

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALING ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTIONS OF CRICKET BALL BRANDS AMONG CRICKET PLAYERS

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ABSTRACT

Creating the brand perceptions in the minds of consumers is one of the most important things in market research that can be done by using brand positioning techniques. Over the years brand positioning is regarded as a weapon for brand implementation in competitive markets. The aim of this study is to explore the positions of six Cricket ball brands (such as Sanspareils Greenlands (SG) League, Sanspareils Greenlands (SG) club, Sareen Sports (SS) League Special, Kimati, Stanford Yorker, Khanna Samrat) that exist in the Indian market on a two dimensional perceptual map in order to reveal the proximities between these brands on the map which will represent how similarly and how different these brands are perceived when compared with each other. Twenty male Cricketers from cricket match practice group of LNIPE, Gwalior were asked to give their preferences of one cricket ball brand over another on 8-point scale. The results of this study indicated that two most important dimensions that are effective on consumer evaluations of Cricket ball brands are found to be durability and price. The map also presents the market opportunities for new entrants and for those brands to be repositioned.

Key Words: Brand Positioning, Cricket ball, Perceptual Mapping and Cricketers

INTRODUCTION:

Brand positioning refers to the decision and activities intended to create and maintain a certain concept of the firm's products in the customers mind (Ferrel, 1997). Positioning is developing a specific marketing makes to influence potential customers overall perception of a brand, product line, or organization in general. Positioning map develops understanding of how the relative strength and weaknesses of different product are perceived by buyers. It builds knowledge about the similarities and dissimilarities between competing products. It assists the process of re-positioning of existing products and the positioning of new products (Kumar and Srivastava 2013). Positioning map is an important tool in development and tracking of

promotional strategy. It enables manager to identify gaps and opportunities in the market and allows monitoring of effects of past marketing communications (Arora, 2006).

According to Gwin and Gwin (2003), in developing a positioning strategy, the marketer must consider the target market, how the product is different or better than competitors, the value of this difference to the target market and the ability to demonstrate or communicate this difference to the target market. Understanding the consumer behavior and strategically positioning the brand in a way to overcome the competition and set a relation with the target market via differentiation is the matter of priority in terms of strategic decisions. Positioning has been provided as the weapon in the competition for years. Through positioning brands try to build a sustainable competitive advantage via product attributes in the mind of the consumer.

Brands today need to find a reason to be in the Sports arena and create share-worthy content which gets consumers involved. In sport like cricket especially in India, there is a huge competition among the brands. There is a kind of race among the brands and all of them wants there product to be used by the players, not only in the club level but also in the international level.

Multidimensional scaling is a technique for exploring similarities or preferences among objects. It is a technique that creates a map, displaying the relative positions of a number of objects, given only a table of the distances between them. These objects can be products, organizations, brands, outlets, etc. In this technique, similarities or preference of the objects are measured on some dimension, and accordingly the objects are positioned in the multidimensional space for understanding the brand positioning. Through multidimensional technique, a researcher can get an idea about the respondent's perceived relative image of a set of objects. The multidimensional scaling is also known as perceptual mapping. In this technique, the consumer judgments of overall similarity or preferences get transformed into distances represented in multidimensional space (Verma, 2013)

This multivariate analysis is used widely in marketing for positioning of products and brands. This concept helps in giving a graphical representation to the position of the products or brands in the market. The study helps to understand the applications of this concept by placing the data of different brand of cricket balls in perceptual map and also to compare them. The

study analyses the concept of multidimensional scaling and the current brand positioning of cricket balls among inter-varsity level cricketers. And also gives a SPSS multidimensional scaling output of the positioning of different cricket ball brands in club. The research study can be used as a stepping stone for further research in this area.

The objective of the study was to identify unrecognized dimensions affecting the consumer (cricketers) purchasing behavior and to find out the relative position of different brands of Cricket ball in respect of customer perception.

METHODOLOGY:

Selection of the subjects

Twenty male Cricketers of LNIPE, Gwalior from the cricket match practice group were selected as the subject for the present study. The subjects were selected by using convenience sampling. Their age ranged from 18 to 28 years.

Selection of the variables

The following six brands of the Cricket Ball were selected for the study. They are:

- SanspareilsGreenlands (SG) League
- SanspareilsGreenlands (SG) club
- Sareen Sports (SS) Yorker
- Kimati
- Stanford(Yorker)
- Khanna (Samrat)

Data Collection

The participants were asked to rate 6 cricket ball brands that are most commonly used in Indian market by showing the cards bearing the name of a pair of supplements. All possible pair of supplements were shown, and the cricketers were asked to rate their preferences of one cricket ball over other on an 8-point scale. If the athletes perceived that the two supplements were

completely dissimilar, a score of 8 was given, and if the two supplements were exactly similar, a score of 0 was given.

Statistical Analysis

Multidimensional scaling analysis was used to investigate unrecognized dimensions and position of different brands of Cricket ball in respect of customer perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The perceptual map that is produced as a result of the multidimensional scaling analysis of six cricket ball brands is shown in Figure 1. This Figure shows the dispersion of these dimensions on a two-dimensional space map. The stress value obtained is found to be as .02971 and R^2 value of the model is .99508. RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress is used as a criterion to evaluate the model during estimation and the final solution of the model. $S1 = 0$ Perfect fit between the model and the data. An additional measure of goodness of fit is the squared correlation coefficient (RSQ) between actual distance and the fitted distance. An RSQ value of 1 indicates a perfect fit between the data and the model.

Table 1: Stimulus Coordinates

Sr.No.	Brands	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
1.	SG Club	1.3934	-.0441
2.	SF Yorker	-.9232	-.4654
3.	SS League	-.0011	.6480
4.	Kimati	.5946	-.5678
5.	Khanna	-2.3706	-.2712
6.	SG League	1.3069	.7005

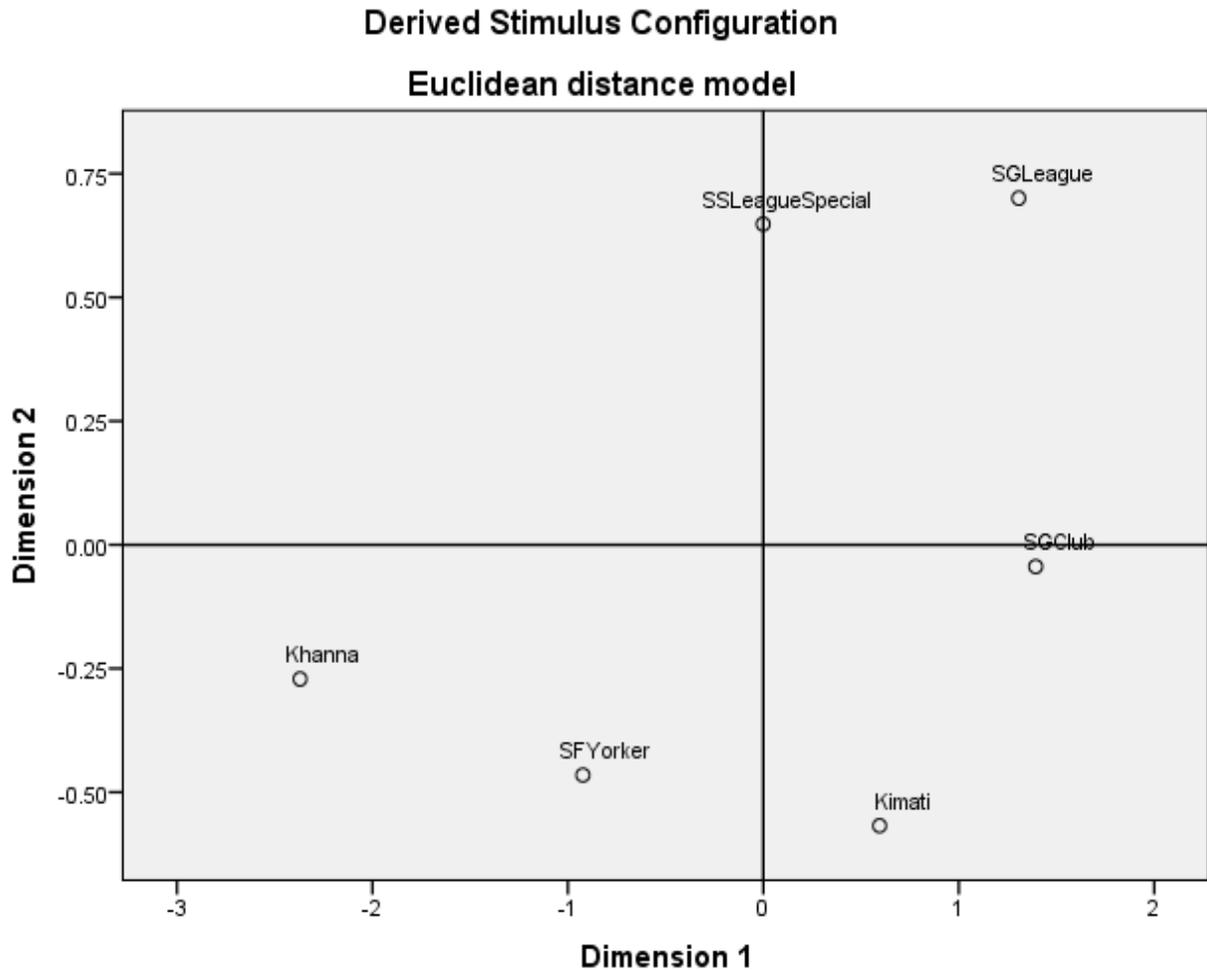


Figure 1: The Perceptual Map Illustrating the Positions of Six Cricket ball Brands

The consumers get attracted by the brands possessing special characteristics in product categories. They use the brands of their choices and refer to others for use. Brand positioning is a relative concept; it is conceptualized with comparative assessment of a brand with others. The key idea in positioning the brand categories lies in identifying the uniqueness in the product (Aaker, David, Batra and Myers, 1992).

For the purpose of knowing the positions of different cricket ball brands and to see the gap between them, perceptual map was produced as a result of the multidimensional scaling analysis. The distances between the brands show how similarly those brands are perceived by consumers. Besides the proximities and dimensions; via the gaps on them, maps also present the market

opportunities for new entrants and for those brands to be repositioned (Arslan, Müge, Yalçın and Çakır, 2001). On the basis of the results on the perceptual map (above) of cricket ball brand positioning, the researcher decided to classify the name of the dimensions as Price for Dimension 1 and Durability (in terms of Shape, Wear and tear of the ball) for Dimension 2. As these names for each dimension, correctly explains the above perceptual map.

In this perceptual map, the customer perceptions of various Cricket ball brands on the two dimensions of brand durability and price can be seen. The brands such as SG League and SS League Specialare perceived to be similar in dimension 1 (i.e. Price) and it is located at the upper side of the map. In case of Durability i.e. Dimension 2, SG Club followed by SG League is found to be more durable. Kimati followed by SF Yorker and Khanna found to be cheapest as compare to other brands and it is located at the lower side of the map.

CONCLUSION

The dimensions that can affect the consumer's decision in relation to purchase of Cricket ball of different brands, on the basis of the results of the study from the selected samples, the two dimensions that best suits to the results of the study were brand durability and price. Companies that aim to be successful in this market may primarily work on building durability of the cricket ball (i.e. Shape of the ball, Wear and Tear) and providing a reasonable price and offers that satisfies the customers.

As for the 6 brands included in this study, SG Club, SG League, Kimati and SS League Special seem to be positively perceived in terms of durability whereas SF Yorker and Khanna Samrat have a relatively negative position as compare to the others. On the other dimension (brand price) SG League and SS league special seem to be positively perceived as compared to SG Club, Khanna, SF, Kimati. Both the brands of SG (SG Club and SG League) are found to be similar on Dimension 2 (i.e. Durability).

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