

Comparing High-involvement and Low-involvement Products: Brand Perspective

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Abstract

Today, with fierce competition in attracting new customers, maintaining existing ones and gaining a greater market share, organizations across the world are obliged to develop new products and create distinctive features in them. With regard to the results, the levels of perceived quality, value and risk as well as the relative price and purchase intentions among the students (participants) are appropriate. This paper discusses knowledge of brand awareness and its crucial role which should be well known to marketing manager for the design of an organization's marketing strategies. The purpose of this paper is to determine the brand awareness of high- and low-involvement products among students enrolled at Tehran University. A self-administered survey was completed by a convenience sample of 60 students of the Tehran University in Iran. The focal high-involvement product was laptop and the low-involvement product, shampoo. The results indicated similar awareness of high-involvement product brands and low-involvement product brands. Advertising played an equal role in the awareness of Laptop brands and Shampoo brands. The brand names which are easy to pronounce were far more important for both Shampoo and Laptop brands. The item of best-selling brands had the most roles and the item of high quality had the least effect on consumer decision making. In addition, the results showed that the higher price brands are more important than well-known ones.

Keywords: Advertising, Brand awareness, Customer, Tehran University

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Introduction

In order to find new customers and keep them, companies should have a successful brand which will make consumers recognize and buy their products. There are several phases which have critical role in ensuring a prosperous product brand. This process include creating and building brand awareness, reaching consumers` minds, and encouraging them to develop a preference for the brand (Keller, 2003).

Among the above process, brand awareness is the fundamental phase to occur (Rossiter and Percy, 1997). Brand awareness is the ability to recognize the brand under distinct conditions and it consists of brand recall and brand recognition (Keller, 1993).

In the modern world, becoming brand conscious and making positive choices among adolescent is increasing (Ross and Harradine, 2004). Indeed, many consumers specify their brand preferences between the ages of 15 and 25 (Taylor and Cosenza, 2002). Moreover, because of exerting noticeable efficacy on the allocation of spending power, adolescents play crucial role in the marketplace (Hogg *et al.*, 1999). Among young consumers, peers have a vital role in the market place, because they make heavy influences by their purchases and choices of brands (Skim *et al.*, cited in Beaudoinet *al.*, 2003).

Laptop is generally considered a high-involvement product. Consumers often buy a laptop for its technological applications, image support or psychological euphoria. Laptop is also known to reflect the consumer`s social welfare and wishing. Consumers are aware of their own self-concept and so they use brand image as a scale comparing products (Oh and Fiorito, 2002), therefor it is important for laptop marketers to be notified about the brand awareness of adolescent consumers.

Consumers, however, also buy low-involvement products such as shampoo. Although the shampoo consumption is less subject to the influence of peers, branding is still crucial as brand awareness alone could lead to the consumer selecting a product based on the familiarity of the brand (Keller, 2003).

A large number of students exist at Tehran University. Students are in their late teens and represent a specialized market segment for a diversity of merchandises and services, consisting laptop and shampoo. Research which specify the distinctions in brand awareness of high- and low-involvement products among students, is sparse. Hoyer and Brown on 1990 claimed that brand awareness is like a heuristic or simple norm for decision-making, in low-involvement buy conditions. also Macdonald and Sharp on 2000 repeated Hoyer and Brown`s study, with the exception that they employed a larger sample than the Hoyer and Brown`s (1990) study, and found that respondents have a strong orientation to use awareness as a heuristic and a grade of inertia in varying this habit. High-involvement products are less focused than low-involvement products on these studies, the current research is attended to help to fill the gap.

Literature Review and Research Objectives

Brand awareness

The phrase of Brand awareness is the strength of the brand node in consumer's mind, i.e. how easy it is for consumers to remember (Keller, 1993). In other words, brand awareness is the ability to distinguish the brand and recall it under distinctive conditions (Keller, 1993). It has been hypothesized that brand awareness has a critical role when a consumer makes a purchase. During the decision-making process, a brand which is not considered cannot be chosen at all (baker, 1984). Finally, it can be concluded that brand recognition is exclusively important when a consumer chooses a brand at the point of purchase.

Brand recall is considered as the next level of brand awareness. Ross and Harradine (2004), defined brand call as an ability which consumer retrieve the brand from his/her mind when provided with a related cue. According Mariotti (1999) and Laurent (1995), brand recall connotes that the brand situates a stronger brand seat in consumer's mind, as he/she is not aided by having the name which is provided.

Brand awareness and advertising

Keller (2003) claimed that brand awareness is made and enhanced by adding the familiarity of the brand through replicated exposal, which finally concludes in consumers having "experienced" the brand. The brand will took root in consumer's mind, when they have sufficient experience of the brand by thinking, hearing or seeing about it.

Advertising is the main manner to enhanced familiarity and brand awareness. In addition, optical and vocabulary effect in advertising aid entrench the brand name in the consumer's mind (Keller, 2003). Therefore, the first role of advertising is to create brand awareness (Gregory, 1993; Hoyer and Brown, 1990). Via advertising, marketers represent possible consumers to the brand and give them the opportunity to adopt it. This is the cause why firms such as Golrang and Samsung make use of television and magazines to advertise their products and brand names (waterschoot, cited in Ross and Harradine, 2004).

Brand Functions

Brands could make a number of functions for consumers (Lambin, 2002; Varey, 2002, Pickton and Broderick, 2001). For instance, serve as a sign of the product specifications; facilitate decision-making; serve as a commitment by providing trust, stability or a set of behests and a decrement of risk; fulfil a personalization, social function and make enjoyment.

Brand elements and brand awareness

Brand awareness can be enhanced through brand elements, such as the name, logo, symbol, packaging or slogan. In other words brand elements identify the brand overall, so it differs from other brands (Keller, 2003). Thus brand awareness can be created or enhanced easier by brand elements (Vranesevic and Stance, 2003).

Brand awareness and the decision-making process

Brand awareness has a critical role in consumer decision-making by efficacy which brands gain the consideration set, which of these brands are employ as a heuristic, and the perception of quality (Macdonald and Sharp, 2000).

Under the decision-making conditions the consumers retrieve, from long-term memory, those products and brands which are known for them. If the brand be a part of consideration set, the probability of being selected of it will increase, so being a part of this small set of brands is significant (Mowen and Minor, 2001).

There is a relation between the level of brand awareness and purchase decision (Woodside and Wilson, 1985). This means that, if the consumer recalls the brand in an unaided recall situation, he/she will have higher intention to purchase. So, there will be higher chance to purchase, for top-of-mind brands.

Consumers almost spend little time or effort in making purchase decisions. Based on Keller (1993), consumers mostly try to minimize the decision-making process by using a heuristic such as “select the brand I have known” or “choose the brand I know” and then buy only similar brands.

As Macdonald and Sharp (2003) have said, the consumer`s comprehension of quality is based on the view that if he/she knows the brand, the company must have expend heavily on advertising. If the company expends so much on advertising, it must have good benefits which means that most of consumers are pleased with the product; so the product must be good.

This research focused on the brand awareness of students in Tehran University in Iran. It considered the similarities and differences and levels in their awareness of laptop brands (high involvement product) and shampoo brands (a low-involvement product).

Research Methodology

In this study a self-administrated questionnaire was used to gather empirical data. The questionnaire was distributed among 60 entrepreneurship students of University of Tehran.

The questionnaire was composed of three sections:

The object of this study focused on the brand awareness of students in Tehran University. It investigated the levels, similarities and differences in their awareness of laptop brands (a high-involvement product) and shampoo brands (a low-involvement product).

(1) *Section A*: included four open-ended questions aimed at identifying which brands of shampoo (or Laptop) students could think of and which brands came to mind first. These were determined by the questions: “What brand names of laptop (shampoo in the case of the second questionnaire) can you think of?” and “When you think of the laptop brands, which one comes to mind first?”. Thereafter respondents were presented with a list of brands and were asked? “Which of the following brands have you heard of?” and “Which brands have you seen advertised in the past six months?”. It was

argued that following the customary method of first asking brand recognition questions (and providing a cue, which in this case consisted of a printed list of brand names), could influence brand recall.

(2) *Section B* dealt with demographics which included questions on gender and marital status.

(3) *Section C* contained 30 Likert-type questions each consisting of a short, structured statement and five preferences ranging from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree.

Data analysis and Findings

Profile of the respondents

Almost the respondents of both questionnaire (Shampoo and Laptop) were single. The majority (53 per cent) of those responding to the Shampoo questionnaire were male and 47 per cent were female. The corresponding figures for those responding to the Laptop questionnaire, were 67 per cent, 33 per cent. These results are shown on table1.

Table1. Demographic results

	Sex		Marital	
	Male	Female	Single	Married
Sample for Shampoo	53.3	46.7	83.3	16.7
Sample for Laptop	70.0	30.0	80.0	20.0

Levels of brand awareness

- *Brand recall.* Respondents had to list all the brand names that came to mind when thinking of Shampoo (or Laptop) and to indicate the one that came to mind first. To differentiate the extent of brand recall, those respondents who listed up to three brand names were deemed to have low brand recall, while who listed four to six brand names had medium brand recall. Those respondents who listed seven or more names were deemed to have high brand recall. The data showed that proportionately more respondents had medium levels of brand recall in the case of Shampoo (47 per cent) and in the case of Laptop (50 per cent). The most frequently mentioned Laptop brands were SONY (19 per cent of respondents) and DELL (18 per cent of respondents), while the top-of-mind Laptop brands were SONY (76 per cent of respondents) and DELL (24 per cent of respondents). The most mentioned Shampoo brands were Head & Shoulder (12 per cent of respondents) and Sehat (11 per cent of respondents), while the top-of-mind Shampoo brands were Panten (25 per cent of respondents) and Head & shoulder (25 per cent of respondents).

- *Brand recognition.* The respondents were presented with lists of Shampoo and Laptop brand names. They identified 23 brand names of Shampoo and 21 brand names of Laptop. The three most chosen brand names in shampoo products were Sehat, Golrang and head & shoulder while SONY, Apple, Accer and DELL were the top

laptop brands. Brand recognition and recall of advertising shared some common trends. Fifty percent of the respondents had heard of SONY. SONY was also the brand for which the most advertising was noticed. A similar pattern was in the case of Sehat Shampoo.

Random sampling has been utilized for this research. In order to collect data, a questionnaire was administered between 60 graduate students of Entrepreneurship Management. In pre-test phase, the questionnaire's reliability was established via Cronbach Alpha (with a coefficient of 0.83) and split-half (with a coefficient of 0.76) among 20 students. Finally, alpha Cronbach were calculated for 60 students, that is 0.82. It was also validated using face validity (expert opinion). The questionnaire is of a five point Likert scale type. In this research, data analyzing were utilized with the help of SPSS 20 software.

According to Sekaran (2003), if Reliability Coefficients were lower than 0.60, a doubtful situation would be considered, adjacent to 0.70 factors meant admissibility, and higher than 0.80 figures showed a good condition. The results of reliability test are shown on table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Test Results

Test- Type	phase	Sample Size	Result
Alpha- Cronbach	Pre-test	20	0.873
Alpha-Cronbach	Final test	60	0.828
Split- Half	Pre-test	20	0.762

Brand awareness, advertising, brand elements and consumer decision making

Table 3 shows a comparison of the mean scores which indicate the significance respondents attached to branding of Shampoo and of Laptop.

Table 3 shows that advertising did not seem to play an important role in the awareness of Shampoo and Laptop brands, because all mean scores were lower than 4.0 on a five-point scale. On Shampoo brands, In-store advertising and on Laptop brands, internet advertising played the least important role in creating brand awareness, While advertising, particularly in magazines was far more important for both Shampoo and Laptop brands.

Respondents agreed that brand names that are easy to pronounce were more important than those that reminded them of something. In addition, on both categories, respondents agreed that products which are priced higher, have a better quality while, the results show that respondents of both Shampoo and Laptop brands, did not seem to agree with the item "Well-known brands are of good quality."

Finally, it can be concluded from the results which are shown on table 3 that, respondents agreed that best-selling brands were far more important and high quality products were least important for both Shampoo and Laptop brands.

Table 3- Items of Questionnaire

Description	Shampoo		Laptop	
	Std. Dev	Mean Score	Std. Dev	Mean Score
Brand Function (Radder and Huang, 2008)				
Brands products are worth their price.	0.761	3.80	1.098	3.37
Brands products satisfy my expectations.	0.743	4.00	0.973	3.53
Brands products save me shopping time.	0.776	4.13	0.995	3.90
Well-known brands are of good quality.	0.592	4.17	0.662	4.10
Brands products are good quality.	0.857	3.66	0.730	3.87
The higher priced products are of a better quality.	1.026	3.14	1.185	2.90
Unknown brands are of a low quality.	0.780	2.41	1.040	2.57
Advertising (Radder and Huang, 2008)				
Magazine advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	1.093	3.33	1.117	3.17
Newspaper advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	1.033	2.63	0.964	3.03
Radio advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	0.999	2.37	1.106	2.47
Advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	1.037	3.40	0.712	3.90
Internet advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	1.081	2.93	0.820	3.50
Television advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	1.066	3.63	0.855	3.60
In-store advertising for shampoo/laptop usually draws my attention.	0.894	3.60	0.900	3.50
Brand elements (Radder and Huang, 2008)				
I usually remember brands name that are easy to pronounce	1.066	2.97	1.172	3.27
I usually remember brands name that remind me of something.	0.961	3.80	0.898	3.57
Consumer Decision Making (Radder and Huang, 2008)				
I usually buy the best-selling brands.	1.073	3.43	1.009	3.50
I usually choose well-advertised brands	1.033	3.07	0.980	2.93
I am likely to buy the brand that I remember best.	0.915	3.30	0.971	3.23
I prefer buying well-known brands.	0.877	3.70	1.006	3.77
I can remember a number of different brands when purchasing.	0.786	3.76	0.776	4.13
I usually choose the brand I know.	0.885	4.10	0.868	4.07
I can think of more international brands than local ones.	1.045	3.66	0.913	4.17
I like attractive logos.	0.950	4.17	0.765	4.03
I take note of new brands coming into the market.	0.850	3.97	0.805	3.80
Brands influence my choice of purchase.	0.860	3.87	0.805	4.20
If I had a choice I would buy the best quality.	0.731	4.50	0.765	4.37
I usually buy high quality products.	0.615	4.37	0.747	4.17
Brands make it easier to choose the product.	0.664	4.20	0.761	4.20

Respondents seemed to be familiar with a variety of local and international Laptop and Shampoo brands and tended to choose the ones they know and remember best and which are also well advertised.

Discussion

This research aimed to compare Iranian students' brand awareness of a high-involvement product (Laptop) and a low-involvement product (Shampoo). Based on previous research marketers should use opportunities to increase brand awareness and brand preference among youth until reach brand loyalty.

The results showed that students had a similar degree of recall of Laptop brands and shampoo brands. In the other words, Students seemed to be familiar with a variety of Shampoo and Laptop brands and could remember them easily.

Also advertising played a significant role in awareness for both. For Laptop, expect radio advertising, another type of advertising played an important role in creating brand awareness, while for shampoo newspaper, radio and Internet advertising were unimportant.

Although advertising did not seem to play a significant role in the awareness of products but it has to be explained when advertisements are most influencing that featuring the products together with models. The findings showed that brand elements played similar roles for high involvement and low involvement products.

Also students agreed that brand names that are easy to reminded them are important for high and low involvement products, but pronounce were more important for high involvement than for low involvement.

Table 3 summarizes the comparison of the factor means scores for two products and showed decision making style has important role for students and it is similar for low and high involvement product. Because they had the highest mean scores for consumer decision making in the case of Shampoo and Laptop.

Limitation of the study and future research

First limitation was that, this study didn't consider any environmental variable such as financial status of respondents and their culture. Another limitation of this research is the sample of research. This research was done on students, who may have had no job and self-support. Nevertheless, the result of this study cannot be generalized to everyone. To prescribe more generality, it should be distributed to other populations, especially business owners and employers.

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