

**COMPRENDRE LES EFFETS DE L'IMAGE PRIX DE LA MARQUE DE
DISTRIBUTEUR A L'INTERNATIONAL : UNE ETUDE EMPIRIQUE**

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Résumé :

Les marques de distributeurs (MDD) sont désormais bien établies dans la distribution dans de nombreux pays et dans différentes catégories de produits. L'objectif de cette recherche est de comprendre comment les dimensions de l'image prix de la MDD (prix relatif, bénéfice perçu et valeur perçue) et le risque perçu (fonctionnel et financier) affectent l'attitude et l'intention d'achat des MDD dans différents contextes culturels. Nous avons utilisé les modèles d'équations structurelles sur un échantillon international ($N_{\text{Colombie}} = 390$; $N_{\text{France}} = 399$) pour tester le modèle de recherche. Les résultats montrent que l'image prix de la MDD affecte positivement l'attitude envers la MDD. Par ailleurs, deux des trois dimensions de l'image prix des MDD (à l'exception de la valeur perçue) impactent négativement le risque perçu envers les MDD. Cependant, l'effet du risque perçu sur l'attitude envers les MDD est plus fort en France qu'en Colombie. Nous tirons plusieurs implications de ces résultats.

Mots-clés :

Marque de distributeur, Image prix, Attitude, Culture,

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF STORE BRAND PRICE IMAGE ACROSS INTERNATIONAL MARKETS – AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

Abstract:

Store brands (SB) are now increasingly offered in the retail sector in many countries and in different product categories. The aim of this research is to understand how store brand price image factors (relative price, perceived benefit and perceived value) and perceived risk (functional and financial) both affect SB attitude and SB purchase intention in different cultural contexts. We used structural modeling on a sample of 789 respondents ($N_{\text{Colombia}} = 390$; $N_{\text{France}} = 399$) to test the research model. Results show that SB price image affects positively SB attitude. Furthermore, two of the three dimensions of SB price image (with the exception of perceived value) negatively impact the perceived risk. However, the effect of perceived risk on attitude is stronger in France than in Colombia. We derive several implications from these findings.

Keywords:

Store brand, Price image, Attitude, Culture

Managerial summary

Store brands (SB) are now increasingly offered in the retail sector in many countries and in different product categories. They are now well established in developed countries such as France, the UK, etc. Thanks to their competitive price, they are presented with important opportunities in emerging countries where customers have gained greater experience with modern retail products over the last decade.

However, existing studies do not allow understand how SB price image affects attitude and purchase behavior in developed and emerging countries. Therefore, the aim of this research is to understand how store brand price image factors (relative price, perceived benefit and perceived value) and perceived risk (functional and financial) both affect SB attitude and SB purchase intention in different cultural contexts. Thus, this research contributes to the literature in two main ways. First, it shows how SB price image reduces risk perception while improving SB attitude or purchase intention. Second, it investigates how the cultural context affects the relationship between SB risk perception, SB attitude and SB purchase intention between a developed and an emerging country.

Our results show the effect of store brand relative price, store brand perceived benefit and store brand perceived value on consumer attitude toward store brands within the Colombian and French contexts. It is interesting to note that the better the SB price image is, the better the attitude toward that store brand. In addition, we found that two of the three dimensions of SB price image (with the exception of perceived value) negatively impact the perceived risk. These results are consistent with the signaling theory as the components of SB price image help consumers to build their attitude and contribute to reducing risk perception. Another interesting result concerns the role of cultural context. While perceived risk negatively affects attitude toward SB in the general model, we found that this relation is not significant in the emerging country context, i.e., Colombian consumers do not consider the perception of risk when forming their attitude toward SB. This is the opposite in France (developed country) in which this negative influence is very strong. Risk perception seems to be a very important antecedent of attitude in developed country. This research contributes to better understand the mechanism of consumer behavior regarding store brands.

Understanding the effects of store brand price image across international markets: An empirical investigation

Introduction

Store brands (SB) are now increasingly offered in the retail sector in many countries and in different product categories. It refers to “*products that belong to a retail chain, carry the chain’s name and are offered exclusively in the retail chain’s outlets, in contrast to national brands*” (Diallo and Siqueira, 2017, p.537). These brands are now well established in developed countries such as France, the UK, etc. Thanks to their competitive price, they are presented with important opportunities in emerging countries where customers have gained greater experience with modern retail products over the last decade. Prior studies have investigated different issues related to store brands in developed or emerging countries such as: price consciousness (Jin and Suh, 2005), differences between store brands and national brands (Cheng et al., 2007), risk perception (Beneke et al., 2013), manufacturer name disclosure on store brand attitudes (Cho et al., 2015) and the effect of prior experience with store brands (Diallo and Siqueira, 2017). However, less research has been devoted to the effect of store brand price image with the exception of Diallo (2012). Nevertheless, it is well known that price image is a critical factor that drives customer responses (Zhang et al., 2021) and purchase behavior (Lichtenstein et al., 1993).

Prior studies have also underlined the risk perceptions and negative attitudes toward store brands in emerging markets in contrast to developed countries. Such attitudes could also explain the low market share of store brands in emerging marketing. The situation is the opposite in developed countries. A Nielsen study (2020)¹ conducted in 18 European countries shows that retailer brands' market share remains above 30% on average in all of them - with two exceptions (Italy and Turkey). Almost half of the countries have a market share of over 40%, and the majority of them have good market penetration. These different perceptions of store brands can be explained by many factors among which the local perception of foreign products particularly in emerging market (Eckhardt, 2005), the perceived risk associate with store brands (Rubio et al., 2014), or the store brand price image (Diallo, 2020).

Therefore, the aim of this research is to understand how store brand price image factors (relative price, perceived benefit and perceived value) and perceived risk (functional and financial) both affect SB attitude and SB purchase intention in different cultural contexts. Thus, this research contributes to the literature in two main ways. First, it shows how SB price image reduces risk perception while improving SB attitude or purchase intention. Second, it investigates how the cultural context affects the relationship between SB risk perception, SB attitude and SB purchase intention between a developed and an emerging country.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

We used signaling theory (Spence, 1974) to explain how store brand price image provides signals to improve attitude and purchase behavior toward store brands in emerging countries. Signaling theory specifies the conditions in which information asymmetry can be resolved and firms can convey information about an unobservable attribute (e.g., product quality, brand reputation) to customers through some observable traits (cues or signals). Thus, depending on market conditions, customers can use specific, observable traits (e.g., store brand relative price, store brand perceived value) to infer an unobservable attribute (e.g., attitude toward store brands, store brand quality). Marketing scholars apply signaling theory to help explain

¹ Study conducted for the PLMA (Word of private label) store brand’s International Yearbook 2021, available at: <https://www.plmainternational.com/fr/industry-news/private-label-today>, consulted on April 2022.

the influence of information asymmetry in a wide array of research contexts (e.g., price, quality) (Connelly et al., 2011).

Direct and indirect effects of price image

From prior studies, store price-image is defined as “*a global representation of the relative level of prices*” (Martineau, 1958; Mazurky and Jacoby, 1986; page number?). Following this definition, Diallo (2012) consider SB price-image as a global representation of the relative level of SB products prices for a given retailer. It is considered as multidimensional constructs comprising at least two dimensions (Diallo, 2012). Prior research shows that SB price image affects positively attitude toward SBs (Diallo and Siqueira, 2017) and purchase behavior (Jara and Cliquet, 2012). Thus:

H1+: SB relative price has a positive effect on attitude toward store brands.

H2+: SB perceived benefit has a positive effect on attitude toward store brands.

H3+: SB perceived value has a positive effect on attitude toward store brands.

Previous research established a significant relationship between SB price-image and SB perceived risk (DelVecchio, 2001; Liljander et al., 2009). Customers often perceive SBs as lower quality products and consequently as more risky ones (Mieres et al., 2006). Even if store brands' quality has really improved, this perception is still present in many consumers' mind. In the same vein, SB perceived risk is negatively correlated to SB attitude (Diallo and Siqueira, 2017). Thus, we state:

H4+: SB perceived risk mediates the effects of SB price image factors on attitude toward store brands.

Several studies have underlined the positive relationship between attitude and purchase behavior, including SBs (Burton et al., 1998). Therefore:

H5+: Attitude toward store brands has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Moderating effect of the cultural context

We define the cultural context as a country's specific interrelated characteristics that provide a perspective, a frame of reference for understanding individuals and/or groups and ways of knowing and being. These specific characteristics not only relate to social norms, values and consumption habits, but they also include market (institutional and socio-economical) characteristics which are not usually taken into account in most previous studies on consumer behavior in emerging countries. Based in prior studies on culture (Hofstede, 1991), France and Columbia differ significantly on different cultural dimensions (individualism/collectivism, long term orientation, etc.). Furthermore, Diallo and Siqueira (2017) showed that the relationships between SB risk perception and SB purchase behavior differ between even close geographical countries. Based on this discussion, we anticipate that:

H6a: The cultural context moderates the effect of perceived risk on attitude toward SB such as this relationship is stronger in France than in Colombia.

H6b: The cultural context moderates the effect of attitude toward SB on purchase intention such as this relationship is stronger in France than in Colombia

Appendix 2 displays the conceptual framework tested in this study.

Methodology

Sample and data collection: we chose France and Colombia as target markets for both theoretical and practical reasons (cultural differences, dynamic retail markets, SB development, etc.). Two well-known retail chains were selected in each country (Colombia: Exito and Jumbo; France: Carrefour and E.Leclerc). Consistent with our research objectives, the target population for this study was frequent shoppers. We collected 789 usable questionnaires ($N_{\text{Colombia}} = 390$; $N_{\text{France}} = 399$), using convenience sampling. The study focuses on store retail brands (SB with retailer name).

Measurements scales: SB price image dimensions were measured based on prior research (Diallo, 2012 and Burton et al., 1998). SB perceived risk was adapted from González Mieres (2006). Attitude toward SB was measured based on Diallo et al. (2015). Liljander et al. (2009) four-item scale was used to measure purchase intention. See Appendix 1 for scales.

Hypothesis and results

We used SEM the test both measurement and structural models and Amos 2021. Overall model fit indices are good ($\chi^2/\text{ddl} = 731.356/198 = 3.694$; AGFI = 0.891; RMSEA = 0.058 [.054; .063]; TLI = 0.937; CFI = 0.946). Convergent and discriminant validity are achieved using well established procedures (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Direct effects

Concerning hypotheses test, relative price has a significant and negative effect on perceived risk ($\gamma = -0.196$; $t = -3.816$; $p < 0.001$), and a positive effect on attitude ($\gamma = 0.327$; $t = 7.615$; $p < 0.001$). Likewise, perceived benefit has a significant and negative effect on perceived risk ($\gamma = -0.237$; $t = -4.762$; $p < 0.001$), and positive effect on attitude ($\gamma = 0.383$; $t = 8.937$; $p < 0.001$). In addition, perceived value has a non significant effect on perceived risk ($\gamma = 0.009$; $t = .203$; $p > 0.05$) but significant and positive on attitude ($\gamma = 0.218$; $t = 6.078$; $p < 0.001$). Perceived risk has a significant and negative effect on attitude ($\gamma = -0.149$; $t = -4.812$; $p < 0.001$). Finally, attitude has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention ($\gamma = 0.832$; $t = 17.900$; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the three dimensions of price image have a direct effect on attitude but only two of them are significantly related to perceived risk.

Indirect effects

The mediation effects were tested using the bootstrapping sampling method (Cheung and Lau, 2008). Our findings show a mediating role of perceived risk in the relationship between relative price and attitude towards store brands ($\gamma = 0.029$; [.013; .051]) and between perceived benefit and attitude ($\gamma = 0.035$; [.019; .056]). Similarly, our results also show that the relationship between perceived risk and purchase intention is mediated by attitude towards store brands ($\gamma = -0.124$; [-.171; -.077]). Also, relative price and perceived benefit are both indirectly related to purchase intention through a serial mediations (via perceived risk and attitude towards store brands, $\gamma = 0.296$; [.224; .363]; $\gamma = 0.348$; [.282; .418]; respectively). Finally, perceived value is indirectly related to purchase intention through the mediating role of attitude ($\gamma = 0.181$; [.121; .244]).

Moderation of the cultural context

We used multiple group analysis and compared coefficients between France and Colombia. Measurement invariance was tested found satisfactory. Results indicate that two of the paths differ across the groups. First, the effect of perceived risk on attitude is significantly different between France and Colombia ($\Delta\chi^2 = 37.838/1 = 37.838$, $p < .001$). Specifically, the relationship is negative in France ($\gamma = -0.306$, $t = -6.707$, $p < .001$), but not significant in

Colombia ($\gamma=.000$, $t = -.008$, $p > .05$). Second, the effect of SB attitude on SB purchase intention is significantly stronger in France ($\gamma= .918$, $t= 13.727$, $p < .001$) than in Colombia.

Theoretical Implications

Our results show the effect of store brand relative price, store brand perceived benefit and store brand perceived value on consumer attitude toward store brands within the Colombian and French contexts. It is interesting to note that the better the SB price image is, the better the attitude toward that store brand. In addition, we found that two of the three dimensions of SB price image (with the exception of perceived value) negatively impact SB perceived risk. These results are consistent with the signaling theory as the components of SB price image help consumer to build their attitude and contribute to reduce risk perception.

Another interesting result concerns the role of cultural context. While perceived risk negatively affects attitude toward SB in the general model, we found that this relation is not significant in the emerging country context, i.e., Colombian consumers do not consider the perception of risk when forming their attitude toward SB. This is the opposite in France (developed country) in which this negative influence is very strong. Risk perception seems to be a very important antecedent of attitude in a developed country. This result may relate to cultural factors (e.g. difference in long term orientation). In fact, France scores high (63) in this dimension, making it pragmatic: lower quality/ lower price equals to higher risk. In contrast, Colombia which scores low on this dimension (13), seems less pragmatic. Thus, this research contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms of SB consumption regarding store brands across cultures.

Managerial Implications

The study analyzed SBs in developed and emerging countries. It accounts for the unique characteristics of emerging countries retailing and incites researchers to question established marketing practices developed mostly within the context of developed economies. Fundamental concepts such as market segmentation, market orientation, product value and product pricing do not always fit the context of emerging markets. Latin American markets in particular introduce a unique set of consumer behaviors that at first glance can appear to be irrational and act as entry barriers to international companies. From our findings, international retailers should:

(1) Focus on price image dimensions more carefully. In fact, SB relative price and SB perceived benefit reduce SB risk perception and increase SB purchase intention simultaneously. In contrast, while SB perceived value drives positively SB attitude, it does not affect SB perceived risk. Thus, it seems that this main determinant of SB purchase behavior is no longer so important due to a growing democratization of SB product ranges.

(2) Leverage on SB attitude to increase SB sales. Indeed, the strong relationship underscored between attitude and purchase intention indicates a more central role of attitude on SB consumption than previously found. This result indicates also that the SBs are now well established across different markets. Retailers should use them as strategic weapons against to gain market share against national brands.

(3) Adapt SB marketing to the cultural context. We discovered differences between France and Colombia concerning risk perception. In fact, the effect of SB perceived risk on SB attitude is stronger in France than in Colombia. Given the importance of SB risk perception in France, we recommend that retailers pay more attention to risk reducer (e.g. communicate on SB improved quality, launch new SB products without retailer name, etc.). In contrast, in Colombian market, retailers should offer more SBs in store assortment. Offering SBs with retailer name, across all product categories, could be also an interesting choice in Colombia.

Limitations and future research

Even though this study discusses certain aspects of consumer behavior of a country in Latin America, the findings presented should not be generalized because of the focus on a single country of this part of the world. Given the growth of the store brand category in the continent, other Latin American (e.g., Argentina, Chile and Peru) and European countries (e.g. Spain, Germany, the UK) should be investigated in order to further understand consumer experiences with store brands. We focus on only two retailers in each of the two investigated countries. Our result may be biased by the typical customer structure of these retailers and their specific market position. We call for larger sample from more different retailers in future research.

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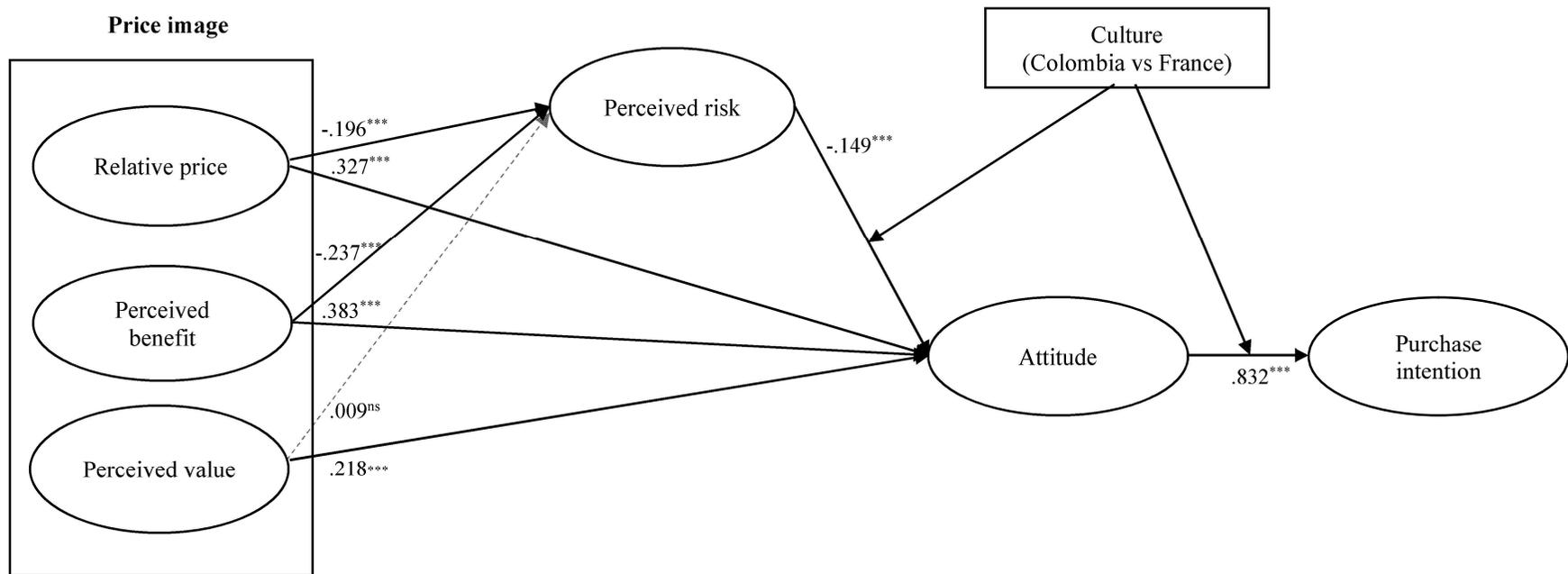
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Psychometric properties of measurement models

Measurement models and items	Means (SD)	Standard. Loading	Internal Reliability	AVE
Price image				
Relative price				
			0.842	0.640
I find in this store low prices in store brand product ranges compared to other stores.	5.11(1.19)	0.771		
All store brand products in this store seem to be cheaper than those in other stores.	4.84(1.28)	0.825		
I think that the store brands in this store are low priced compared to other stores.	5.18(1.21)	0.804		
Perceived benefit				
			0.828	0.617
I have bought more store brand products than I planned to buy in this store.	4.90(1.42)	0.814		
I have been tempted to buy more store brand products in this store than I really needed.	4.68(1.55)	0.795		
I have bought in this store some store brand products that were not on my list.	5.12(1.36)	0.745		
Perceived value				
			0.769	0.528
I always compare the prices of different store brands to be sure I get the best value for money.	5.39(1.24)	0.629		
When purchasing a store brand product, I try to get the maximum quality for the price I pay.	5.65(1.04)	0.773		
When I buy store brand products, I want to be sure that it is worth the price.	5.63(1.06)	0.769		
Perceived risk				
			0.917	0.692
I am suspicious of the quality of store brands.	3.10(1.59)	0.927		
I am afraid that store brand products will lose their qualities quite quickly.	2.88(1.55)	0.801		
I have doubts about the ingredients used in the store brands' manufacturing.	3.16(1.66)	0.898		
I worry that store brand products are not worth the money spent.	3.15(1.58)	0.808		
I do not think buying store brand products is a wise way of spending money.	2.70(1.56)	0.706		
Attitude				
			0.834	0.558
For most product categories, the best buy is usually the store brands.	4.80(1.33)	0.698		
I love it when store brands are available in the product categories I purchase.	5.29(1.19)	0.740		
When I buy a store brand, I always feel that I am getting a good deal.	5.12(1.17)	0.779		
In general, store brands are good quality products	5.43(1.09)	0.768		
Purchase intention				
			0.852	0.593
The probability that I would consider buying store brands is high.	5.46(1.19)	0.656		
I would purchase store brands next time.	5.32(1.16)	0.842		
I would consider buying store brands.	5.47(1.17)	0.752		
I will recommend buying store brands.	5.44(1.17)	0.816		

Appendix 2 : Validated structural model



..... = non-significant
 (ns) ——— = significant

*: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$