogenic needs arise from physiological states of tension such as hunger, thirst, or discomfort. A need becomes a motive when it is aroused to a sufficient level of intensity. A motive is a need that is sufficiently pressing to drive the person to act (kotler, 2003, p.195).

![Maslow's hierarchy of needs](image)

**Figure.5 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Kotler, 2003)**

According to the model above, it reflects that physiological needs or the lowest-level of needs is more important than other level needs. Individuals seek to satisfy basic needs before higher level of needs emerge. (Kotler 2003) said that people try to satisfy their most important needs
first, when important need is satisfied then the person tries to satisfy the next most important needs.

**Perception**

(Kotler 2003) defined perception as “the process by which a person selects, organises and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world”. Perception depends upon the physical stimuli and as well as on the stimuli’s relation to the surrounding field and on conditions within the individual.

**Learning**

People’s learning happens after action. Changes in consumer’s personal characteristics such as past experiences are involved in learning. The interplay of drives, stimuli, cues, responses, and reinforcement are in learning’s production. A drive is a strong internal stimulus pushing action. Cues are minor stimuli establishing when, where, and how an individual responds (Kotler, 2003, p.197).

**Beliefs and attitudes**

Beliefs and attitudes have impact on customer’s buying behaviour. People acquire beliefs and attitudes during doing and learning. According to (kotler 2003, p. 198), “a belief is a descriptive thought that a person holds about something”.

**2.7.2: The buying decision process**

“The buying process starts long before the actual purchase and has consequences long afterward” (Kotler, 2003, p.204).

Kotler (2003) explained that the consumer buying decision process passes through five stages

**Problem recognition**

The first step of the buying process is to recognize a problem or need. Internal or external cues can stimulate a person’s interest triggering factors. An internal stimulus involves a person’s need to do something which might take the form of physiological such as hunger,
thirsty. An external stimuli comprises outside features coming to the consumer’s attention and stimulating interest (Kotler, 2003, p.204)

**Information research**

Consumer may make decision at information searching time before deciding. There are two levels of information searching: heightened attention and active information research. According to (Kotler 2003) major consumer information sources are divided into four groups. First group is personal sources like family, friends, neighbours and acquaintance, second group is commercial sources like advertising, salespersons, dealers, packing, displays. Third group is public sources like mass media, consumer-rating organisation and final group is experiential sources in this handling, examining and using of product will considered.

**Evaluation of alternative**

(Kotler, 2003) explained the clearer picture of the major available choices will be formed during the information gathering process. Certain alternatives may be eliminated and the few remaining alternatives would be selected in the decision evaluation process.

**Purchase decision**

The decision evaluation stage leads consumer to shape a set of product preferences. In this stage consumer may take a decision to buy the preferred product. According to Kotler 2003 there are two factors occurring between the purchase intention and purchase decision like attitudes of other and second factor is un anticipated situational factors.

**Post purchase behaviour**

After purchasing the product, consumer will express the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
2.8: Soft drink industry in Ireland

In the present scenario, Ireland is a potential market for soft drinks. The presence of soft drink industry is very strong in Ireland and it is in the path of intensive development. The soft drink industry in Ireland is very rich with enormous number of brands and brand expansions. The soft drink sector achieved active support from government, beverage council of Ireland and customers because it is proactively engaged in achieving healthy life styles along with the product innovation and partnerships with government and other relevant stakeholders (The beverage council of Ireland position paper).

The Ireland soft drink industry controlled and regulated by the beverage council of Ireland. The Beverage Council of Ireland (BCI), founded in 1928, represents the interests of the manufacturers and distributors of soft drinks, bottled water and fruit juice in Ireland. Its member companies, both multinational and indigenous, represent the entire supply chain from raw materials to finished products.

Soft drinks are typically comprised of carbonated water and a large amount of sugar and for this reason, the market is controversial one. The soft drinks market consists of retail sale of bottled water, carbonates, concentrates, functional drinks, juices, RTD tea and coffee, and other soft drinks. The main carbonated soft drink brands, prevailing in the Ireland soft drink industry are, Coca Cola, Pepsi, 7up, Sprite, Club, Dr Pepper, Finches, Tipperary, Fanta, Irn-Bru, Mountain Dew, etc. The main competitors in Ireland soft drinks are Coca Cola, Pepsi, Dr Pepper, Irn-Bru, and Club orange. There are different product segments within the Irish
market of carbonated drinks. They group clusters of brands by forty characteristics: four flavours (Cola, Orange, Lemonade and Mixed fruit), five different packaging types (Cans, standard bottle, 1.5 litre, 2 litre and multi pack of cans) and two different sweeteners (Diet and Regular. The Ireland soft drink industry is very rich with the presence of a lot of national or international manufacturers. They are mainly, Nash Mineral Water Marketing Limited, Crinnaghtaun Juice Company, Britvic Ireland Vending, Clada group, PepsiCo International, Munster Soft Drinks Limited, M & J Gleeson Group, Beverage Equipment Limited, Ballygowan Limited, James McDaid& Sons Limited, Drino Drinks Limited, Coca Cola HBC Ireland Limited, Kerry Spring Water Company, Glenpatrick Spring Water Company Limited, Keeling F Juices Limited, Sive Mineral Water Factory and McDaids Drinks Limited.

The distribution system prevailing in the soft drink industry is very strong. Main distributors of soft drinks are, Irish Soft Drinks.Ltd, Coca Cola HBC Ireland, FiorUisce, Wild Orchard, Slushee, J Donohoe Beverages, Aquablue, Britvic Ireland, etc. The distribution of soft drink brands are fulfilled or the soft drink brands are reaching in the consumer’s hands, through the retail outlets which have a strong influence of Irish market such as Tesco, Lidl, Aldi, Marks and Spencer, Dunnes, Superquinn, Spar, Londis, Centra, Daybreak, Cost Cutter, etc.

Brand switching is a great challenge for the soft drink industry in the present competitive soft drink market. The increasing number of new market entrants, high volume of promotions from soft drink brands and severe competition among soft drink brands resulted in the massive loss of brand loyal customers and hike in the number brand switchers. To maintain the profitability and growth, soft drink companies must retain and increase the brand loyalty of customers on their brands. Along with the brand switching, the sugar tax being issued by the Beverage council of Ireland will also be a great challenge to the soft drink industry in Ireland.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY
3.1 Introduction

This chapter of research methods being used in order to prepare and implement the research and it outline the procedures involved in the collection of information pertaining to the research objective. In the research process, the author also carried out the primary and secondary research. Questionnaire with various groups have been carried out in order to gather information on the opinion of customers preference towards the brand. The main areas that will be research perspective, research philosophy and research approach and data collection methods.

3.1.1 Definition of Research Methodology

The empirical and systematic method of finding solution to research problems is termed as research methodology. It acts as a guideline to the research by defining the starting point of the research, the various methods that may be used for research, and finally arrive at the results which indicates the successful completion of the study. The emphasis of the research is to find suitable methods for conducting the research and of these the choice of the most suited method based on the learning style of the researcher, practical in this case.

The intention behind a well-defined research methodology is to adopt a systematic approach to research which not only helps in enhancing the quality of research but also the expertise and awareness of the researcher. Scientifically, the concept of research may be defined as the assessment of the principles of rules and methods that are deployed by certain disciplines or the methodical study of methods with an elaborate description of the same.
Research methodologies comprise of multiple methods applied to the entire scope of the research and may be divided as qualitative and quantitative which shall be discussed in the later sections of this chapter. The two aspects of research are – “being systematic” and “determining the right things” which share a logical connection between them.

This research shall use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, and equal emphasis shall be given to both the methods. Qualitative data shall be applied to elicit the concepts of brand loyalty and the factors which are affecting consumers to be Hard core loyal consumers and brand switchers. On the other hand quantitative data can be used for statistical analysis to validate the qualitative statements collected from the research. This method of data collection comprises mainly of facts and figures which when statistically analysed can produce a set of results based on which the recommendations are subsequently made.

### 3.2: Research Objectives

On a broad basis, objectives of this research would be the following:-

- **To carry out an in depth research on brand loyalty of Irish customers on soft drink brands.**
  The research is mainly trying to identify how is a customer is being loyal to a particular soft drink brand. It discusses the factors which leads a customer to be brand loyal along with the causes of brand switching. The current Ireland soft drink market is facing a great challenge of brand switching because of the emergence of a lot of soft drink companies and massive competition which results in the unlimited promotions and offers. The customers are switching from one brand to another because of the extra offers and price benefits they are getting from other brands. So maintaining the brand loyalty is a challenging factor for the soft drink companies. In this condition, a research on brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland will result in the findings on the factors which will increase the brand loyalty on soft drink brands. The awareness of these factors will be helpful for the soft drink companies in Ireland to make competitive branding strategy to retain the brand loyalty.

- **To distinguish brand loyal consumers and brand switchers in the Ireland soft drink market by analysing factors of brand loyalty.**
The main aim of the research will be the analysing of factors of brand loyalty and how these factors affecting customers and create Hard core loyal customers and brand switchers. Each and every consumer is buying one product or brand by analysing some factors of that particular brand. It may include the characteristics and specifications of that particular brand. The combination of those factors is creating consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. As the satisfaction is very much related with the loyalty on a particular brand, analysing the factors of brand loyalty which are creating brand loyal consumers and brand switchers is essential in this study.

The specific objectives of the study would be:-

- To analyse the factors of brand loyalty.
- To find out the factors of brand loyalty which are influencing customers to be brand loyal or brand switcher.
- To discuss about the Ireland soft drink industry and the challenges faced by the industry in the present scenario.

3.3: Research Philosophy

Research methodology is generally a framework for getting a solution to a problem which consists of different phases that are namely tasks, techniques, methods and tools. As goes the words of Arthur Schopenhauer, “Just as the largest library, badly arranged, is not as useful as a very moderate one that is well arranged, so the greatest amount of knowledge, if not elaborated by our own thoughts, is worth much less than a far smaller volume that has been abundantly and repeatedly thought over.”, it suggests that research is not completely effective if not supported by the thoughts the rationale and the critical assessment of the researcher. Hence the best research method is the ultimately chosen by the researcher at their discretion which they feel will be best suited to achieve the required research objectives.

Easterby-Smith et al (1997) classifies the objectives of investigating the philosophy of research in three main parts. Initially it would assist the researcher to improve upon each of the available methods, filter them and finally suggest one or more methods suitable to the research topic. In other words it would help the researcher in getting clarity on the research. This comprises of the evidence obtained, its source, its styles of interpretations and its
applicability to arriving at the answers to the research questions. It would further aid the researcher to avoid redundant activities in research by evaluating each method on its limitations to the research and thereby use only the appropriate methods. Understanding the philosophy of research also helps in the researcher to be innovative in choosing methods.

3.3.1: Research Onion

![Figure 5: Research onion (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, 2006)](source://Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2006)

According to Saunders et al, 2006 the research “onion” will enable the researcher to get a comprehensive view of differing methods to carry out the research so that each stage may be distinctly identified. It would help in differentiating between the philosophy, strategy, technique and the method of research. He further asserted that a vivid conceptualization of the research at its early stages itself will help the researcher in raising critical and valid questions through the design stage of research itself. With reference to the onion shown above, the researcher of this study would adopt a positive approach to the study. (SushmaBhat, Sanjaya S. Gaur, (2012)
Saunders M in 2007 asserted that a researcher who tends to show the principles of positivism in his research is bound to adopt the characteristics of an ordinary scientist. This benefits the researcher in the way that he is not affected by the subject. Also researchers imitating positivism in their research will stick to structured methods so that it would be easy to replicate the research at further stages. Another position that relates to epistemology is realism which exists in independence of the human intellect and is parallel to positivism since the approach is scientific. The counter to positivism is interpretivism that tends to conceptualize a fact on the basis of assessment. This is different from positivism because the aim is to collect and assess data discretely from a phenomenon. However the approach of interpretivism is to understand multiple realities that is divergent across places and timings.

Having discussed each of the possible methods of research based on the research onion it has been found that a positive and pragmatic research philosophy and approach to research shall be best suited for this kind of a research. The main reason for this being that the sector and the location being studied is quite conformational to a conservative culture and hence the researcher is bound to face multiple challenges in data collection which may be overcome only through a practical and positive mind-set.

3.4: Research Approach

Of the available approaches to research, the best one is to be found out through an assessment of all the methods and arriving at the one that suits the research objectives and enables the researcher to obtain answers to all the research questions. The conceptual knowledge of the researcher at the start of the study shall influence the type of research and help in determining which the apt method is. Research methods are mainly of four types — quantitative, qualitative, pragmatic and emancipatory.

Quantitative research is linked with positivism and comprises of collecting data in numerical formats or converting the collected data into similar formats so that further computations and statistical analyses may be done in order to draw inferences. Qualitative research is connected to the model of social constructivism and is related to the reality. It involves collecting and assessing information to interpret the profound meaning of knowledge that comprises of beliefs and emotions with the ultimate motive of gaining an intense knowledge of specific information rather than facts that may be generalized.
Pragmatic approaches to research comprise of using the nest available method practically instead of using a philosophical approach to determining the research methodology. Such researchers freely use any kind of procedures and methodologies that may be have been applied to the quantitative and qualitative methods of research previously. Since the pragmatic researcher recognizes that each method has certain drawbacks they may deploy the use of more than approach to research. The emancipator or participatory approach aims at responding to the needs of the groups of people and involving them in all phases of research so as to avoid marginalizing them.

The approaches to research may also be classified broadly as inductive and deductive approaches. A deductive approach is a top-down method where the researcher moves from general to specific information and the conclusion follows from the premises or the facts. An inductive approach is on the contrary a bottom-up method where the researcher moves from specific information, observations, facts and figures that lead to generalizations or the conceptualization of a theory. In the inductive method the data required is collected and a framework is developed on the basis of the statistics. (Vinnie Jauhari, Gunjan M. Sanjeev, (2010))

This research paper shall employ the use of a combination of deductive approach and quantitative methods. The objective of this research is to understand about the brand loyalty of Irish consumers on soft drink brands, analysing the factors of brand loyalty and how these factors distinguishing customers into Hard core loyal and brand switchers. Hence the most suited approach for this paper would be a deductive one as the research objectives are met by analysing quantitative figures resulted by the survey. Quantitative methods of data analysis best suited for this research topic as its results depend upon a survey which has quantitative results.

3.5: Research Strategy

This subsection entails the action plan to be followed by the researcher in gathering the requisite data to be analysed for the research. The common methods are experimental trials, observation and recording of events, obtaining data from published or secondary sources and through surveys and interviews. The strategy adopted is to be of the kind that the data helps in developing a theoretical model and attaining the objectives of research. The data to be analysed is to be obtained through surveys and interviews. Surveys shall comprise of close-ended, likert scale and pre-set questions which will vividly entail the objectives of the study.
The quality of the data obtained shall depend on the level of expertise of the research planners.

Trials and observation is an important tool for data collection in this research. The data that is collected through this may further be validated through statistical and analytical methods. A great deal of confidence is to be also placed on secondary sources of information. Primary sources would also be required to be put into use of which focus group discussions, interviews and surveys are the most solicited methods. The data collected through FGDs help in formation of the questionnaire. Questionnaires may be administered formally or through informal interviews with the sole intention of collecting data pertaining to the research objectives.

3.6: Research Hypothesis

The research is based on the brand loyalty of Irish customers on the soft drink brands. The main aim of research hypothesis is to find out the perceptions on the brand loyalty factors between the brand loyal customers and brand switchers in Ireland soft drink market. Based on the literature review of the research and conceptual model of brand loyalty and factors 7 hypothesis were generated:

**H1:** Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards brand name.

**H2:** Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards product quality.

**H3:** Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards price.

**H4:** Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards style.

**H5:** Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards store environment.
H6: Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards promotion

H7: Hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers of soft drink brands have different perceptions towards service quality.

3.7: Sampling and Data collection

A pilot study using in-depth interviews, was conducted with ‘20’ Irish customers who is buying and consuming soft drinks and who are regularly visiting in the two Daybreak retail stores situated in the Dublin city.

The purpose of this pilot study was to gather information about the usual soft drink brands that Irish customers were loyal to, and factors affecting brand loyalty which were useful in constructing the questionnaire. Results showed that the main soft drink brands that Irish customers usually purchased are Coca Cola, Pepsi, 7up, Sprite, etc. The research is only concentrating on soft drink brands not the brand extensions. The carbonated soft drinks are only considered as soft drinks in this research. The research is not at all concentrating on energy drinks, mineral water and juices. According to the respondents, factors affecting brand loyalty included brand name, product quality, price, style, store environment, promotion, and service quality. Subsequently, we conducted a pre-test questionnaire survey in Daybreak retail outlet. On the basis of the experiences with this pre-test, the questionnaire was modified.

According to Saunders, population refers to the full sets of elements or cases from which a sample is taken for investigation. The researcher may accordingly classify the respondents on the basis of the data required and the objectives of research. The researcher shall classify the respondents on the basis of their age group and gender.

A self-administered questionnaire was directly distributed to ‘150’ Irish customers who are the buyers of soft drinks and regular visitors of two Daybreak retail outlets aged from ‘15’ years old. As a sales assistant of Daybreak retail outlet. It was favourable for the researcher to do the survey in two Daybreak outlets as the researcher quite familiar with the customers. Finally, ‘130’ customers were accepted to participate in the survey by responding to the questionnaire. Responses from the questionnaire took into account for the analysis and interpretation.

Sampling technique:
Sampling techniques used in research are of two types. The most commonly used ones are probability sampling or representative sampling and non-probability sampling or judgmental sampling. In probability sampling the chance of each case selected from a population is known, meanwhile in non-probability sampling the chance of each being case selected from a population is unknown. The survey was doing through a convenience, non-probability sampling method.

3.7.1: Research questionnaire

The final questionnaire was developed and modified based on the pilot test. It includes questions related to concepts, brand loyalty and factors of brand loyalty.

**Brand Loyalty:**

In the questionnaire, a screening question (Are you used to have soft drinks?) is asked to identify whether the respondent is buying or consuming any soft drink brands. Respondents who answered “no” were considered as non-users and thus they were excluded in this study. Direct questions about loyalty (i.e., Are you especially loyal to a particular brand of soft drinks?), allowed marketers to segment consumers into hard-core loyal consumers or brand switchers. Respondents were then classified into hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers based on this question. Next, questions asking respondents, how often they bought any of the 4 soft drink brands (Coca Cola, 7up, Sprite and Pepsi) in the last month, was used to identify whether respondents were really loyal to their favourite brands. Respondents who bought one soft drink brand more than 10 times were considered as brand loyal and the respondents who bought soft drink brand less than 10 times were considered as brand switcher.

**Factors of brand loyalty:**

In this part, respondents were asked to evaluate the factors of brand loyalty on their favourite brands. The statements of the seven factors were adapted from previous research: brand name, product quality, price, style, store environment, promotion, and service quality. Five-point Likert scale questions were developed based on these ‘7’ factors of brand loyalty to indicate respondents’ degree of agreement on each of the statement (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Then, the data resulted through the agreements on statements were analysed and interpreted. The Likert scale agreements based on the factors of brand loyalty is summarized below.
Brand name
- Soft drink brands are reputable.
- The prestige of the brand reassures me when purchasing a soft drink.
- Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink.
- Soft drink brand reflects my personality.

Quality
In this research, quality of the soft drink brand is considered as the healthy content of soft drinks, taste and convenience of the brand.
- Soft drink is healthy.
- Availability of soft drink brand in several quantities suits with my convenience.
- Soft drink brand is tasty.
- Soft drink brand has sufficient flavour choice.

Price
- I am not sensitive to price when purchasing a soft drink.
- Soft drink brand provides good value for money.

Style
- The packaging of soft drink brand is very important to me (size, color, logo, etc)

Store environment
- The soft drink brands are easily available in the stores.

Promotion
- TV advertisements influence me when purchasing a soft drink brand.
- Window displays of soft drink brands in the store, attracts me to purchase.

Service quality
- Salespersons of the stores are willing to help me to find out the soft drink brand.
3.8: Time Horizon

The study of a particular event for a particular period of time is called as cross sectional study and particular study for a lengthy period of time is referred as longitudinal study (Saunders et al, 2007). This research shall be classified as longitudinal as the emergence of Ireland soft drink industry has a long traditional history.

The detail knowledge about the Ireland soft drink industry, brand loyalty and factors of brand loyalty shall have to be acquired mainly through published sources of information that includes books and articles while the current trends in the brand loyalty on soft drinks and the influence of factors of brand loyalty on costumers to be brand loyal or brand switchers are to be researched through data collection tools.

3.9: Data Collection methods

Data collection is the base of any research study and is very important to any research. This is because inaccurate data would lead to incorrect research results which may be detected only at the final stages, making all the efforts of the researcher in vain. The researcher in this case collects data based on the research questions and objective and mainly makes use of two types of methods of data collection that are essential to test the hypothesis.

3.9.1 Secondary Data Collection Methods

Secondary data collection serves as a tool for validating the data collected through primary methods and also for testing or validating the model that is conceptualized as a part of the research. This method of data collection is used to interpret the primary data as it forms a frame for the study. The knowledge and literature on brand, branding, consumer behaviour, brand loyalty and factors of brand loyalty are available widely over the net, through journals and articles, of which a major portion has been discussed in this paper also. Apart from this other research papers in this area, even though limited in number, and textbooks of journalism and travel management may serve as insights for the research. The options available for secondary data collection is-

i. Journals and articles

ii. Internet
iii. Published sources like books
iv. Existing research material
v. Textbooks of Marketing
vi. Newspaper articles/magazines
vii. Publications from the Beverage Council Of Ireland (BCI)

Journals and articles on soft drink market of Ireland would include the latest happenings and developments in the soft drink industry through a scientific approach. The internet is a plethora of information of which there may be certain contradictory data as well. Hence this method is to be used judiciously considering the validity of the source and the reliability of the web source. Books on soft drink industry and empirical studies related to marketing and branding are the traditional and most reliable source of information for any piece of research. While it may prove as only a tip of the iceberg and a trigger to further input and research, existing stuff of research on the same subject may be used with certain caveats like the source of the information included in the research and the expertise levels of the researchers. Academic textbooks may be used for collecting information on the theoretical side of the research. This may prove as an effective tool on hypothetical information and for well-authored articles on branding and brand loyalty. Magazines and newspapers provide latest information, happenings and trends in the soft drink industry. This may be coupled with publications from the Beverage Council of Ireland as well.

From the options listed above, the most suitable for this study would be the existing research material, publications from the Beverage Council of Ireland, internet and books in the same order of significance. Existing research material would be a ready source of reference to study the available data on the soft drink industry and the concepts of branding and brand loyalty. However since much research has not been developed in this area, it would be better to take assistance of internet, books and publications.

3.9.2: Primary Data Collection Methods

Primary data is the original data collected by the researcher to support his objectives. Primary source of data is considered as the original source of work of research without any interpretations and declarations representing an official opinion (Cooper et al, 2008). The types of primary data collection are qualitative and quantitative methods. As discussed previously in this research quantitative methods of the data collection shall be comprised of
structured questionnaires, surveys and informal interviews. These questionnaires will convey information about the need for survey and help the researcher in getting supporting data for the research objectives. The survey shall give the researcher adequate amounts of primary data that is adequate to and answer the research questions and arrive at the objectives of research.

3.10: Data Analysis Tools

There are many software’s available in the market for data analysis, editing and coding. The software that will be used by the researcher is Microsoft excel with the assistance of charts, graphs and diagrams. This will be used for statistical analysis and data documentation for this research.

3.11: Ethical Issues and Limitations

Ethical issues play a major role in the outcome of the research. The sample population under consideration can be support of the researchers work or against it. The researcher will face these issues because the research data will be collected from different consumer. The responses will be different to each and every customer. Since they may not want to disclose any of their interests or may not find the time to do so, this may prove as a main limitation to the research. They may not comply with answering the questionnaire due to time constraints or other ethical issues. The researcher will also provide privacy to the information provided by the respondent.

Even though ample amount of information may be available through the internet and journals, other secondary sources may not necessarily give the required information for which the researcher will have to take efforts. This is another shortcoming of the research. Other limitations include the validity of data that the respondents may provide. It is highly likely that the respondents may be casual in their approach to answering the questions or they may not give out accurate information for a variety of reasons. All of these are bound to affect the quality of the research conducted which will have to be suitably accounted for.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS
4.1: Introduction

The data collected through administering the questionnaire, from secondary and published sources, and many other multiple sources has been analysed through various statistical and analytical methods and subsequently presented as below. A questionnaire was administered to the soft drink consumers who are visiting the Daybreak retail outlet for shopping. The sample format of the same may be found in the appendix. The results of the same are tabulated as below. An average sample size of 150 was suggested for the research and correspondingly around 130 respondents were approached. Of these around 26 to 30 responses were discarded due to insufficiency of clarity in response. Hence the final sample size for this study is 100. The respondents were demographically classified on the basis of age and gender.

4.2: Tabulation/Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

The results of the questionnaire were analysed and have been tabulated as below. In order to closely scrutinize and infer from them, the findings have also been represented graphically. Each set of tabulations and representations are followed by an analysis of the corresponding findings. The responses from the respondents are analysed in a two way method. The first way is the representation of responses through a table. Second is the representation of responses through graphical representations such as pie diagram, Bar diagram, charts and graphs.
**Demographic Segmentation of Respondents:**

**A: Gender of respondents**

In this, the respondents are classified on the basis of gender, male or female. It analyses what the ratio of male and female respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.1: gender classification of Respondents

By analysing the responses, it is clear that, among 100 Irish soft drink customers, 68 respondents were male and 32 respondents were female. As the 100 respondents of this research is representing whole Irish soft drink consumers, we can make conclusion that the major consumers of soft drink brands are male.
B: Age group of respondents

The respondents of this research were classified on the basis of their age. Different age group of the respondents were, (15-25), (25-35) and above 35.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.2: Age group classification of Respondents

According to the responses from the respondents of the research, 48% of the total respondents are in the age group of 15-25, 32% of respondents will be in the group of 25-35 and rest of them are above 35. In the light of the responses, it is clear that the majority of Irish soft drink consumers are the young people who are in between the age of 15 and 25. The least buyers of soft drink brands are the consumers who have the age of 35 and above.
I. Are you a user and consumer of soft drinks?

It was an entry question for the selection of respondents for the research. Respondents who answered ‘yes’ was assumed as the consumers of soft drinks and selected for the research as respondents. The respondents who answered ‘No’ were excluded from the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.3: Are you a user and consumer of soft drinks.

The responses show that 100% of the respondents are using and consuming the soft drink brands. In a nut shell all respondents of the research were the buyers of soft drink brands.

Figure.8: Are you a user and consumer of soft drinks.
II. Are you especially loyal to any soft drink brand?

It was a very important qualifying question of this research. The respondents are directly asked question. Are they loyal to any particular soft drink brands? The result of this question will create two groups. The respondents who are answering ‘yes’ will be brand loyal consumers and who are answering ‘No’ will be brand switchers for the whole research study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.4: Are you especially loyal to any soft drink brand?

According to the responses, 28% of the respondents agreed that they are loyal to a particular brand of soft drinks and 72% of respondents are not loyal to any particular brand of soft drink. In the light of these results, the researcher assumed that 28% of respondents are brand loyal consumers and rest of them are treated as brand switchers. The percentage of brand loyal consumers will be constant for the whole research. For this purpose, the portions of brand loyal consumers is coloured in green for all graphical representations.

Figure.9: Are you especially loyal to any soft drink brand?
III. How often, the following soft drink brands you bought in last month?

As a result of previous test, the researcher identified the major players of Ireland soft drink brands. They are Coca Cola, Pepsi, 7up and Sprite. The researcher asked this question to the respondents to understand the frequency of buying of above stated soft drink brands in a month. The researcher assumed that the respondents, who are buying one brand more than times in a month, will be loyal to that brand others will be brand switchers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coca Cola</th>
<th>Pepsi</th>
<th>7up</th>
<th>Sprite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5 times</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 times</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Frequency of buying soft drink brands.

Responses summarises that, only 28% of respondents bought Coca Cola for more than 10 times. In the same time, the rest of respondents bought all brands from 0 to 10 times. According to this result, it is clear that the respondents who bought Coca Cola for more than 10 times in a month are loyal to the Coca Cola brand. Other respondents are brand switchers.

Figure 10: Frequency of buying soft drink brands.
1: Soft drink brands are reputable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Soft drink brands are reputable.

According to the responses, 28% of respondents are strongly agreeing that the soft drink brands are reputable. Most of the other respondents are neutral and disagreeing with the agreement. So the conclusion is, 28% of brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing that soft drink brands have a matter of reputation.

Figure 11: Soft drink brands are reputable.
2: The prestige of the brand reassures me when purchasing a soft drink.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The prestige of the brand reassures me when purchasing a soft drink.

The responses show that except 28% of respondents, most of the respondents (52%) are neutral and disagreeing that the prestige of the brand reassures them when purchasing a soft drink. These figures clearly say that the brand switchers are neutral and not agreeing that the prestige of the brand influences a consumer, while purchasing a brand. At the same time, brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing with this attitude.

Figure 12: The prestige of the brand reassures me when purchasing a soft drink.
3: Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.8: Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink.

The responses describes 28% of respondents are strongly agreeing that the Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink brand. Most of the other respondents are neutral and disagreeing with the agreement. So the conclusion is, 28% of brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing that the Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink brand. Most of the brand switchers are neutral and disagreeing with the statement.

Figure.13: Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink.
4: Soft drink brand reflects my personality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Soft drink brand reflects my personality.

The responses of respondents narrate that, except 28% of respondents, most of the respondents (54%) are neutral and disagreeing that soft drink brand reflects their own personality. These figures clearly say that the brand switchers are neutral and not agreeing that soft drink brand reflects their own personality. At the same time Brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing with this attitude.

Figure 14: Soft drink brand reflects my personality.
5: Availability of soft drink brand in several quantities suits with my convenience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.10: Availability of soft drink brand in several quantities suits with my convenience.

According to the responses, 40% of brand switchers are agreeing that the availability of soft drink brand in several quantities suits with their convenience and 32% of brand switchers are disagreeing that statement. The brand loyal consumers (28%) are neutral. They are not disagreeing the statement.

Figure.15: Availability of soft drink brand in several quantities suits with my convenience.
6: Soft drink is healthy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.11: Soft drink is healthy.

According to the responses, 60% of brand switchers are strongly disagree that the soft drink is healthy and 12% of brand switchers are being neutral with the statements. The brand loyal consumers are also disagreeing with the statement. So it is clear that both the brand loyal consumers and brand switchers are not agreeing that the soft drinks are healthy.

Figure.16: Soft drink is healthy.
7: Soft drink brand is tasty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.12: Soft drink brand is tasty.

According to the responses, 42% of brand switchers are agreeing that the soft drink brand is tasty and 30% of brand switchers are disagreeing that statement. The brand loyal consumers (28%) are neutral. They are not disagreeing the statement. The results clearly show that brand switchers giving more importance for the taste, while the brand loyal consumers are not that much attached to the taste of soft drink.

Figure.17: Soft drink brand is tasty.
8: Soft drink brand has sufficient flavour choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
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<td>Agree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.13: Soft drink brand has sufficient flavour choice.

According to the responses, 35% of brand switchers are agreeing that the Soft drink brand has sufficient flavour choice and 37% of brand switchers are disagreeing that statement. The brand loyal consumers (28%) are neutral. They are not disagreeing the statement. The results clearly show that both the brand switchers and brand loyal consumers are not giving more importance for the flavour choice soft drinks.

Figure.18: Soft drink brand has sufficient flavour choice.
9: I am not sensitive to price when purchasing a soft drink.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
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<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Table.14: sensitive towards price.

The responses show that except 28% of respondents, most of the respondents (64%) are neutral and disagreeing that they are not sensitive towards price when purchasing a soft drink. These figures clearly say that the brand switchers are neutral and not agreeing with the statement. At the same time Brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing with this attitude. And the price is not an issue for brand loyal consumers while they are buying their soft drink brand.

Figure.19: sensitive towards price.
10: Soft drink brand provides good value for money.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table.15: Soft drink brand provides good value for money.

According to the responses, most of the respondents (52%) are neutral and disagreeing that the soft drink brand provides good value for money. These figures clearly say that the brand switchers are neutral and not agreeing with the statement. At the same time Brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing with this attitude. And they believe that their soft drink brand is a good value for money.

Figure.20: Soft drink brand provides good value for money.
11: The packaging of soft drink brand is very important to me (size, colour, logo, etc.)

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<thead>
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<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Table.16: The packaging of soft drink brand is important.

The responses show that except 28% of respondents, most of the respondents (67%) are neutral and disagreeing that the packaging of soft drink brand is important. These figures clearly say that the brand switchers are neutral and not agreeing with the statement. At the same time Brand loyal consumers are strongly agreeing with this attitude. And the packaging is an important factor of their soft drink brand.

Figure.21: The packaging of soft drink brand is important.
12: The soft drink brands are easily available in the stores.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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Table.17: The soft drink brands are easily available in the stores.

According to the responses, 64% of brand switchers are neutral and agreeing that the soft drink brands is easily available in the stores. The brand loyal consumers (28%) are strongly agreeing with the statement. So it is clear that both the brand loyal consumers and brand switchers are agreeing that the soft drinks are easily available in the stores.

Figure.22: The soft drink brands are easily available in the stores.
13: TV advertisements influence me when purchasing a soft drink brand.

<table>
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Table.18: The influence of TV advertisements.

According to the responses, 64% of brand switchers are agreeing that the TV advertisements influence them when purchasing a soft drink brand and 8% of brand switchers are disagreeing with the statement. The brand loyal consumers are neutral with the statement. So it is clear that brand switchers are very much influenced by TV advertisements on their purchase decision.

Figure.23: The influence of TV advertisements.
14: Window displays of soft drink brands in the store, attracts me to purchase.

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<td>100%</td>
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Table.19: Window displays of soft drink brands in the store, attracts me to purchase.

According to the responses, 70% of brand switchers are agreeing that the Window displays of soft drink brands in the store attracts them to purchase, and 2% of brand switchers are disagreeing with the statement. The brand loyal consumers are neutral with the statement. So it is clear that brand switchers are very much influenced by window displays of store on their purchase decision.

Figure.24: Window displays of soft drink brands in the store, attracts me to purchase.
15: Salespersons of the stores are willing to help me to find out the soft drink brand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Table.20: Salespersons of the stores are willing to help me to find out the soft drink brand.

According to the responses, 55% of brand switchers are agreeing that the Salespersons of the stores are willing to help me to find out the soft drink brand. The brand loyal consumers (28%) are neutral with the statement. So it is clear that both the brand loyal consumers and brand switchers are agreeing that the Salespersons of the stores are willing to help them to find out the soft drink brand.

Figure.25: Salespersons of the stores are willing to help me to find out the soft drink brand.
16: Do you recommend your favourite soft drink brand to others?

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<tr>
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<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Table.21: Recommendation of soft drink brand to others.

According to the responses, 50% of brand switchers not interested to recommend their soft drink brand to others. 22% of brand switchers were not sure about their interest on the recommendation. Brand loyal consumers were ready to recommend their soft drink brand to others.

Figure.26: Recommendation of soft drink brand to others.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS & CONCLUSION
This chapter deals with major findings and conclusion of the research named “An investigation on the brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland”. In this chapter there will be a brief explanation of the research findings from the analysis and how it related to the research question. The research findings are resulted from the survey. The survey did on a sample size of 100 Irish consumers of soft drinks. Among the 100 consumers, there were 68 male customers and 32 female customer of different age groups such as, (15-25), (25-35) and 35 above. The buying and consumption of soft drinks are mostly visible in the age group of (15-25). The research was doing in two daybreak retail stores in Ireland. Main findings generated through data analysis collected through the questionnaire.

- In the basis of pre-test, the factors affecting brand loyalty are brand name, quality, price, style, promotion, store environment and service quality. These are the main factors which create brand loyalty and brand switching.
- The major players of soft drink brands are, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Sprite and 7up. Among these, Coca Cola has the strong brand loyalty among the Irish consumers. (question no: C in the questionnaire)
- Among the 100 respondents 28 consumers are the brand loyal consumers and the rest of 72 customers will be brand switchers. This classification could possible through asking a direct question on brand loyalty. (question no: B, Are you especially loyal to a particular brand)
- The brand name has a great influence in the creation and development of brand loyalty. It mainly affects the brand loyal consumers in 4 ways. The reputation of brands, prestige of the brand, good will of the company and the reflection of personality. The brand loyal consumers believe that the soft drink brand will reflect their personality. They are treating the reputation, prestige and good will as key elements while choosing the brand. These elements have no much influence on the brand switchers.
- The common factor of brand loyalty which affects both the brand loyal consumers and brand switchers is quality of the brand. According to the research on brand loyalty on soft drinks in Ireland, The quality of the soft drink included several elements such as convenient quantities, healthy content and flavour. By analysing these elements, the researcher could find that both the brand loyal customers and brand switchers are affected or influenced in the same manner. Both the brand loyal
customers and brand switchers holds the opinion that the soft drink brands are unhealthy.

- The brand loyal consumers are not sensitive on the price of a soft drink brand. Even if they are capable to get other soft drinks of low price they won’t switch from their favourite brand. But the brand switchers are very much sensitive towards the price and offers of soft drink brands.

- Style of soft drink brand is an essential factor on the purchase intention of brand loyal consumers. The style includes, size, colour, packaging, design of bottle, etc. brand loyal consumers will take into account all these factors, when they are purchasing a soft drink brand. The brand switchers are not that much concentrated on these factors of brand loyalty.

- Easy availability of the soft drink brands is essential for both the brand loyal consumers and brand switchers. The major brands such as, Coca Cola, sprite, 7up and Pepsi are always available in the store.

- The main factor which is affecting brand switchers is promotion. The promotion will include price discounts, extra quantities, twin packs, advertising, etc. in this research, the main promotion elements are TV advertising and window displays of the store. The brand switcher’s purchase decisions are being affected by these elements. The promotion has no that much influence on brand loyal consumers.

- The store environment and sales person’s service quality also influencing the brand loyalty and purchasing decision of consumers. The ambience of the store, the attractive displays of soft drink brands, decorations, cleanliness, etc. can result a motivation to purchase in consumer’s mind. The hospitality and service mind of the sales person also can affect the brand loyalty on the soft drinks.

**Differentiation of Hard core loyal consumers and Brand switchers on the basis of factors of brand loyalty**

In the light of the research the key factors which distinguishes brand loyal consumers and brand switchers are,

- **Brand name**
- **Style**
- **Promotion**
The brand name and style are the essential factors for creating brand loyalty. On the other hand, promotion is the cornerstone for the brand switching. As hard-core loyal consumers were loyal to a particular brand, it is meaningful that they were greatly influenced by the brand name. They were satisfied with the reputation of the brand. They might probably think that their personality fits with the brand personality. The brand was selected regardless of the increase in price, so this is true loyalty. Hard-core loyal consumers indicated their better perceptions with the style of their favourite soft drink brands. These factors affect the consumers to build up their brand loyalty on soft drink brands.

The difference of group means on promotion between hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers indicates the importance of promotion to brand switchers. Brand switchers are also relatively receptive to advertising that is strongly visual in character, shows activity and impressions of energy. Brand switchers react to promotional advertising, special inducements, etc. than loyal consumers. Promotion by other brands could affect brand switchers’ purchase decision. This induces the action of brand switching among brands. Therefore, effective promotion of other brands would affect the brand loyalty of brand switchers towards their favourite brands. However, hard-core loyal customers do not need frequent advertising or price promotions. They do not easily switch to alternative brands because of promotion by other hands.

To sum up, the main difference of brand loyalty factors between hard-core loyal consumers and brand switchers are brand name, style, and promotion. The main concern for hard-core loyal consumers is brand name and style, while promotion is more important to brand switchers.
Conclusion

In a nutshell, creating brand loyal consumers is difficult. Marketers need to continually improve their marketing programs to attract and retain consumers. As competition in the Ireland soft drink market is getting increased, consumers are supplied with information on different brands. Thus important views between “making more consumers satisfied” and “making specific groups of consumers more satisfied” rose. Making specific groups of consumers more satisfied is more significant related to company’s profitability level. Therefore marketers now focus on brand switching behaviour in the market place. As a result they concentrate on gaining knowledge in factors that can affect consumers to become and remain loyal to their own brands. Loyal consumers are willing to pay more for a brand. Consequently, branding gives marketers an opportunity to develop and maintain a loyal and profitable consumer base (Reichheld&Sasser, 1990).

Furthermore marketers have to launch consumer retention program because the cost of consumer retention program is five times less expensive than the cost of recruiting a new customer (Gould, 1995; Reichheld&Sasser, 1990). There are three main benefits for consumer retention: costs of consumer acquisition are reduced, higher margin are gained as long lasting consumers are less price sensitive, and sales are raised because consumers buy more products from the company they are loyal to. Instead of attracting new customers, companies would like to do more business with consumer in order to retain current consumers and build up long-lasting consumer relationship. Thus brand loyalty programs are designed to turn one time buyers into buyers that will purchase the soft drink again.

Moreover after analysing data, it was found that promotion is the most efficient strategy in attracting brand switchers. In the soft drink market, promotion tends to reinforce brand switchers to develop more solid brand loyalty towards soft drinks. Irish soft drink companies can promote their brand images by sponsoring major sports events. The promotion of innovation and bringing innovative aspects for packaging and style will also generate brand demand. Therefore, promotion of soft drink brands can be used to draw the attention of brand switchers.

This is an exploratory study of brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland, which could potentially contribute to marketing theory. One suggestion is made for future research. More, future research can be administered on how each brand loyalty factors influence a consumer’s loyalty towards other product categories.
CHAPTER 6

SELF REFLECTION ON OWN LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE
6.1: Introduction

In this section, the researcher tries to outline the learning process and self-reflection on skills developed over the duration of the course, MBA (Business Management). This section is divided into two parts. The first part will concentrate on identifying the researcher’s learning style with various theories, and second part will explain about the skills achieved by the researcher during the tenure as an international MBA student at Dublin Business School.

The researcher joined for MBA at Dublin Business School in January 2012. Prior to this study, he had a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration. The researcher worked as an Assistant Human resource Manager in BRD MarutiSuzuki.Ltd. After working 1.5 year in the Human resource field, the researcher decided to join for a MBA program specialized in marketing and human resource management. In order to develop the marketing skills and human resource managing skill, after a thorough study, he decided to do the course in Dublin Business School. The researcher considered this study as an opportunity to develop his hard skills of Marketing, Branding, Retail marketing, consumer behaviour, as well as the soft skills of leadership, teamwork, ethics and communication that are so critical for effective marketing and management.

6.2: Reflection on Learning

Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it (David A. Kolb, 1984).

According to Honey and Mumford (2000) learning is a process that occurs when people exhibit that they know something they never knew before or when they can do something they never did before.

Dale (2001) defines learning as a vital human process, which is essential survival and fundamental to evolution. Further she added that learning can take place in any settings and under any set of circumstances and that learning does not need to be formal or organized but it does need to be aimed at achieving some outcome, for growth without a purpose is the ideology of cancer cell.
Kolb pointed out the basic characteristics of experiential learning as mentioned below:

- Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
- Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.
- Learning process requires the resolution of conflicts dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
- Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.
- Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment.
- Learning is the process of creating knowledge.

Learning styles are different for each person. There are four types of learning style according to Kolb 1984. Divergent, convergent, assimilating and accommodating learning styles are the different learning styles. Understanding the learning style of a person is important to enable learning according to that method. Every person responds to their learning styles one way or the other.

a. **Divergent learning style:** This style refers to the learning style of people who are sensitive. People with divergent learning style prefer watching than use imagination and regularly gather information to solve problems. These people prefer to work in groups and listen with an open mind and prefer to receive personal feedback.

b. **Convergent learning style:**

This type of learning style is associated with people who solve problems. People having convergent learning style will use their learning to find solutions to practical issues. These people do not rely on interpersonal characteristics and prefer more technical work. They are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories. They can find swift and efficient solutions to problems. Thus, these people are more interested in performing technical tasks than social or interpersonal issues. Hence this type of learning style helps to achieve specialist and technology abilities.
c. Assimilating Learning Style: Assimilating learning style develops learning through a logical approach. Ideas and concepts are more given more importance than to people. People with such learning style are interested in abstract concepts and find logical explanation to theories rather than a practical approach.

d. Accommodating Learning Style: This learning style depends mostly on intuition. Accommodating learning style does not involve logic. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences. Accommodating learning style makes people rely on others for information than carry out their own analysis.

Each of the learning styles has its own importance. Here the researcher uses convergent and assimilating learning style. The researcher adopted convergent learning style because he deals with people who believe in technical tasks and finds solution to questions and problems. They can solve the problems and do not consider the social or interpersonal tasks. Assimilating style focuses less on people and gives more importance to concepts and ideas.

e. Adult Learning (Andragogy)

Malcolm Knowles devised the concept of adult learning and popularized it in the period from 1978 to 1990. The theory stated that when people tend to behave in the ways of an adult and reflects mature behaviour, the individual is said to be in a state of adulthood. From then on they need to be treated as adults since their style of learning is specific. They style of learning in adults accompany extensive learning that can be used as a resource for further learning. In this research paper the adult style learning and the knowledge of the researcher has brought extensive quality to the research.

Andragogy is a style of learning that focuses on learning for adults and structured learning engaging adults. The concept is interpreted differently by different practitioners and in various countries. It is commonly understood as the approach to scholarly learning style of matured individuals and more simply understood as the theory of practice or in other words learning through practical experience.

The style is typical of this dissertation exercise where most of the learning and research has emerged from investigation and observation since the topic is very naive in the area of research and does not have very many models to support the study.
The study conducted by the researcher reflected on the andragogy style of learning supported by the researched models of brand loyalty and factors. In this method he was taken to a scholarly level where in most of the findings had to be supported and validated through statistical analysis conducted by him. Therefore the research followed a primarily investigative style and was enriched the knowledge of marketing analysis and tools.

6.3: Self-Assessment and Learning and Skills development

The researcher had a main objective for pursuing MBA, that to develop the academic knowledge and skills in the marketing and management field. Hence the program and research helped the researcher to develop and improve his skills in many fields and provided him with relevant practical experience in building a strong professional career. As stated in the opening session of this chapter, the modules of the course guided the researcher to develop various skills. The modules like marketing, branding, retail Marketing and Marketing research gave him a relevant idea in international trade within fast phase growing world. These modules helped the researcher to understand the potential benefits in the areas like how to study a market, situations, identifying factors, challenges faced in economy etc.

Development of Skills

➢ Research and Investigative Skills

The MA Marketing programme has given a new outlook on the research and investigative skills. Dissertation gave the confidence on the process of research such as planning, administering analysing a survey and interpreting the data in to a consequential conclusion. Even though, the researcher had a research in marketing sector, as a part of his previous Bachelors study, this research gave him a new experience in the different context. The extensive literature review as the part of present research could help him to study more about the topics like branding, marketing, Consumer behaviour and perception etc. and their practical aspects too. Time factor was an important element in the research, thus it taught the importance of effective time utilization within the time constrains. The methods used to collect the data, analysis of data and deriving conclusions were helped him to widen his analytical skill in total.
➢ **Time Management Skills**

As the part of the course work, the researcher had to submit assignments and present group reports and presentations within the time constrains. Initially this felt very difficult to deliver the works within the deadline because of the bad planning and time management. The researcher admired this as a weakness, and tried hard to develop a new habit of time management. In the second semester he could complete his course works with the sufficient time. In the dissertation stage, he could complete the works on time, as he tried to keep a timeline along the dissertation tenure. Time management helps the researcher in the master’s program and future in many ways. First of all it helps the researcher to focus on the tasks, which has to be completed in given date. Secondly it boosts the researcher, if the researcher achieves the task within the time plan. Thirdly helps the researcher to plan his time without losing a single minute. Ultimately it gives an extra benefit to build up the mind of researcher to take over jobs or assignments, which associated to time as target.

➢ **Critical Skill**

From the two semesters of MBA, the researcher had various case studies to analyse, and group discussions on them. Some of the group assignments and group presentations lead the researcher to extensive arguments. In the beginning stage of the course, he was not able to make coherent arguments with others, even though he had good ideas and judgements. But continuous exercise through the course works made him good at critical evaluation of the topics. In addition, the method of literature review used in different assignments and dissertation showed him how to develop a critical perspective and evaluate the conclusions in theoretical framework.

➢ **Diversity and Teamwork**

As stated in previous sections, the researcher had a work experience of Assistant Human resource Manager and he dealt with a group of forty-five people under his position and his co-workers as well. But there was no scope of diversity or different culture, since most of the employees were from the same country. But this atmosphere was a new experience to the researcher to interact in an international community and to develop the communication skill. As the part of group presentation in the first semester and group report in the second semester, the researcher had to work in a group of four members. The academic discussions within the group and entire class as well, helped him in expressing himself more clearly and
convincingly in a diversified community. Furthermore the researcher’s ability to effective interaction with the people was improved distinctly. Researcher believes that this will be helpful in future, when a situation arise to work with the different nationalities.

➢ IT Skill

In the beginning of the course, the researcher had only a limited knowledge in Information technology and the Computer Software. As a part of MBA Marketing research module, he got acquainted with the usage of MS-PowerPoint for presentations, as well as MS-Office Word and Excel for typing the assignments and presenting the figures. Moreover the technical terms related to Information technology like MIS, ERP are got more familiarized from the study tenure.

6.4: Challenges Encountered

The researcher encountered a lot of difficulties during the course. Selection of the topic for the dissertation was an issue. The researcher wanted to select a topic that is related to the course. Several topics were selected and the researcher weighed out the pros and cons of the topics. The researcher also did some reading on topics related to the area of interest. This helped the researcher to narrow down the topic.

The researcher faced a lot of challenges while conducting the survey. First the questions for the survey had to be developed in such a way that it conveys the necessary ideas to the audience. The questions should be easily understandable to workers of all industries.

6.5: Conclusion

The entire Masters programme helped the researcher to identify his strength and weakness. And self-reflection on learning section helped him to identify his learning styles and advantages and disadvantages of those styles. Hence, as a total outcome of the course, the researcher could develop an analytical mind with solution-oriented way of thinking along with knowledge of basic marketing concepts and relevant skills. This will be significantly useful in his future career, where these skills can be applied effectively.
BOOKS:

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- Kellogg on Branding: The Marketing Faculty of the Kellogg School of Management Foreword by Philip kotler 2005


• Greenberg, C.J., Sherman, E. And Schiffman, L.G. (1983). The measurement of fashion image as a determinant of store patronage,


• The importance of being branded, John Fanning, 2006.
• New Exciting Ideas and Perspectives on Brand building, Philip Kotler, 1997.

Research works:

• Consumer perception of Global versus Local Brands in Automotive Industry in India, Shibin Abdul Sathar, Dublin Business School, 2013.
• An Investigation on Kerala Tourism, Lumi Anna Mathew, Dublin Business School, 2013.
• Brand Loyalty of Sportswear in Hong Kong, ITATM, Volume.5, 2006.

Websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brand_loyalty
www.beveragecouncilofireland.ie
www.tx.ncsu.edu/jtatm/volume5issue1/Articles/.../Lau_Full_169_05.pdf
http://www.begleys.com/drinks-links.html
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APPENDIX
Questionnaire:

Hello, my name is Aneesh. I am a MBA student of Dublin Business School. I am conducting a survey on the brand loyalty of soft drinks in Ireland. Your valuable feedback will be helpful to achieve my research objectives. It will only take less than 7 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Your response will only be used for the survey purposes. If you have any queries, feel free to contact me on aneeshyaar@hotmail.com or if you wish, you can also contact my supervisor on Chantal.ladias@dbs.ie.

Gender

- male
- female

Age group

- 15-25
- 25-35
- Above 35

A: Are you used to have soft drinks?

- Yes
- No

B: Are you especially loyal to a particular brand of soft drink?

- Yes
- No

C: How often, the following soft drink brands you bought in last month?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coca Cola</th>
<th>Pepsi</th>
<th>7up</th>
<th>Sprite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5 times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements that best describe your attitudes towards your favorite brand by ticking the options (note: strongly agree – strongly disagree).

1: Soft drink brands are reputable.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

2: The prestige of the brand reassures me when purchasing a soft drink.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

3: Goodwill of the company is vital when choosing a soft drink.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

4: Soft drink brand reflects my personality.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree
5: Availability of soft drink brand in several quantities suits with my convenience.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

6: Soft drink is healthy.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

7: Soft drink brand is tasty.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

8: Soft drink brand has sufficient flavor choice.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree
9: I am not sensitive to price when purchasing a soft drink.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

10: Soft drink brand provides good value for money.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

11: The packaging of soft drink brand is very important to me (size, color, logo, etc)

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

12: The soft drink brands are easily available in the stores.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree
13: TV advertisements influence me when purchasing a soft drink brand.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

14: Window displays of soft drink brands in the store, attracts me to purchase.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

15: Salespersons of the stores are willing to help me to find out the soft drink brand.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

16: Do you recommend your favorite soft drink brand to others?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure