

## **Role of In-Store Cues in Forming Purchase Intentions Towards Private Labels**

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### **Abstract**

The present study uses a systematic review for assessing the effectiveness of in-store cues in the light of behavior of consumers towards private label. In order to examine in-store components and identify if they have an impact on consumer behavior when it comes to the purchase of private label, various research publications were analysed. According to prior research, in-store cues assist customers in forming their behavior, such as, a customer thinks a store has a better store image and high-quality products, they are more likely to purchase private brands.

**Keywords:** Private Label, Private label in Indian Context, Consumer Behavior, In-Store Cues.

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## **Introduction**

Because of increased rivalry, retailers are now being required to implement some competitive strategies in order to differentiate their products from those of other retailers (Vo *et al.*, 2015). A branding process is put into place in order to distinguish their items from other goods that are available and to keep the market competitive (Wood, 2000). According to Keller (2007), a brand may be refer to anything that can be utilised to differentiate a product or service in contrast to those of rivals. This includes labels, slogans, logos, sign, designs, and even combination of each of these elements.

One can distinguish between two types of brands: national brand and private label as suggested by Keller, 2007. Product with a national brand is representing that the producer itself has created, promoted, and sold that product (Amrouche & Zaccour, 2007). However, certain merchants produce and market goods exclusively through their own stores under their own brands. These products are included in the list of private labels (Herstein and Jaffe, 2007; Vo *et al.*, 2015). Retailer Brands, Private Labels, Wholesale Brands, Own Brands, and Distributor's Brand are some of the phrases used to describe private labels that contain these products (Moore, 1995). These brands are owned by and under the ownership of a specific retailer (Baltas, 1997; Burt, 2000; Herstein and Jaffe, 2007). Private label brands, as defined by Sprott and Shimp (2004), are products which are sold in retail outlets and contain the brand name that has been developed by the retailer. According to Dodd *et al.* (2003) and Beneke (2010), the retailer determines the brand's title and assigns production to another entity, i.e. the businesses that manufacture it.

In the earlier times, products were sold using a substandard positioning plan and presented in unattractive packaging since retailers weren't aware of the benefits of private labels over national brands (Fong *et al.*, 2015). These products were packaged in white colour packages using black font (Jaafar *et al.*, 2012). Retailers adopted price reduction tactics for luring budget-conscious customers (Richardson *et al.*, 1996). According to Richardson *et al.* (1994), despite lower pricing, private label retailers have the dilemma that consumers prefer national brands over private labels because consumers perceive lower priced products to be of poorer quality (Fugate 1986). As a key differentiation, these firms' lower prices make them "value for money" when compared to national brands (Richardson *et al.*, 1996). Whereas currently, retailers are focusing on enhancing the quality and packaging of their products in order to turn their private label products into ideal brands (Kumar, 2007; Raju *et al.*, 1995). Research done by Verhoef *et al.* (2002) and Labeaga *et al.* (2007) indicates that customer opinion of private labels keeps changing; more buyers purchase as well as approve the private brands due to an enhanced level of quality. From the perspective of

the consumer, packaging is equally important since it captures their attention (Ampuero and villa, 2006). Because it helps consumers by providing a glimpse of quality and product information, it serves as a "Silent Salesperson." As a result of increased private label development on a global scale and their introduction to the market in a number of product categories, national brand manufacturers are now attracted towards private label products (Fong *et al.*, 2015). Overall success of private labels depends on how customers perceive them.

Different factors have contributed to the growth of retail sector in India, among which the changing lifestyles of the consumers is a prominent factor. The expansion of organized retail sector has paved the way for the growing dominance of private labels (Singh, 2021). Development of these brands and consumers' liking of these in consumption behavior is being studied as a new phenomenon (Tondon, 2020). Almost all the organized retailers in India offer private labels in a variety of product categories (Pangriya, 2018).

***Private Label in India Context***

Some of the largest Indian retailers that have launched their own private labels are The Aditya Birla Group, Bharti Retail, Niligiris, Megamarts, Shoppers Stop, Pantaloon Retail India Limited, and Godrej. The most well-known Indian retailers and their private label brands are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1- Major Indian retailers and their private brands**

<b>Retailers</b>	<b>Private Labels Brands and their Product Category</b>
Bharti Retail and Walmart	Great Value (tea, wheat flour, rice), Kid Connection (children toys, shoes and clothing), Mainstays (kitchen utensil, home decor).
Aditya Birla Group	More (grocery), Feasters (jam, honey, cookies, ketchup), 110% (dishwash, detergents), Enriche (shampoos, soaps), Fresh-O-Dent (toothpastes, toothbrushes).
D Mart	D Mart, D Mart Minimax, D Mart Premia, D Homes, Dutch Harbour
Vishal Mega Mart	Vneed brand (salt, toothbrush), Brink, Vivela (Apparel)
Pantaloons	Tasty Treat (Snacks), Alto Moda, Honey, Akkriti (Apparel), KORYO (Electronics products), Care Mate (Baby diapers segment).

(Source: Hariprakash, 2011 and Author's own research)

***Preference for private brands versus national brands in India in 2021***

According to a study conducted by Statista Research Department (2021), consumers prefer private label in comparison to national brands. The national brand still dominates the various product categories. However,

the share of private label remains low but it is significant and growing. The study highlights that share of private label in beverage category (11%), personal care (8%), food (12%) and household goods (10%)

In the Indian retail sector, private labels had a minor segment of the market, but their recent growth has given them new relevance. Previous private label research indicates that a wide range of variables impact the performance of private brands. According to Fong *et al.* (2015), quality is the primary consideration that affects the decision to buy private brands. Sheinin *et al.* (2003) look into how customers perceive store brands in relation to store image. Research also looked at consumer and product-level factors. The product level factor examines risk associated with the product (Semejin *et al.*, 2004) and category of the product (DelVecchio, 2001). External components (Batra and Sinha, 2000) as well as price consciousness of consumers (Jin and Suh, 2005; Burger and Schott, 1972) are investigated at the consumer level. In addition to these, several studies on a range of determinants that affect the propensity to buy private label products have been carried out by researchers. This study, however, focuses on the in-store components that encourage customers to choose a particular product from stores and help them to make a decision to purchase. However, relatively little research has been undertaken in the Indian context on how in-store components influence the perception of consumers towards private labels. Thus, the study's main objective is to carry out an in-depth examination of the relevant literature and look into the factors which influence the choices consumers make to purchase private-label products.

### **Research Methodology**

This study aims to undertake a thorough examination of the literature and examine those variables which influence customer preference when choosing private-label products. In order to do this, a number of academic papers were examined utilising a number of databases, including Emerald Insight, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Service, Psychology & Marketing, European Journal of Management and Business Economics, Journal of Retailing, etc. The review included research publications published from 1972 to 2022. The study's relevance was evaluated using 64 papers in total. Search terms such as "promotional influence on private label buying," "influence of both intrinsic and extrinsic elements on private label purchase," "cue theory and private label," "impact of store related factors on consumer perception," etc. were used to identify the research articles. Several techniques and statistical methods were implemented in the studies, including Analysis of

Variance (ANOVA), Regression, Chi- Square test, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

## **Theoretical Background**

### ***Cue Utilization Theory***

Cue utilisation theory provides a compelling framework for analysing consumer opinions of the quality provided by private brands. (Richardson, 1994). Cues represent facts that enable customers to draw conclusions regarding a product. (Burnkrant, 1978). Cues can be classified as extrinsic and intrinsic categories, according to Olson (1972). Extrinsic cues comprise characteristics that connect to a product but may be changed with no alteration to the product's basic appearance. Extrinsic cues include elements like price, package contents, labeling, and a store appearance. (Richardson *et al.*, 1994). Stimuli that come directly from a product itself are known as intrinsic cues. Intrinsic cues include elements like substances, flavor, smell, as well as texture. Consumers make assessments about a product's quality by considering factors that are internal as well as external. (Lee and Lou, 1996).

The confidence element as well as the prediction value are two additional factors that Olson (1972) recognizes as having an impact on the use of both internal and extrinsic cues. The prediction value expresses the degree to which the customer feels that the signal is likely to be utilised for predicting the quality of the product. The confidence value, on the other hand, reveals the level of customer confidence in the choices they make as well as effective use of the information (Helm and Mark, 2007; Yan *et al.*, 2019). In accordance with a prior study conducted by Hoch and Banegi (1993), the perception of quality and the perception of risk are the two key intrinsic factors determining purchase intention. As per previously carried out research, the intentions of consumers to buy are impacted higher by external variables compared to by intrinsic features. (Richardson, 1994). Packaging and other external indicators increase the quality of the product through modifying the consumer's risk perception (Chen and Dubinsky, 2003).

### ***In-Store Factors***

When customers decide what product to buy, they depend on a lot of information in order to form perception about those products based on a variety of cues. Due to this, customers take into account a variety of in-store factors while selecting private-label products in retail stores.

### ***Store Image***

The perception that consumers have of retailers store is known as the store image (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). According to Burt & Mavrommatis (2006), it helps in improving how customers perceive the store. It covers the most important aspects of the store, especially appearance aspect (convenience, layout, selection), as well as the social or psychological aspect (atmosphere, quality, emotions and experiential feelings). These cues enable consumers to form a perception about the retail establishment. As stated by Diallo (2012) and Bao *et al.* (2011) the name of the store, the services offered, the quality of the goods, the layout, the ease of use, the variety of products, etc. are just a few of the numerous elements that make up the store's image.

### ***Packaging***

Packaging generally refers to the container used to hold, identify, secure the safety of and simplify the movement of products (Mohebbi, 2014). It is an effective marketing approach that boosts the products sales. Packaging is important during the process of decision-making since everyone who purchases, evaluates the product's packaging prior to purchasing. Usually, consumers examine products through reviewing what's written on the packaging. (Ampuero and Vila, 2006). Packaging's main purpose is to attract customers' attention and educate consumers with respect to the benefits of the product. It also leaves a long-lasting impression on customers minds (Beneke, 2010).

According to Peters (1994), packaging represents one of the most important form of communication means for several reasons: it impacts almost every single person; its presence is there at the point of decision when a purchasing choice is made; and customers feel strongly connected to the packaging in order to obtain the essential details. Silayoi and Speece (2007) emphasise the key package components that affect customers' purchasing decisions. Packaging has both visual and informative components; the visual components relate to the color, size, shape, and graphics of the package, whereas the informative elements relate to every aspect of the product.

### ***Price***

Price is the amount of money spent by the consumer during the course of a purchase (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). It is used as an extrinsic cue that significantly influences the consumer's quality

opinions (Rao and Monroe, 1988). Economic and psychological frameworks have been employed to explore the relationship between a product's price and the decision to purchase it, showing the fact that pricing serves number of functions in this process of decision-making. From an economic standpoint, pricing is viewed as having an adverse effect on choice since more expenses have a negative impact on customers' budgets. However, looking at the psychological aspect, pricing might be viewed as a product quality signal (Lichtenstein, 1993). Price may therefore be seen as an indicator of giving something up, an indication of excellence, or both.

### ***Shelf Space***

The shelf space that retailers have in their store is one of their most precious assets (Amrouche and Zaccour, 2006). Due to its scarcity, this important resource must be effectively allocated among many different categories and brands. The distribution of shelf space influences purchases greatly. According to Brown and Lee (1996), shelf space may be considered a form of advertising that places goods at the forefront of customers' minds and usually denotes product attractiveness. Furthermore the findings of the study stated that, available space on shelves can have an effect on demand via minimizing the cost of customer search. Retailers must give greater attention to the amount of space available and allocate additional space to a particular category or brand if their objective is to boost awareness, this ultimately improves their product chances of getting bought.

### ***Promotion***

An important part of integrated advertising and marketing communications campaigns is promotion. Promotions have been split into hedonic and utilitarian promotions as stated by Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent (2000) as well as consumer franchise building (CFB) and consumer non-franchise building (non-CFB) as defined by Joseph and Sivakumaran (2011). CFB promotions involves activities which increase knowledge concerning the brand messaging and thus contribute in developing the brand (such as contests). The sole purpose of non-CFB promotions (such as incentives and reduction of price) is to result in sales quickly. Customers who get involved with hedonic promotions receive hedonic advantages like emotional sensation and personal experiences, compared to customers who engage in utilitarian promotions receive advantages that are utilitarian including functional, cognitive, etc. Retailers commonly use price-

cutting offers in order to boost store traffic and sales (Sarkar, 2015). According to Abril and Canovas (2016), a great way to raise the perceived quality of a brand is through in-store promotion, which includes samples and demonstrations.

### ***Perceived Quality of Private Labels***

Consumer factors, especially perceived quality, are significant in deciding whether to buy private label products. (Chikhalkar & Chaudhuri 2016). Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived quality of product as how well or how much better a consumer thinks a product is overall. Consumers evaluate the excellence of product by using standards of production, its performance, and product-specific qualities. (Agarwal and Teas, 2004). Thus consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by quality, which is a key factor in assessing the worth of products. (Cronin *et al.*, 2000). According to Chaniotakis *et al.* (2010), customers' perceptions of quality are taken into consideration as essential factors when making decisions about purchase, and this directly influences their intentions to buy private label products. (Porral and Lang, 2015).

### ***Purchase Intention towards Private Labels***

The choice of the consumer about whether to make a purchase is an extremely complicated one. The decision to buy something is seen as a crucial factor when customers evaluate products. It is regarded as an essential component to use in forecasting decisions regarding purchase. According to Wu *et al.* (2011), the intention to purchase refers to a consumer's potential to create a plan or be prepared to acquire a particular good or service in the near future. According to Zeithaml (1988), the decision consumers undertake to acquire a product is driven by their intention to make a purchase. Grewal *et al.* (1998) provide more information by suggesting that the purchase intention reflects the actual behaviour of the consumer while purchasing a product. The consumer's desire towards the products and possibility of making additional purchases are both reflected in their purchase intention (Midha *et al.*, 2021). Purchase decisions, however, may change according to the interaction of price, quality, and perceived value. (Grewal *et al.*, 1998). According to Kim and Jim (2001), a consumer's decision to make a purchase can be influenced by both internal impulsiveness and environmental factors. Therefore, understanding consumer behavior following their purchase allows businesses to make predictions about their forthcoming purchasing behaviour (Midha *et al.*, 2021).



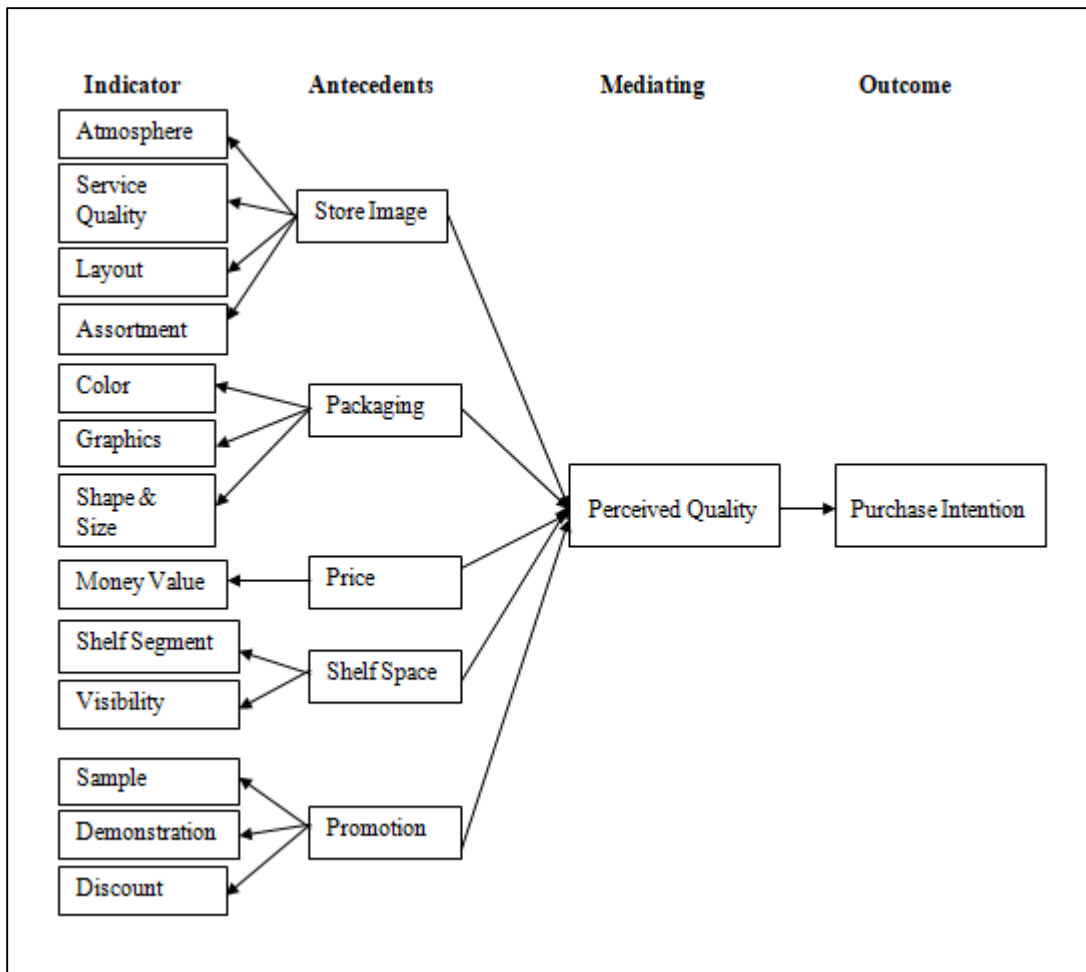
## Findings

Researchers have undertaken a number of studies to look at customer intention to purchase for private labels and their quality utilising various sorts of indicators observed in retail stores (Figure-1). Table 2 displays the findings from previously conducted studies carried out by various researchers with regard to the in-store information that assist customers in evaluating the overall quality of products as well as determining what to buy.

**Table 2- Customer Perspectives Regarding Private Label Product Based on In-Store Cues**

<b>In-Store Cue</b>	<b>Comprehensive Overview of Consumer Perspective</b>	<b>Source</b>
Store Image	<p>According to previous studies, consumers use the store's appearance associated with the retailer's store as a cue when evaluating private label products quality and deciding which product to buy.</p> <p>Customers feel that a store's product quality is higher when it has a good reputation among consumers, hence they are more likely to purchase store brands when the business's image is strong.</p> <p>The research revealed that consumers are more satisfied with a retail store's atmosphere than with other characteristics.</p>	<p>Burnkrant, 1978, Varghese, 2020</p> <p>Dodds <i>et al.</i>, 1991</p> <p>Sharma and Yadav, 2021</p>
Packaging	<p>In order to more accurately judge the quality of private label products, consumers exhibit a greater willingness to purchase goods that can be easily and rapidly assessed by examining their packaging specifications.</p> <p>Packaging can be considered as a means of communication for price differentiation to consumers. Consumers examine the pricing of various products and search for greater quality at a more affordable price based on the instructions on the packaging. In this scenario, private brands enjoy the benefit of being accessible to all consumers.</p>	<p>Batra and Sinha, 2000</p> <p>Peter and Olson, 2008</p>
Price	<p>Consumers consider two indicators for assessing how they perceive prices. First is price attractiveness, deciding if the price that is offered is attractive. The second consideration is fairness, or if the price appears reasonable when compared to those of comparable goods.</p>	<p>Janiszewski and Cunha, 2004</p> <p>Sethuraman, 1999</p>

	<p>A key factor in the growth of private label is the price difference between it and national brands.</p> <p>Retailers have concentrated on incorporating pricing to distinguish their products from the highly priced producer brands. Because, this approach has made a considerable impact on PLB's purchasing intentions.</p>	<p>Boon <i>et al.</i>, 2018;          Ndlovu and Heerala, 2022</p>
Shelf Space	<p>With shelf space, products can be promoted to consumers in a way that puts them at the forefront of their minds and usually denotes how desirable they are. Therefore, it affects customer tendency to purchase private label in both direct and indirect ways.</p>	<p>Brown and Lee, 1996          Dursuna, 2011</p>
Promotion	<p>According to a previous study on couponing strategies, price-conscious consumers are even more inclined to search for and take advantage of coupons when buying private labels.</p> <p>Promotions improve one's chances of acquiring a private label. Customers who buy private labels might assume that they are receiving higher value for a lesser price.</p>	<p>Bauner <i>et al.</i>, 2019            Abril and Canovas, 2016</p>



**Figure 1- Conceptual framework proposed from the literature review**

### **Managerial Implications**

Numerous practical implications are derived from this study's findings. That assists retailers in understanding the significance of their retail image. Consumers usually spare most of time in a store that have attractive interior design. Therefore, enhancing the store's reputation must be the main priority. By strengthening the organization's practices of the store, which assists in strengthening the perception regarding the private label and quality of products, the store's image can be improved.

Packaging supports consumers in receiving useful knowledge regarding a product, such as a product image, instructions for use, ingredient information, and so on. This enables the buyers to better comprehend the product and make a purchasing decision. The packaging quality reflects the product quality. High quality material selection and design offer credibility to the product.

Therefore, retailers should focus on improving packaging by mentioning clear details and using good quality material.

Retailers should also focus on giving value to the customer with respect to the price of the product they purchase. Value pricing is one of the essential method of pricing. This considers how valuable, high quality your products are to your customers. Retailers also make sure that products are priced appropriately.

It is important to consider where products are placed on the shelf so that customers can find them quickly. Product must be given adequate shelf space that captures the attention of buyers. It is used as a marketing strategy tool that helps the retailer in promoting a product. Because of this, it has become the retailer's obligation to maintain products properly and appropriately organised in accordance with the various product categories.

An incentive for consumers to make additional purchases is a promotional tactic. This strategy includes discount on products besides this it also includes method like grouping items, extra services or gifts to attract customers. Retailers can therefore occasionally concentrate on several forms of promotions, including rewards that are both monetary and non-monetary, with the goal to attract more consumers within the store.

## **Conclusion**

By reviewing existing work, various in-store cues were identified that help consumers to make purchase decision in stores. The current study provides insight into consumer behavior toward private label buying using in-store cues. This research includes aspects such as store image, packaging, price, shelf space, and promotion. The study's findings indicate that these cues positively affect consumers' perceptions on product quality and have an impact on their purchasing decisions. The study's findings also valuable to retailers in devising strategies to make their products more acceptable in market.

The scope of the present research was limited to examining the in-store cues that affect consumers' assessments of private label quality and decision-making processes. Some of these factors have already been evaluated, but not all of them. The perceived quality effect as a mediator involving in-store cue with private label purchasing is not well supported. So, more research on in-store elements can be undertaken to see if they assist consumers to create their opinions of private label. Furthermore, more research is required to compare in-store cues of different retail stores to

evaluate how these in-store cues assist customers to make decision regarding purchase. In addition to this, relationship between various products categories should also be examined, which provide more avenues to future research.

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