PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS AND STORE LOYALTY –
A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO APPARELS

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ABSTRACT

This research studies about the penetration of private label brands towards the minds of customers and its influence over the enhancement of store loyalty. The main objective of the study is to identify the key factors to improve store loyalty particularly in private label brands and to determine the relationship between the private label brands and store loyalty. Data comprises of 200 samples within the Chennai city. Convenient sampling technique was used to select samples. The nature of the study is descriptive. MAX, RELIANCE Trends, Big Bazaar are the three private label brands chosen for date collection.

Keywords: Private label brands, customer perception, store loyalty, loyal customers.

INTRODUCTION:

In the competitive market, all the retail companies are trying very hard to reach top place in the minds of customer, in this situation a new concept which every company focuses is private labelling of their own brands to retain their customer. Particularly in apparels from big renowned brands with multiple store to a famous but small brand with fewer chains of shops are competing to up hold their brand to attract and retain the customers. According to American Marketing association (AMA) in the 1960s that "a name, term, sign, Symbol or design or a combination of them. Intended to identify the goods and services of one seller of group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors".

In the rivalry situation the retail store are framing their creative ideas and trying to capture the customers for their brands. One of the powerful strategies which the marketers introduced in the market is private labelling. Exclusive collection of models, sizes, designs, varieties are manufactured and that is being sold to their customers in the form of private label.

This phenomenal strategy is very much attractive to the customers and this made the customers to visit the same store again that helps the store to increase the store loyalty. In order to maintain the same, retail outlets are making much effort to understand and observe the expectations of the customers and adopt all those expectations in manufacturing the private label apparels.

PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS:

Private label brands are those brands which are exclusively owned, designed and sold by the retail store, in most of the cases their own store name has been used for Private label products.

Private label exists in all industry but it benchmarks its presence in apparel sector. Particularly in the late 1970's private label concept entered India, within a short period and much effort invested by the retailers have paved the way to reach the epitome in apparel industry. May be the emergence of malls, hypermarket also contribute to the major reason for the emergence of private label.

In the fast moving and busy economy, people visit malls to spend valuable time and relax with their families, friends and colleagues. This scenario changes the shopping behavior and influence then to purchase apparels in the shops located at the malls. Individual shops are taking many steps to attract the mall visitors to enters into their shop. One best strategy ideally followed by the retail store is private labeling.

According to the private Label Manufacturers association (PLMA) "Private label products encompass all merchandise sold under a retailer's brand. The brand can be the retailer's own name or a name created exclusively by that retailer. In some cases, a retailer may belong to a wholesale group that owns the brands that are available only to the members of the group".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To understand the perception of the consumers towards Private label apparels.
- To evaluate the satisfaction level of the customers about the private label apparels.
- To compare the relationship between private label and store loyalty.
- To identify the key factor to improve store loyalty

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Price and Quality:

The price of the private label brands were considered as cheap alternatives for the national brands compromising on the quality, during the initial stages of the evolution of the private label brands. However, the consumer's perception has now changed. People started buying the private label brands and consider them as competitive to national brands in terms of quality and price (Singh & De, 2016). They consider private label brands are quality equivalent to national

brands, even when the private label brands are priced up to 15% less than that of the national brands (Grewal & Levy, 2009). Also, consumers have started to believe that the private label brands provide the value for money (Gugloth & Murali, 2014).

Most important two factors which influence consumers to purchase private label brands are price factor and quality factor (Chakraborty, 2013). Low priced private label in comparison to national brand with good quality is the success factor for private label products (Labeaga, Lado, & Martos, 2007). Quality is considered as a potential a factor for Private label success (Hoch & Banerji, 1993). Price is considered as an important factor for purchasing Private label after which quality and availability of the products comes into account. It is perceived that private labels are low priced products so low income group prefers to buy private labels for better life style (Gala & Patil, 2013).

For the quality seeking customers, the evaluation of the apparel quality may not be directly related to the emotional appeal of the apparel, but the intrinsic characteristics of the apparel (Forsythe, 1991).

Purchase Decision:

The customers are mainly of two types. The first type of customers gives more stress to the quality. Such customers are willing to pay a higher price in order to get the best quality product. The second type of customers looks for products at reasonable prices. These customers make the purchase decision after analyzing the price and quality aspects of the products (Kumar & Kothari, 2015). There could be a tradeoff between the price and quality, while arriving at a purchase decision.

However, in the segments where the private label brands have more market share than national brands, the factors such as quality, price and loyalty doesn't contribute much to the purchase decision. In the segments where private label brands have less market share, the competitive strategies of the private label brands accounts for the purchase decision of the customers (Mark S. Glynn & Shaoshan Chen, 2009).Even though image of the national brands seem to impact consumers' purchase decision, consumers rely primarily on the actual apparel characteristics, and not the brand name alone (Forsythe, 1991).

Income level of the people is not an influencing factor to affect or to attract the purchase decision on private label products. There is no relationship between private label brands and income level of the consumers. Customers prefer to buy private label products than national brands irrespective of their income level (Kumar & Kothari, 2015). However, It is also important to note that the perceived risk will negatively impact the purchase decision of the customers (Liljander, Polsa, & van Riel, 2009).

Positioning:

Consumers are more likely to talk to the store personnel when buying the apparels than when buying the groceries to understand whether the attributes of the apparels and material. It is necessary for the store personnel to be knowledgeable about the private label products and should be able to reassure the customers about the quality (Liljander et al., 2009).

Private label brands are positioning themselves in the minds of consumers especially apparel segments are growing very fast in private labeling. Major factors which influence the success of the private labels are quality, price, trustworthiness and variety. (Ramakrishnan & Ravindran, 2012). It is also important for the for the retailers to stress on the quality and the value for money of the private label brands, as these two factors are the direct drivers of the purchase intentions and would catalyze the position of the private label brands (Liljander et al., 2009).

Even if the store differentiates itself from the competitor in terms of its edge on quality, it should combine the role of quality oriented store brand to differentiate from the competitors and price oriented store brands in order to attract the price oriented customers(Martos-Partal & González-Benito, 2011).

Store Loyalty:

Private label brands contribute to building the store loyalty in a way that the private brands are exclusively available at specific retailer while the national brands available in the competing retailers. Thus the retailers in turn can use store brand loyalty as a marketing tool to attract traffic to their stores and to differentiate them from other retailers (Labeaga et al., 2007)(Labeaga et al., 2007)(Labeaga et al., 2007) A quality based private label brand stresses the capacity of the retailer to generate store loyalty and segmenting the customers according to their price sensitivity will also be helpful in strategy planning to improve store loyalty (Martos-Partal & González-Benito, 2011).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research is Descriptive in nature, around 200 samples were collected within the Chennai city, survey method was adopted, structured Questionnaire were prepared based on the factors identified from the review, through questionnaire opinion was collected from the customers of Max, Reliance Trends and Big Bazaar.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Demographic Profile of the Respondents
The respondents are inclusive of males and females; the number of males being 118 and females being 82.

Table (I): Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	118	59.0	59.0	59.0
	Female	82	41.0	41.0	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

The age group of the respondents ranges from 18 years to 55 years with the average being 35 years. For research purpose, the respondents are grouped into five categories, as mentioned in table (III).

Table (II): Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age in Years	200	18	55	35.29	10.448
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Table (III): Age Group

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 20 Yrs.	18	9.0	9.0	9.0
	21 - 30 Yrs.	49	24.5	24.5	33.5
	31 - 40 Yrs.	75	37.5	37.5	71.0
	41 - 50 Yrs	39	19.5	19.5	90.5
	Above 50 Yrs	19	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Shopping Cart Items:
We could understand the ultimate thought of the consumer's when we ask them about their cart space sharing between the private label brands and national brands. The instantaneous thought of the consumers with respect to their own shopping cart may show us their mindset about their purchase decisions they carried out earlier. Table (IV) shows that the 44.5% of the respondents the respondents say that most of their cart items are private label brands while the rest say that most of their purchases are national brands.

Table (IV): Cart Items

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Private Labels	89	44.5	44.5	44.5
Valid	National Brands	111	55.5	55.5	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Purchase Repetition:

When the consumes is comfortable with the apparels they purchase, in terms of either quality or price or any other factor, they could go for the repeated purchase of that particular brand. It could be private label brand or national brand. The table(V) shows that 56% of the people confirm that they purchase a particular brand repeatedly.

Table (V): Repeated Purchase

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No	88	44.0	44.0	44.0
Valid	Yes	112	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Out of those who are purchasing a specific brand repeatedly, 48.2% purchase the private label brands repeatedly while 51.8% purchase the national brand. Thus out of the total, 27% of the respondents purchase the private labels repeatedly.

Table (VI): Brand Repeated

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Private Label Brands	54	27.0	48.2	48.2
Valid	National Brands	58	29.0	51.8	100.0
	Total	**112**	**56.0**	**100.0**	
Missing	No Repeat Purchase	88	44.0		
	Total	**200**	**100.0**		

Private Label Brand:

The price of the private label brands may or may not be less than that of the national brands in the apparel stores. When it comes to the private label brands, the consumers expect certain quality attributes for the price they pay for the apparels. 59.5% of the respondents say that the quality of the private label brands is on par with the price which they spend on it.

Table (VII): Price Quality Equivalence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Yes	119	59.5	59.5	59.5
Valid	No	81	40.5	40.5	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Consumers may think of some attributes of similarities and distinctions between private label brands and national brands. Ignoring the price criteria, 46.5% of the people say that private label brands are equivalent and alternative to national brand in terms of its usability.

Table (VIII): Private Label - Alternative for National Brand

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	93	46.5	46.5	46.5
	No	107	53.5	53.5	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Attention to Others' Thoughts:

Whether a person is a student or an employee or an entrepreneur, dressing up well is considered as a personality trait. While some care for what others think of their appearance, some do not care for what others think. Out of the total respondents, 53.5% of the respondents care for what others think of their appearance and dressing sense.

Table (IX): Care for Others' Thoughts

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	107	53.5	53.5	53.5
	No	93	46.5	46.5	100.0
	Total	**200**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Influence of People:

Most of the shopping activities, especially when it comes to apparels are carried out with the company of someone or a group. The person, who accompanies us for shopping may interfere or have impact on our purchase decision. It depends on the strength of our relationship with that person and our acceptability. Keeping this idea as a reference, the relationship between the people who accompanies the shopping and the most of the items in shopping carts can be test with the following hypotheses.

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the person accompanying during shopping and the type of brand of apparels in the shopping cart.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between the person accompanying during shopping and the type of brand of apparels in the shopping cart.

In order to test this hypothesis, we need to do a cross tabulation and carry out the Chi-Square test for association. The output of this test is shown below.

### Table (X): Accompanied By * Cart Items Cross-tabulation

Count

		Cart Items		Total
		Private Labels	National Brands	
Accompanied By	Family	26	34	60
	Friends	34	42	76
	Colleagues	21	29	50
	None	8	6	14
Total		**89**	**111**	**200**

Table (XI): Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.067[a]	3	.785
Likelihood Ratio	1.061	3	.787
Linear-by-Linear Association	.219	1	.640
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.23.

In the above table (XI), the significance value for Pearson Chi-Square is 0.785 which is greater than 0.05. Hence, we accept the null hypothesis and there is no significant relationship between the person accompanying during shopping and the type of brand of apparels in the shopping cart.
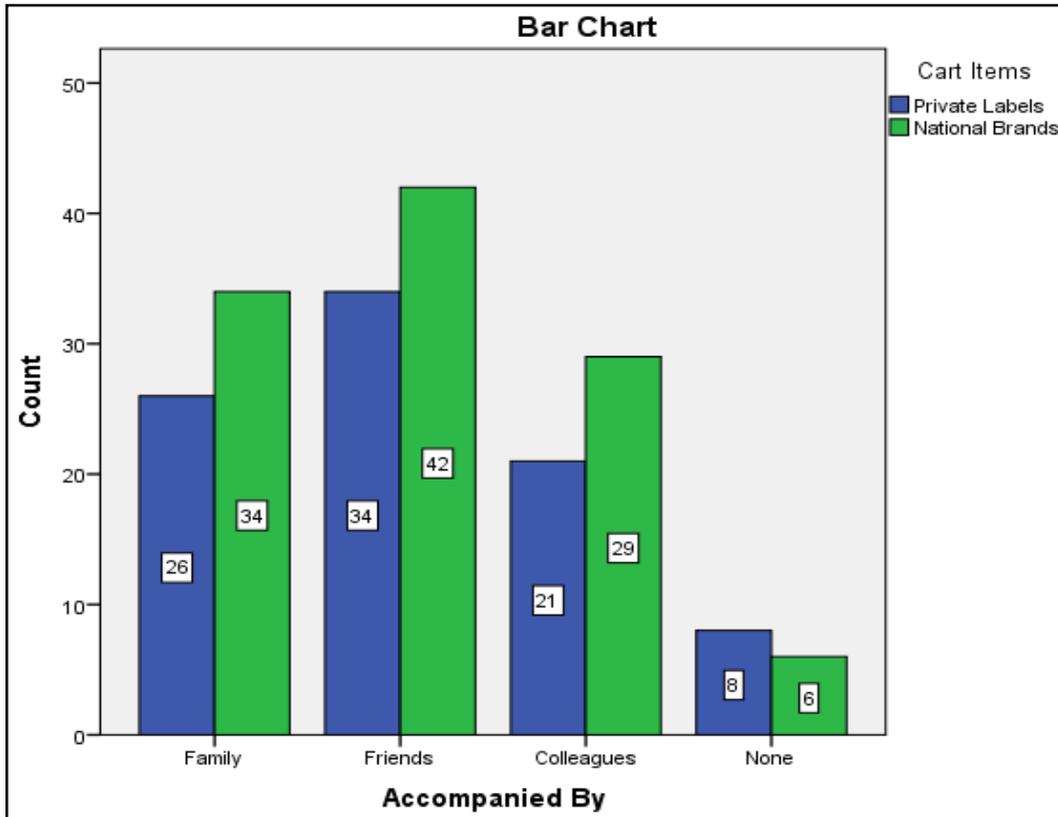
Influence of Income Level:

As said earlier, the price of the private label brand is assumed to be lower than that of the national brand apparels. If this assumption is believed by the people, the preference towards the private label brand and national brand may be influenced by the income level of the respondents. To test this relationship, the hypotheses are devised as follows:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the income level and the type of brand of apparels in the shopping cart.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between the income level and the type of brand of apparels in the shopping cart.

Table (XII): Income Per Annum * Cart Items Cross-tabulation

Count

		Cart Items		Total
		Private Labels	National Brands	
Annual Income	Less than 2.5 Lakhs	6	2	8
	Between 2.5 Lakhs and 4 Lakhs	22	14	36
	Between 4 Lakhs and 5 Lakhs	30	42	72
	Between 5 Lakhs and 6 Lakhs	23	35	58
	6 Lakhs or Above	8	18	26
Total		89	111	200

Table (XIII): Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.805[a]	4	.044
Likelihood Ratio	9.918	4	.042
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.184	1	.004
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.56.
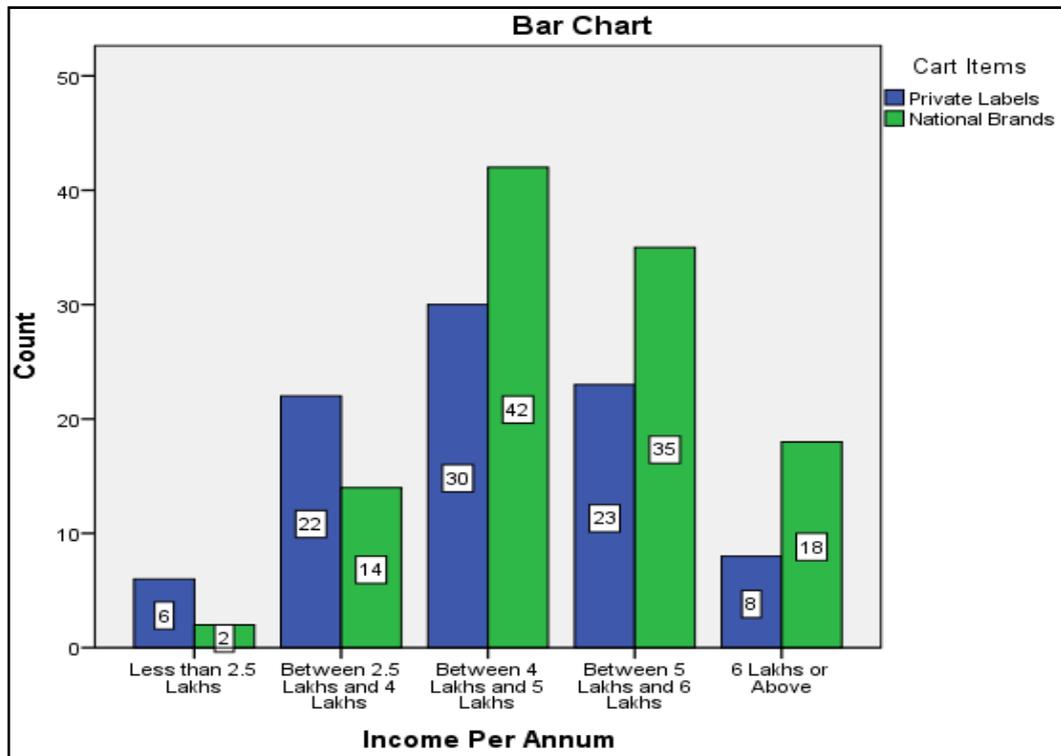
Here, the Pearson Chi-Square significance value is 0.044 which is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the income level income level of the respondents significantly influences the decision on private label vs. national brand apparels.

Brand Image Influence:
People get influenced by the brand image, if so due to several factors. Once of such factors can be the attention to others' thought about the appearance, if they believe that national brands influences the appearance and there by personality. Given below are the hypotheses to test such influence.
H_0: Giving importance to others' thoughts about appearance does not influence the attraction towards a brand.
H_1: Giving importance to others' thoughts about appearance influences the attraction towards a brand.

Table (XIV): Care for Others' Thoughts * Brand Image Influence Cross tabulation
Count

		Brand Image Influence		Total
		Yes	No	
Care for Others' Thoughts	Yes	53	54	107
	No	29	64	93
Total		82	118	200

Table (XV): Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.926[a]	1	.008		
Continuity Correction[b]	6.188	1	.013		
Likelihood Ratio	6.996	1	.008		
Fisher's Exact Test				.010	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.891	1	.009		
N of Valid Cases	200				

   a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 38.13.
   b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The Pearson Chi-Square significance in the above table(XV) is 0.008 which is less than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Out this, we could say that the respondents who care for others' thought on their appearance significantly get influenced by the brand image.

Private Label Brands as Alternatives:
With respect to private label brands we found that 59.5% of the respondents say that the quality of the private label brands is on par with their price. We also found that the 46.5% of the respondents say that the private label brands are the perfect alternative for the national brands, neglecting price criteria. It is necessary to check whether there is any relationship between customers' perception towards the price quality equivalence and their acceptance of private label brands as alternative to national brands.
H_0: There is no significant relationship between customers' perception towards the price quality equivalence and their acceptance of private label brands as alternative to national brands.
H_1: There is a significant relationship between customers' perception towards the price quality equivalence and their acceptance of private label brands as alternative to national brands.

Table (XVI): Price Quality Equivalence * Private Label - Alternative for Brand Cross tabulation

Count

		Private Label - Alternative for National Brand		Total
		Yes	No	
Price Quality Equivalence	Yes	77	42	119
	No	16	65	81
Total		93	107	200

Table (XVII): Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.148[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	37.362	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	41.249	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	38.952	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	200				

  a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 37.67.
  b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

In this test, the significance value 0 which is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that there is a significant relationship between customers' perception towards the price quality equivalence and their acceptance of private label brands as alternative to national brands.

In other words, the respondents, who say the quality of the private label brands is on par with their price, believe that the private label brands are the perfect alternative for the national brands. On the other hand, the respondents, who say the quality of the private label brands is not on par with their price, do not think that the private label brands are alternative for the national brands.

PRICE AND QUALITY PERCEPTION:

Price and Quality are the major factors that determine the customers' preference towards the private label brands and national brands. The private label brands may have certain competitive edge when compared to national brand, which is the reason why most of the apparel retailers have their own private labels. Assessing the satisfaction level of the customers with respect to the price and the quality of the private label brand may help in devising the strategy and improving the store loyalty. Also, it is important to check whether the people who are satisfied with the price of the private label brands are also satisfied with the quality of the private label brands. This will enumerate the equilibrium between price and quality of the private label brands.

H_0: There is no significant correlation between the level of satisfaction with price of private labels and the level of satisfaction with price of quality label brands.

H_1: There is a significant correlation between the level of satisfaction with price of private labels and the level of satisfaction with price of quality label brands.

Table (XVIII): Correlations

			Satisfaction with Price of Private Labels	Satisfaction with Quality of Private Labels
Spearman's rho	Satisfaction with Price of Private Labels	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.576[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	200	200
	Satisfaction with Quality of Private Labels	Correlation Coefficient	.576[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Spearman's correlation coefficient is 0.576 and the significance value is 0 which is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a moderate positive correlation between the level of satisfaction with price of private labels and the level of satisfaction with price of quality label brands.

Gender and Satisfaction Level:

We could witness certain brands which are gender specific. At the same time a store can have its own private gender specific brands. It is necessary test the overall satisfaction with the private label brands vary with gender. This can be done using Mann-Whitney U test. The hypotheses for this test are as follows:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between gender and the level of overall satisfaction with the private label brand.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between gender and the level of overall satisfaction with the private label brand.

Table (XIX): Ranks

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Overall Satisfaction with Private Label Brands	Male	118	98.71	11648.00
	Female	82	103.07	8452.00
	Total	**200**		

Table (XX): Test Statistics[a]

	Overall Satisfaction with Private Label
Mann-Whitney U	4627.000
Wilcoxon W	11648.000
Z	-.539
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.590

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

The significance value of Mann-Whitney U test is 0.59 which is greater than 0.05. Hence we accept null hypothesis and there is no significant relationship between gender and the level of overall satisfaction with the private label brand.

Purchase Decision Factors:
The ultimate objective of any brand, either private label brand or national brand is to incept a purchase decision in customers' minds. The purchase decision is influenced by various factors which can be tangible and intangible. The most common factors are price, quality, design/cut, reliability and comfort. The respondents have ranked these factors from 1 to 5 based on the amount of influence each has on their purchase decision, 1 being highly influential factor and 5 being least influential factor. The below tables show the average rankings of these factors and the Kendall's coefficient of concordance of the ranks.

Table (XXI): Ranks

	Mean Rank
Decision Factor - Quality	1.27
Decision Factor - Design/Cut	2.26
Decision Factor - Comfort	3.51
Decision Factor - Price	3.62
Decision Factor - Reliability	4.35

Table (XXII): Test Statistics

N	200
Kendall's W[a]	.608
Chi-Square	486.011
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

In the above table, Kendall's coefficient of concordance is .608 and the significance level is 0. It means that the respondents agree with each other to a reasonable extent in terms of ranking the decision factors.

Store Loyalty:

The store loyalty can be measure in different forms. Once of the form is the customers' intention to recommend the store and the private label corresponding to a particular store. The store loyalty is influence by several factors such as customers' shopping experience, satisfaction with the previous purchases, etc. Once the customer becomes loyal to a particular store, they may take additional efforts such as time, distance etc, in order to make a purchase in the same store. The relationship between customers' preference to purchase the familiar store and the willingness to take additional efforts to purchase in the familiar store is tested below.

H_0: There is no significant correlation between customers' preference to purchase the familiar store and the willingness to take additional efforts to purchase in the familiar store.

H_1: There is a significant correlation between customers' preference to purchase the familiar store and the willingness to take additional efforts to purchase in the familiar store.

Table (XXIII): Correlations

			Prefers Familiar Store/Chain	Takes Effort to Shop at Familiar Store/Chain
Spearman's rho	Prefers Familiar Store/Chain	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.921[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	200	200
	Takes Effort to Shop at Familiar Store/Chain	Correlation Coefficient	.921[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Spearman's correlation coefficient in the table (XXIII) is 0.921 and the significance value is 0 which is less than 0.05. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a highly positive correlation between customers' preference to purchase the familiar store and the willingness to take additional efforts to purchase in the familiar store

The store loyalty doesn't end in purchasing the products in the same store alone. It also includes the intention of the customers to recommend the store to others. Assuming the customers' satisfaction level with the private label brands of a particular store influences the store loyalty, the hypothesis is framed as below.

H_0: There is no significant correlation between the level of overall satisfaction with theprivate label brand and the intention to recommend the brand/store to others.

H_1: There is a significant correlation between the level of overall satisfaction with theprivate label brand and the intention to recommend the brand/store to others.

Table (XXIV): Correlations

			Overall Satisfaction with Private Label	Recommends Others
Spearman's rho	Overall Satisfaction with Private Label	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.695[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	200	200
	Recommends Others	Correlation Coefficient	.695[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In this test, the Spearman's correlation coefficient is 0.695 and the significance value is 0 which is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a positive correlation between the overall satisfaction level with the private label brand and the customers' intention to recommend the brand or store to others

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

The repeated purchase of certain brands is an indicator of the satisfaction level of the customers and the store loyalty. While 44% of the respondents do not go for the same brand repeatedly, 27% purchase the private label and 29% purchase the national brands repeatedly. The intentional repeated purchase of the apparel brands by the consumers is approximately equal in terms of both private label brands and national brands. This shows that the customers get themselves attracted to the apparels irrespective of whether private label brands or national brand, provided the products fulfils consumers' expectations.

This study reveals that the customers give importance to the intrinsic value of the apparels, whether it is private label brand or national brand. The customers are able to assess value for money spent on private label brands in terms of price quality equivalence and 59.5% of the customers believe that the quality of the private label brand apparels is on par with their price and 46.5% customers feel that the private label brand can be a perfect alternative for the national brands. The difference of 13% between these two statements reveals that the portion of customers still feel that there are some other factors which differentiate the national brands from the private label brands. The customers, who are saying the quality of the private label brands is on par with their price, strongly believe that the private label brands are the perfect alternative for the national brands. At the same time, the customers who say the quality of the private label brands is not on par with their price, do not consider the private label brands as alternative for the national brands.

The customers' attitude towards the private label brands and national brands is driven by the attention that they get from others. Some may think that it is important to get noticed by others and their thoughts about them are influence by the brand of apparels they wear. In this study, 53.5% of the customers give importance to the thoughts of their friends, family and colleagues and strangers about their appearance.

Some people consider shopping as a way to spend time with friends and family. Almost all the shopping activity is carried out with the company of friends or family or colleagues. The study shows that the preference of customers towards private label brands and national brands can be influenced by the person who accompanied during the shopping activity. However, this influence cannot be differentiated based of the type of company. In other words, the different types of relationship with person accompanying during shopping may equally influence the preference towards private label brand and national brand.

The review suggests that the customers have overcome the thought of private label brands having lesser prices compared to the national brands. However, the study reveals that the preference towards the private label brands and national brands is influenced by the income level of the customers. We couldn't confirm whether the price alone is considered by the customers of different economic segments. However, it can be inferred that people with high economic status consider the national brands to project the economic status positively.

While there are many factors on which the customers can get satisfied on using the private label apparels, the two main factors are quality and price. The retailers need to cope up with the expectations of the customers in terms of both price perspective and quality perspective. This study shows that the satisfaction level of the customers with the price of the private label brands are positively correlated with the satisfaction level with the quality of the private label brands. Even though the correlation cannot be said highly positive, we could say that it is moderately enough to consider the satisfaction levels in both perspectives move together. This makes clear that the customers are not forced to compromise the quality to get lower prices or to compromise on price to get higher quality. This is a good sign that the private label brands have

enough potential to compete with the national brands. It is also found that the gender of the customers doesn't play any prominent role in the satisfaction level on the private label brands.

The purchase decision of the customers is influenced by both tangible factors and intangible factors. The customers give importance to the purchase decision factors Quality, Design/Cut, Comfort, Price and Reliability. It is noted that the quality of the apparel is the top priority factor which influences the purchase decision and is followed by the design/cut which also includes the availability of choices. The reliability is the least influential factor which comes next to the price. From this we could infer that the customers give more importance to quality and design attributes of the apparels than the price of the apparels.

There are several aspects which could be evaluated to measure the store loyalty. In this study, the store loyalty is measured in terms of customers' preference to purchase the apparels from the familiar store; willingness to take additional efforts to shop in the preferred store and intention to recommends the preferred brand or store to friends, family, colleagues, etc. The study reveals that the customers who prefer to purchase the private label brands from the familiar store, with which they are satisfied, are willing to take additional efforts to carry out the purchases. These additional efforts can be in terms of time required to be spent, the distance need to be travelled, etc.

When it comes to word of mouth, people tend to recommend their favorite brands or stores to their family, friends and colleagues. This intention of the customers is mainly based on the previous purchase activities of the customers. This study shows that the customers' intention to recommend their favorite stores is positively and moderately influenced by the overall satisfaction level of the customers with the private label brands. The absence of high influence may be due to other store related factors, rather than product related factors. In other words, the customers' overall satisfaction level with the private label brand is one of the factors which influence the willingness to recommend the store to others.

CONCLUSION:

The main objective of this study was to understand the customers' perception towards the private label brands. The customers' perception with respect to private label brands has been studied in terms of price, quality and we could infer the relationship between these factors and their impact on the satisfaction level of the customers. The role of brand image in influencing the customer's preference towards the private label brands has also been analyzed. We could also witness that the type of relationship with the person with which whom the customers carry out the shopping activities doesn't have any specific influence on the preference towards the private label brands. However, the income level of the customers has certain impact over the customers' preference towards private label brands. We could also see how the customers' perception towards the price quality equivalence of the private label brands have influence on considering the private label brands as alternative to national brands. The customers' satisfaction level with respect to the price of the private label brands are found to be positively correlated with the satisfaction level with respect to the quality of the private label brands and the gender doesn't have any influence over the satisfaction level with private label brands. We have also found the rank orders at which the customers' decision factors influence the purchase decision. Finally, we found that the customers who get satisfied with the private label brand are moderately willing to recommend the retailer to their friends, family and colleagues.

This study was carried out with the sample data collected from customers of selected retailers in Chennai and not all the retailers in the city. Also, any implication out of this study would be viable for the retailers in Chennai city only. The study didn't analyze the individual quality attributes of the apparels and the researchers which want to conduct further study are advised to identify the different quality attributes while focusing on the customers' satisfaction on quality of private label brands. In addition, the analysis on store loyalty didn't include the in store factors such as visual merchandising, etc. as the ultimate aim of this study was to find out the impact of private label brands on store loyalty.

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