CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS IN LEBANON

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With the rising global popularity of private label labels (PLBs) the significance and the demand for research in this subsector is also increasing. This research explores the impact of various factors on PLB popularity and the intention to buy in Lebanon. We have used a structural equation model built on the data obtained from 348 respondents.

Keywords: purchasing purpose, commitment to product, brand loyalty, private label

Introduction

Private labels as supermarket products are getting increasing prominence since they are often seen as trustworthy among the clients. Categories of private labels may differ, depending on a country and the development stage of a specific market. Overall, private labels today are generating about 15% of all the fast-moving consumer goods worldwide.

Production of PLBs is nearly always based on cost-efficient technologies (Richardson et al., 1994). This is one of the reasons why in the times of economic recession, households' interest in PLBs becomes much more pronounced.

Both distributors and national suppliers may be the owners of PLBs. This allows many manufacturers to profit from cooperation instead of competition. In other words, having private labels, manufacturers are able to develop and sell a larger range of goods at cheaper prices and directly to shoppers (Dunne & Narasimhan, 1999). At the same time, PLBs support smaller operating costs and larger margins for retailers.

PLBs have been growing much quicker than many local and industrial brands around the world. The interest of business practitioners in this trend provoked an academic interest as well.

Lebanese market has also embraced the private label concept and a range of retailers already have their own labels. Private label packaging and relevant food labelling are also used by local manufacturers, including even some of the SMEs. Some exporters are also developing their PLB products for Lebanon. The private label factories make up a large

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proportion of Lebanese exports to the EU these days. The leading palace among these products belongs to basmati rice. Many large plants in Lebanon have been manufacturing PLBs with their own brands.

Alternatively, our goal here is to build and present an economic model (SEM) of PLB development. For this, we need to start with evaluating several complex theories. In view of an economic downturn within many developing countries, PLB is seen as a crucial element of the purchase-making process (Richardson et al., 1994). If the customer knows the name of the store, the image might become the indicator of whether to buy or not.

Therefore, we directly ask the following questions:

Will service levels influence the interpretation of PLBs by customers?

What is the influence of purchasing goals and brand loyalty on PLB image?

Does perceived risk have a mediating impact on PLB image?

How does the purpose of purchasing a PLB affect brand loyalty?

Literature Review

Various quality attributes such as presence, physical environment and customer outcomes together represent operational quality. Together they are also able to show the potential gap between what the customer perceives and what the provider is able to provide. Service quality is often seen as a rather open category since it is strongly based on direct contact and communication.

In relation to PLBs, high production volumes always help to increase business productivity overall. If shoppers are convenient in the shop overall, they tend to be optimistic about PLB too. In simple terms, feelings of satisfaction and happiness while in a shop tend to facilitate purchasing decisions.

The image of any shop is based on both its physical and emotional features. Abimbola (2010) proposed this idea while studying retail photography. The initial concept has been extended to include customers' characteristics.

The buying goal corresponds to the probability that the product will be exploited in the near future.

A strong brand knowledge leads to a greater purchasing purpose. Product image also has a positive impact on the purchasing purpose and intention. The PLB image in particular often represents a mix of PLB features and impressions. Through them, PLC image influences on the buying intention.

Overall PLB brands are usually less public and are thus shared primarily through direct contact with consumers, straight in the shop venue itself

The PLB image is directly linked to boosting sales. This means that PLB image usually has a considerably negative correlation with the perceived risk from purchase.

Less of perceived risk therefore ensures that a PLB good is more likely to be purchased. In an increasingly competitive world of client support and customer science, contemporary marketers are highly motivated to get a better understanding of how an individual makes his/her purchasing choices (Amue & Kenneth, 2012). A wide range of gastronomical, environmental, technological, personal and psychological influences is usually evaluated for this. At the same time, marketers need to keep in mind that attitudes and opinions of consumers may be formed either together, in a group, or individually.

During the buying phase, each buyer relies on multiple considerations at the same time. These multiple compounds affect the purchasing behavior as internal (or psychological) factors or as social, cultural, economic and personal determinants (Ashokkumar & Gopal, 2009).

The private labeling issues also have the capacity to impact human decision-making, as it was proved and explained by Bandara (2014). The definition of a private label is different across the markets. To some extent, it might be even determined by the specific procurement patterns. The private brand incorporates certain critical elements with regards to their target customer audience. Through private brands a company is able to demonstrate its rational and emotional benefits to current and potential customers (Bergès & Bouamra-Mechemache, 2004).

In this context Gavurovà et al. (2018) noted that it was never more important than it is now to use social networks for commercial purposes and brand promotion in particular. looked at the role of the background — brand love and brand consciousness and how they are perceived by consumers as a meaningful voice.

Berges-Sennou et al (2004) highlighted the importance and the necessity of competition and industry effect of individual brands. Bouhlal & Capps (2012) stated that development of foreign market conditions also involves the use of private labeling. In the past decade, product quality has evolved greatly, namely, packaging and product design have become a priority, and private label brands were not excluded from this common trend. Generally speaking, products under private brands tend to be somewhat lower in quality (as compared to market average) but also much lower in terms of expenses. This fact has greatly increased the PLB market share. In the food products category alone, 10–45% of all retail trade is now occupied by private labels (Chebeň & Štefúnová, 2011).

However, the role and meaning of private label brands is not the same across all product categories. According to some industry estimates, it can be rather challenging to integrate private labels into the product categories with high degree of market trust (for example, baby foods, organic products and the like) (Chou & Wang, 2017).

Many marketing studies today are centered around shopping trends and buying choices. Chico et al. (2017) concluded that such features as logo, cost/price and potential risk from a brand are named by customers as being the most important when it comes to private label goods. Since costs and quality often weigh equally, private labels have sufficient power to shape the expectations of buyers. Value is an important competitive asset that enables buyers to see brand representations and increasing market loyalty (Lin et al., 2016).

Cleanthouse et al. (2011) explained price as an important consideration in the product selection process. Coelho et al. (2013) stressed that customer motivation often influences requirements for product packaging. In (Doyle & Murgatroyd, 2011) packaging as well as other factors were dismantled in the context of cost considerations.

Dunne & Narasimhan (1999) discussed the interaction between price, costs and perceived risk to consumers in the case of personal goods. The impacts of competition in this context were investigated by (Wyma et al., 2014). Familiarity with private label brands also plays a major role in consumer behavior and it changes. It is obvious that every customer defines their own position on private labels, which is why resolution of the related problems would have a unique scenario in each particular phase.

Cleanthous et al. (2011) studied private label products at Australia's markets, while Vysekalová & Mikes (2009) researched their operations on African markets.

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Due to changing efficiency of sales tactics these days, the market share of private labels has dramatically been growing in recent years. Today private labels are playing an important role in distinguishing brands among potential buyers, thus strengthening competitive benefits and enhancing customer participation.

Figure 1 - Theoretical framework of the study
(made by the author)

Purchasing intention towards private label brands within a collectivist culture

Trying to understand Asian societies it is essential to remember their collectivist nature which is very much distinctive from the Western cultures.

The definition of a social group is primarily used in Asia to talk about luxury goods purchase and consumption. Social groups might be also relevant when explaining certain elements of Thai culture. A collectivistic, community-centered social unity always enjoys sensitivity in compliance and the ease of influencing others. Lebanon culture is no exception in this regard. The Asian people often tend to emphasize on the rank of a person. How one carries out social activities is also important. For instance, shopping habits would undoubtedly be dominated by the local community standards, and this is one of the most obvious consequences from a collectivist national culture. As Gavurova et al. (2018) reported, citizens would be more relaxed in the increasingly individualistic societies (like that in the United States), thus, they tend to perform many things individually, such as eating, they also tend to have more of the personal time.

At the same time, Grohmann et al. (2007) concluded that collectivistic individuals are more inclined to purchase products in a group. That's exactly why many shopping trips in Asia have multiple participants. In such a way, people can shop with their community and spend more time with their closest ones at the same time.

In the Western context, mainly due to time constraints, people tend to engage in what is named "intelligent shopping": people are trying to use their time wisely, shop with the businesses they know as best as possible, and the amount of time spent on shopping is seen as an important factor. In many cases, such behavior is focused on money saving, thus, it can be inferred that an intelligent buyer will use shopping lists and budgets, with detailed data and pre-planning actions (Horáková, 2015).

Under such a scenario, private labels may help with the time pressure issue and relatively high customer awareness. Kakkos et al. (2014) stated that communist-like societies are more likely to favour national labels over private ones. In individualistic societies, people usually have fewer than six behavioral influences. In shopping decisions, people tend to use their own common sense focused on costs and/or own desires, and as compared with most of Asian nations, they worry less about what others have to say about their decisions (in shopping and not only).

Thanasuta (2015) explained the presence of premium goods and the tendency to expand among well-known, already recognized labels within the collectivist society. As a consequence, members of such societies nearly always think that higher prices equal better quality.

To sum up, Asians shoppers prefer to remain in a community. They adhere to the collectivist community principles, thus, they mostly perform collective shopping events. They are also interested in purchasing national and/or renowned labels. All of the above is mostly because they are extremely concerned with what people might say about them.

Furthermore, the statement that the price always corresponds to the quality. It is completely different from the standpoint of people living in Western Europe (who are part of individualistic societies). Westerners prefer to do business individually and also to have more personal resources. This community of customers is involved in direct, personal communication with private label labels, and what other people think of them is not really significant. In addition, the desire to spend some time alone might be also indirectly indicative of the desire to choose private label brands, at least in some shopping cases. Western shoppers also tend to dig deeper into industrial expertise and ground their shopping decisions on the arguments about price and quality of various products.

Moreover, Easterners are known to have stronger risk avoidance than Westerners, and this also may be correlated with the fact that Asian shoppers tend to be searching for a commodity that provides less risk (Svoboda & Kopecka, 2017).

In such a case, consumers could actually not meet their initial shopping objectives (Kantar, 2015). Sutton-Brady et al. (2017) found that customers might be likely to reduce the potential risks by means of buying less risky alternatives. For example, consumers may opt to purchase the labels of known national manufacturers, if discouraged from buying private label brand items. The perceived risks associated with private label labels is believed to be greater in Eastern countries, namely, in Asia. This is because representatives of the Oriental cultures are more concerned with their image and social status, thus, they would take extra effort to prevent any sort of a potential confusion, while representatives of Western cultures would be more relaxed about confusion and image risks (Stauder et al., 2012).

To sum up, the Asians in general remain to be somewhat confused when it comes to private label products, and for this very reason, they are often inclined to view them as dangerous and risky. Therefore, they are very seldom involved in purchasing privately labelled goods.

Price and quality consciousness

Retailers these days are very much interested and motivated to launch private label merchandise, which, in many cases, is almost the same standard as more traditional, national labels (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Kasotakis (2014) emphasized that price can also be used along with brand names to infer consistency. Consumers who believe in the connection between price and quality are usually strongly brand-dependent. At the same time, they also tend to do some research in what concerns pricing options (Kelting & Chaountalas, 2017).

The latest economic crisis has affected both market shares of popular products and consumers' awareness about private labels. This happened due to a reduction in income and a probable increase in price awareness, while most of private labels tend to deliver cheaper prices. Economic conditions also have their effect on the most price sensitive customers.

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Moreover, the organization of private label manufacturers has found that the market gap between private labels and national ones (owned by traditional manufacturers) is usually about 20% (Kiymalioglu et al., 2011). This disparity is particularly important for those customers who are concerned with prices. Price-conscious shoppers are more prone to establish favorable expectations and buying plans in relation to private labels (Kliestik et al., 2015).

However, Kocisiarova & Nagyova (2014) in their analysis found that, on average, the price of Thailand's private labels is 30% down from the average national producer price. This gap of 30% is quite significant and surely has its effect on the decreasing product quality on the side of private labels.

Lebanese buyers know very well that the price corresponds to quality when shopping. Mendéz et al. (2008) assumed that if consumers evaluate goods by brand and cost, they eventually would be less interested in purchasing private labels.

However, according to (Monnot et al., 2015), consistency is more critical than price when it comes to private labels. When you weigh price and quality, the cost of purchasing often becomes a problem. If buyers believe that the risk is too big, they may be less interested in purchasing private labels. Mulačová & Mulac (2013) claimed that when there is a large probability of consuming private labels, their offering would become more limited.

However, Maisam & Mahsa (2016) noted that if retailers are able to transmit this lower price-image quality goods to customers well, they will prosper since they will be able to achieve much higher sales of private labels.

Nair (2011) have underlined the critical feature of private brand use as regards to understanding the cost: when comparing private labels with similar products of foreign origin, buyers would mostly prefer the latter; however, when comparing private labels with the similar products of local origins, buyers would be more inclined to choose private brands. In other words, privately-owned labels are usually cheaper than similar domestic brands and thus are popular among price-conscious customers. Some customers, however, believe that there is a connection between quality and price in this comparison too. Consequently, they will not agree to purchase private labels even considering that the price is smaller.

Loyalty

Companies used to have some serious difficulties while trying to establish the impression of commitment in relation to private labels, according to (Poliačková, 2011). This is the case primarily due to the enormous increase in the amount of stores operating at the retail market as such. Therefore, maintaining the current clients and turning them into truly loyal ones becomes of critical importance for many shops. Poliačková (2011) further claimed that the emergence of comparative gain over competitors seems to be one of the most significant reasons for the introduction and use of private labels. This strategy may indeed contribute to the growth in loyalty. According to (Ramya & Sa Mohamed, 2016), private labels are able to generate loyalty among new customers and also to enhance customer loyalty among the existing ones. This loyalty, obviously, leads to repeated purchases (Richardson et al., 1994).

This sort of loyalty allows retailers to gain a strategic edge and stability over a relatively long period of time. Rimarčík (2007) claimed that the higher the repurchase costs, the greater the recommendations by current customers. Lin et al. (2017) noted that shop loyalty is directly and strongly correlated with private label use. This is because many shop

customers tend to build their attitudes of confidence directly in the store and thus become acquainted with private brands, this directly in line with Kotler & Keller (2011).

Finally, loyalty contributes to an optimistic outlook and adds more trust in a shop. Loyalty to a store as such will thus expand the usage of private labels. In simple terms, the more customers tend to shop at one and the same store, the more they would be likely to purchase private labels.

Data and Methodology

Our study sample consists of young university students. We have distributed 500 sample surveys in English using a snowball technique. Part of the surveys were distributed in a paper version, and part online. 348 questionnaires were returned to us, thus, the return rate is 69.6%.

Instruments

To collect meaningful answers, we have used a five-point scale with three dimensions. Quality of the relationship represents the opinions of the buyers directly involved with the seller. The service environment takes location into consideration. The accuracy of data is tested based on the respondents' own shopping experience.

PLB is a two-dimensional emotionally consistent framework. It is influenced by the satisfaction or inclination of customers in relation to a certain PLB. Value means that consumers appreciate the nature/character of the goods in question.

There are three dimensions measuring potential risk: financial risk, practical risk and physical risk.

Methodology

Amos 18 has been used to carry out SEM. The comparison point is 0.5 for all the factor loads. Any item with less than 0.5 charge factor is removed. In addition, convergence and inequality has been examined as part of the general results.

The incremental fit index has been assigned by means of a normal fit index (NFI), a Standard Fit Index (NNFI or TLI), a comparative fit index and a progressive fit Index (IFI). This demonstrates the success of our model. R2 has also been calculated.

Descriptive Analysis

The demographics of our sample included such parameters as: age, race, monthly pay, educational level, marital status and household status. 55.7% of our respondents were women, and 44.3% were men. Majority of those surveyed were between 20 and 25 y.o. (81.9%, to be precise).

Skewing and kurtosis have the benchmarks ± 2.0 . The findings show that the first component explains 53.55% of the variation.

Measurement Model

CFA results show that our model is appropriate. Since the loads for two items are removed (perceived risk and PLB image), the factor load for the other items varies from 0.60 to 0.95 (see Table 2). CR values range between 0.808 and 0.936. Both variables used are fairly reliable. The table also provides the convergent outcomes for validity, as determined by the average derived variance.

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The primary purpose of this research has been to determine the significance of the factors and variables that influence the attitude of consumers to private labels and purchasing them.

We have also conducted an observational study with a questionnaire to identify specific variables and determinants which may foster and articulate consumer desires for private label purchases. For information on the range of items that were purchased we have used the Likert scale. In response to the comments, we divided all the respondents into three categories, depending on their behaviour.

Favorable reactions (“I feel I agree”) to the statements clearly demonstrate private brands' preference over other commodities in all the categories of goods, given the privately branded items contribute to a positive atmosphere. In the case of pessimism, the appeal of private labels becomes negligible, and unfavorable opinions are observed (“I disagree” and so on). Where the vendor offers private label products and other items equally, a neutral approach can be observed.

According to Nielsen Category Classification, we have ten groups of products here: (a) milk goods, (b) cakes, (c) organic products, (d) non-alcoholic beverages, (e) frozen meals, (f) drinks and beverages, (g) snacks, (h) hygienic paper and detergents, and (j) animal food. This classification of products stems from our personal product rating and also (Mulačová & Mulač, 2013).

The questions included into the survey concerned demographics, customer care general questions, satisfaction with private label items and comments concerning personal standpoint of a customer about buying private label brands (positive, negative or neutral). We had three initial theories for starters: (1) Opinions of consumers do not depend on the opinions among general population; (2) There are certain conditions leading to the purchase of private labels; and (3) Much depends on a specific kind of a product purchased.

We have found that buying a certain commodity of a private labels does depend on certain demographic variables. For processing results in detail, we have used data analysis in Excel.

With the Pearson chi-focused independence measures we have evaluated the theory and confirmed the dependency (or independence) of the variables under consideration. The Cramer's value, the most well-known contingency rate, can be used here to calculate the strength as this check confirms that the qualitative variables depend on one another.

We then use CFI, TLI, NFI, CMIN/DF and RMSEA to approximate the model. The complete and progressive model that fits indices shows that the proposed model corresponds to the findings (see Table 3).

Path Analysis (Structural Model)

Table 4 summarizes the results of the systemic model, including data on the significance levels. The value and the sign of the relation is determined by the calculated parameter. The exercise values are shown in Table 5 to demonstrate the correlation with the outcomes within acceptable ranges.

The connection between the service level and the PLB image is examined under our hypothesis H1. The model predicts a single-unit increase in operation by 0.408 (p-value <0.05), thereby improving the one-unit PLB image by 0.408. (thus implying a good correlation). Then we did some calculations for H2. This results in a coefficient of 0.634 (p-

value < 0.05), thus showing that PLB image has a positive impact on the motivation behind purchase.

Table 2 - Results of the model
(made by the author)

Variable	Items	Factor loading	CR	AVE	DV
Purchase intention	P1	0.88	0.935	0.708	0.842
	P2	0.89			
	P3	0.92			
	P4	0.88			
	P5	0.72			
	P6	0.75			
Service quality	SQ1	0.75	0.930	0.727	0.853
	SQ2	0.89			
	SQ3	0.87			
	SQ4	0.94			
	SQ5	0.81			
PLB image	PLBI1	0.95	0.808	0.592	0.769
	PLBI2	0.69			
	PLBI3	0.63			
Perceived risk	PR2	0.60	0.849	0.591	0.769
	PR3	0.75			
	PR4	0.95			
	PR5	0.73			
Brand loyalty	BL1	0.87	0.936	0.747	0.864
	BL2	0.85			
	BL3	0.82			
	BL4	0.83			
	BL5	0.94			

Table 3 - Goodness of fit (CFA)
(made by the author)

Index	Model fit value	Standard value
Standalone indices		
CMIN/d.f.	4.36	Range (1 to 5)
RMSEA	0.03	≤ 0.05
Incremental indices		
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.92	≥ 0.90
Non-normed fit index (NNFI or TLI)	0.98	≥ 0.90
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.93	≥ 0.90
Incremental fit index (IFI)	0.91	≥ 0.90

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H3 explores the correlation between the intent to purchase and loyalty to a shop. We have received the coefficient of 0.78, which implies that both variables have a positive and significant correlation.

H4 suggests that PLB's image and perceived potential have a negative correlation. The relationship between them indeed has a negative significance of 0.459. In other words, positive image reduces future risks as expected by consumers.

Table 4 - Results of structural modeling
(made by the author)

Hypothesized path	R2	Estimate	Significance
H1: Service quality ---> PLB image	0.06	0.408	***
H2: PLB image ---> purchase intention	0.62	0.634	***
H3: Purchase intention ---> brand loyalty	0.69	0.780	***
H4: PLB image ---> perceived risk	0.43	-0.496	***

The vector's explanatory potential is indicated by the multiple squared correlation (R2). The R2 for PLB image is very small in this case (0.06). However, the overall model seems to be working. This anomaly contributes to the huge difference between individual observation units (an inherent characteristic of the cross-sectional data). The questionnaire itself may actually have also influenced the respondents' ability to provide proper answers in English.

Hu et al. (1999) observed a similar situation in their study and assumed that the contribution of external variables may have caused low R2 values in the model.

Table 5 - Results for goodness of fit (path analysis/structural model)
(made by the author)

Index	Model fit value	Standard value
Standalone indices		
CMIN/d.f.	3.11	Range (1 to 5)
RMSEA	0.01	≤ 0.1
Incremental indices		
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.94	≥ 0.9
Non-normed fit index (NNFI or TLI)	0.94	≥ 0.9
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.93	≥ 0.9
Incremental fit index (IFI)	0.94	≥ 0.9

Mediating Effects

The mediation impact of the p-values for PLB image and the potential risk on the purchase intent are shown in Table 6. This association is not applicable to the case of a potential threat since these two variables are clearly correlated. Therefore, we can conclude that the connection between PLB and purchase intention does not interfere with the perceived risk as such. Thus, we reject our hypothesis H5.

Table 6 - Testing for mediating effects
(made by the author)

Mediation hypothesis	P-values of			Result
	Direct effect (without mediation)	Direct effect (with mediation)	Indirect effect (with mediation)	
H5: PLBI -->	0.009	0.020	0.365	No mediation
PR --> PI				

Discussion

This study looks at the preferences of consumers in relation to privately labelled brands in Lebanon by determining the variables that influence customers' purchase intentions. It is demonstrated that PLB image positively influences the purchasing choice.

The servicing level plays an important and advantageous role for PLB image. In other words, customers expecting higher prices initially tend to have higher loyalty later, thus assessing the store favorably. This, in turn, improves the credibility of private labels. Lin (2005) have also recorded a favorable relationship between service quality and brand image. A shop can win in competition with other shops by offering customers a better level of servicing. Then, customers would be more committed to PLBs of this shop. Therefore, the servicing level may act as a measure of consumers' purchasing habits in relation to PLBs.

In relation to the association of PLB image with potential risks, the results of the path analysis indicate a substantially negative correlation between these two variables. This suggests that consumers who have a clearer understanding of a particular PLB will actually perceive lower potential risks (in terms of both quality consistency and value for money). PLBs are often perceived to be unsafe and economical, therefore, many buyers are reluctant to buy them.

Finally, we have also analyzed the correlation between purchase motives and engagement. We have found that consumers who are satisfied with the transaction in question would probably return and buy more in future, PLBs or other commodities.

Our analytical findings have several important business implications, which highlight the use of PLBs as a crucial retail technology. Many retail outlets are now offering a broader selection of uniquely labeled goods which have shop labels, supermarkets/hypermarkets labels and groceries labels. The latter are increasing the roles and value of retail units overall. Businesses may boost the engagement with their PLBs by lowering the potential perceived risk factor associated with shop internal goods and also through building stronger consumer confidence. The latter can be namely possible through improved service quality.

Limitations and Future Research

Our results should be viewed, taking into account several constraints that took place in the course of this study. Some of them can be actually overcome in further studies:

Our sample was dominated by young, well educated and urban respondents. Thus, our findings and conclusions cannot be easily generalized on the whole population of Lebanon, strictly speaking.

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In contrast to other studies, we have not concentrated on specific types of stores and specific products, for example). Future studies may consider the impact of additional product features, such as shelving, width of product selection and so on.

Brand loyalty does not apply uniformly to all clients, particularly in Lebanon, where poverty and inflation may seriously change the purchasing behavior. The drop in purchases as such usually means that shoppers are forced to prefer cheaper products.

Conclusions

This research aims to explore the relationship between service level and the PLB image to determine which variables increase the intention of purchasing PLBs. We have used SEM method on the data collected from the group of 348 citizens. Our evaluation and further analysis of the model was carried out by means of CFA and path analysis carried out with the help of Amos 18 and SPSS. We have also tested the validity and reliability of the systems.

We can now confirm there is a positive correlation between purchases and the PLB image in the retail sector of Lebanon. PLB image can even be interpreted as an essential purchasing target. Better quality standards will enhance PLB's credibility and thus contribute to increased consumer satisfaction and stronger purchasing intention in the long term.

Private labels have undergone significant changes in the recent decade. In many countries they have become important competitors to national products, especially in terms of pricing. The latest economic recession has also recorded a significant rise in the purchases of private label goods in many countries, including Lebanon, primarily because thousands of shoppers were forced to reduce their expenses, thus they turned to private-label products. However, this trend has continued even later, in the aftermath of the crisis. Then, shoppers were substantially more attracted to private labels because they favored their preferences.

The key factors that contributed to changing consumer tastes in relation to private labels can be described as follows. Regardless of the demographic determinants, shoppers are inclined towards the best-selling brands among milk-processed products, organic products and paper hygiene among all the types of private labelled brands covered by the survey. Consumers rest their choice on the following buying criteria of private labels: cost is the most crucial factor when it comes to dairy products, quality is the most important factor for personal hygiene items, formula is most important for detergents, favorable packaging is important for foodstuffs in general, packaging is very much important for frozen goods category, and also a variety of cosmetic products.

In addition, family status of the respondents impacted their choice of the products to be bought. There are many additional aspects that might influence the general attitude of consumers to private labels. The Pearson test results confirm that the attitudes of buyers is influenced by the form of a commodity to be bought. Besides, consumers' attitudes are influenced by the cause behind a purchase, explanation of the purchase as such would surely have some influence.

The findings of our study contain a substantial number of observations which may contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena of private labelling. One of the possible directions for further research would be to investigate private label commodities in a broader geographical scope of.

Other aspects that may affect customer tastes for private labels should be explored. Also, private labels items could be studied not just in the context of customer conduct but also in the context of rivalry/competition among supply chains.

The quantity of goods marked as private labels is rising all the time these days. Therefore, both brands and their prices rival. On the one hand, the relations of sellers with their suppliers has been already changed due to presence of private labels. On the other hand, manufacturers of private labels are themselves facing lateral rivalry. Analytical studies dedicated to retail trading should be used to execute private-label brand strategies focused on specific preferences, needs and geographic differences in various customer segments.

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