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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND AWARENESS AND GEN Y DECISION MAKING

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Abstract

The Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Malaysia has experienced rapid growth and is still growing, over recent years. With increasing competition, economically and ecologically challenging times, HEI have been looking at developing innovative approaches to meet the bottom line of economic, social, and ecological sustainability. HEI needs to be very competitive and be maintainable inside the turbulent market that they locate themselves. Hence, this paper intends to discuss the idea to improve marketing strategy in Malaysia HEI. The main purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between brand awareness and Gen Y decision-making process which Pearson correlation analysis was performed in this study. There were 346 students from private universities in Malaysia participate in this study. The result dictated that there is a positive significant relationship between brand awareness and decision making process. Brand awareness gives a significant influence on the decision process. This result supported by other findings. Finding from this study may be able to contribute the understanding to the relationship between brand awareness and decision making to HEI. This study makes a valuable contribution to literature given the growing importance of brand awareness have been made to have a deeper well profiled understanding of Gen Y decision making in the selection of HEI. Given this development, it is essential that a brand awareness based on Gen Y evaluation be built to assist HEI in providing services with maximum efficiency to satisfy them.

Keywords: HEI, gen Y, brand awareness, decision making process.

1. Introduction

The 21st century age represents key adjustments within the marketing techniques employed through employer and institutions so that it will assist them be very competitive and be maintainable inside the turbulent market that they locate themselves. Today's consumer live in a world in which the purchase of products and services is huge and continuous (Sonkusare, 2013).

Consumer purchasing behavior as indicated by (Macdonald & Sharp, 1996), is relate with needs to with their intention, mentality, strength, and predisposition to commitment and the consumer's methods for credentials evidence. Customers purchasing behavior can be referred to the buying behavior that relate with the way that numerous internal and external components have impact on consumers purchasing decision process.

According to Shabbir et. al., (2010), Consumer decision making process affected so much by brand awareness. Consumer would feel more confidence and comfortable when they already heard the brand name and their perception meet the expectation. Brand awareness is important to the organization in order to capture intention and consumer's familiarity with the brand. Keller in her study (1993), identified that brand awareness something relates with consumer capacity to recall and recognize a brand in the market. In order to make consumer purchase more frequently, the company needs to develop strong bonds with the related product and the consumer.

In Malaysia, the Higher Education Institution (HEI) has experienced rapid growth and is still growing, over recent years. Nowadays, education has been treated as a business enterprise and is therefore governed by a business approach in a business environment. They need to change their mindset into business way of thinking. In relation to this development, students are not viewed merely as participants in the process but as customers of the process.

In the increasing global competition, HEI struggle to survive, the cost is increasing, demands for accountability and rising customer expectation in quality. Not only that, the competition to student enrolments is also growing due to the number of HEI is increasing. The HEI need to coop with the new concept and they need to acknowledge to competitive advantage. With this all of forces, has driven Higher Education institution to undertake marketing initiatives and embark on brand awareness.

This research aims to understand the relationship between brand awareness and decision making; A case study of private university in Malaysia. The end of this research, the organization and institutions will aware about how important brand awareness gives impact to customer decision making.

1.1. Brand

According to Erdem et al. (2006), brand name act as signals to consumers. A brand signal becomes the sum of the brand past and present marketing activity. Brand can help customer in market information produces uncertainty in consumer`s mind. A credible brand signal generates consumer value by (1) reducing perceived risk, (2) reducing information search costs and (3) creating favorable attitude perception (Erdem & Swait, 1998).

A brand also known as a name, term, signal, symbol or design or a combination of them (that) is planned to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of seller and to differentiate with other competitors (Kotler, 1997) – easy for customer to make decision making when they know brand knowledge.

Brand play roles in consumer decision making can happen through multiple mechanism, such as psychologically (e.g. associative network memory), sociological (e.g. brand communities), and economic (e.g. brands as signals under uncertainty process (Keller, 2002). A good brand can be a positive in customer mind and give a good impact to the organization.

De Chernatony, et al. (2010), also say brands are more powerful in terms of build relationship with customer which is a brand are already familiar in market and profitable compared to regular unbranded products. The great brand is which positioning in the mind of the customer. In the market place, brands have a different in the amount of power and worth (Shabbir et. Al., 2010). Customer always buy a product what they familiar or know. It will decrease their risk if they use product that they know or product that they always used. As a companies concerned, brands are valued as important assets as for and individual.

Joshi and Gupta (2013) in their study, explains that brands help consumers to decide in their decision making process. Consumers perceive brands and get them since they guarantee to satisfy a need, in view of prior experienced with the brand. Consumers additionally purchase brands in light of the fact that the brand stories interface with them straightforwardly or their life, it offers them a self – costly advantage or they discover the brands applicable in certain culture setting.

A brand play a vital role in helping the seller to gain goodwill and have a repeated support from their customer. For continuing the standards and the quality of the goods and services, the organization will offer the brand personal guarantee to their consumer. There are three basic characteristic to identify a genuine brand. First is, based on functional and emotional benefits, second is, consumer internalized sum of impression and the third is, a distinctive position. The evolution of brands start with products made out of certain ingredients over a period of time, brands are built through marketing activities and communication. The acquiring attributes keep on and the core values will be extended. (Nayeem, 2012).

However, for a brand to be successful it does not properly identify its positioning. As long as the target group does not perceive or identify in brand activities its major assumptions or ideas (which are the basis of brand-differentiating associations) the brand is not really positioned in the audience's minds (Janiszewiska and Insch, 2012).

1.2. Brand awareness

Brand Awareness is buyer aware of the existence of the brand but the knowledge about it is limited and obviously has no particular emotional attachment to it as a result he may or may not think of purchasing the brand (Nayeem, 2012).Brand awareness does not mean to merely know the name of the brand or to have seen it before, it rather means that consumer can associate the name, logo and something similar in his mind (Yildram, 2010).

Based on study conducted by Macdonald and Sharp (2000), consumer are willing to buy the product if they are the familiar and known to the brand, and brand awareness another factor that influences the purchase decision. If the product have a higher brand awareness then the customer are willing to buy a good services. The higher level of brand awareness can give influence to customer make a purchase decision.

Aaker (1996) look at the sources of brand value to be as brand awareness, mark affiliation, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. This is the level, to which customer identified a specific brand. This influence

consumer to create robust brands with the related product or services and this can influence them to buy frequently.

Brand awareness is influence by which the purchasing attitude of consumer changes about any good or service (Shabbir, et al., 2010). Television advertisement is a very strong medium to create brand awareness with the help of audio and visual messages (Sonkusare, 2013).

Brand awareness play vital role in consumer decision making process, if customer had already heard the brand name, the customer would feel more comfortable at the time of making decision making (customer normally do not prefer to buy an unknown brand, especially if it is an expensive product like motor, car, and television). Therefore, companies with a strong brand are most be a customer preferred compared with unknown brand.

Wang & Ruhe (2007) conclude in their study, the organization will be acceptable and have a good reputation by having a successful brand awareness for their product and services. The organization still has a good position in market and customers also choose that product in their buying decision.

1.3. Decision making

Vasilescu (2011) indicated that in buying decision process the consumer need to align with intention, mentality, strength and inclination to identification evidence before they make any decision. Consumer buying decision process have a direct effect from the way numerous internal and external factors such as brand awareness.

According to Hansen (2000) the consumer buying behavior depends on which intentions, attitudes, preferences, effort to commitment and way of identifying the consumers have. Therefore, consumer behaviour describes on how consumer make buying decision and how they utilize and discard of the purchase serices and goods (Marsh, Pare & Hamilton, 2006). Hence, we can make a better understanding on decision buying process for a marketer. A marketer needs to distinguish their market and consumer with a specific end goal to be fit for offering their goods and services, to be able to satisfy their needs, wants and demands in order to generate profitability and revenue, such as a market shares through acknowledgment and recognize their consumer's behaviour would make the organization success (Brosekhan, Velayutham and Phil, 2016). Beresford & Sloper (2008) mention that buying decision making process is the intention of the consumer to buy through the five stages and lastly how they going to use and put the goods or services.

From the finding, most of organization is more concerned on to have a better understanding of their consumer. This will lead to have a clear information about their consumer feel, think and choose goods and services (Appelt at. El., 2011). Consumer buyer and behaviour is a study about market segmentation, market targeting and to satisfy tehe needs, wants and demand (Dunn, 2007). In this new day, customer have a tough deal. This due to the varieties of products that offer a great option and deal. However, each of individuals or consumer will have a different decision making criteria and interpretation. Marketer need to understand buying behavioural in an ongoing process that involved pre purchase stage, purchase criteria, and post purchase issues (Franses & Vriens, 2004).

As a conclusion, consumer behaviour is a study on market segmentation, market targeting, market differentiation and market positioning to satisfy target consumer needs, wants and demands. (Usman at. el.,

2010). Market segmentation states that consumer behavior can understand based on the four dimension demographics, geographic, psychographics and behavior, this serve to satisfy the consumer needs, wants and demands. Brosekhan et.al., (2016), discovered that consumer behavior is an activity that involves, consuming, ordering of products or services and people obtaining.

2. Problem Statement

Brands awareness is very important role in the consumer decision making processes. It is really important for companies to find out customer decision making process and identify the conditions, which customers apply while making decision (Joshi & Gupta, 2012).

Many companies have a good product and services, but due to poor and unorganized branding activities the brand in not well-known to the consumer. Thus in mandate to increase sales in future, strong brands is need to capture loyal customer and market (Brosekhan et. al., 2016).

The focus of the result is to evaluate the branding and branding awareness and it is effects in the consumer buying decision making process.

3. Research Questions

The framework of the present study addresses independent variables that include brand recall, brand recognition and top-of-mind awareness. The framework also considers consumer decision making as dependent variables. Furthermore, the proposed framework that incorporates the variables to be studied is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 01. Theoretical Framework

Research Objective

• To identify the relationship between brand awareness on decision making in choosing the Higher Education Institution in Malaysia.

Research Question

This research was conducted to find the relationship between independent variables which brand awareness on dependent variables decision making. The question that can be arising is:

• Is there any relationship between brand awareness on decision making?

Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between brand awareness and decision making.

4. Purpose of the Study

This particular research focuses on the relationship between brand awareness and decision making: A case study of university. The result of this study will give the benefits to the country, organization and also to the researcher.

First, the result will guide the high education industry to improve their brand awareness in education to attract student to the organization. The findings of this study will help the organization to consider that brand awareness plays an important role in decision making. Consumers are usually aware of all the positives and negatives of each choice in terms of brand, quality, price and innovation (Franses & Vriens, 2004). Thus, the organizations that apply the recommended approach derived from the result of this study will be able to give a positive impact in decision making to the organization. Theory as well as practical strategies can be tied through the proposed research for increasing new brand awareness through different media options. Hansen (2000) examined how a university can use its heritage to promote and enhance its brand name.

This renewed interest in branding and strategy has also triggered researchers to study universities as brands (Nayeem (2012). This study benefits to researchers in the future about the effect of consumer decision making in the context of improving brand awareness. Thus, the study will help the researcher uncover critical area in the decisions making on education process that not able to explore.

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5. Research Methods

5.1. Population and sample

The target population is generation Y. Generation Y comprises the population of a country born between 1977 and 1994 (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999). The member are described as realistic, 'savvy', socially and environmentally aware and open to new experiences. They have moved some of their television viewing habits to the Internet and less likely to read the newspaper compared to their parents (Cant et al., 2006). Hestad (2013), found that generation Y were frequently in touch with their parents and they used technology at higher rates than people from other generations. Gen Yers were protected by their parents and are characterized as having grown up with self-esteems, a sense of entitlement and belief that anything is possible. They are optimistic, social and have high expectations for themselves and others. As a whole, this generation is the most educated and tech savvy of all generational groups.

5.2. Measurement Variables

In this study, 7 likert scale has been used to measure the independent and dependent variables. Likert scale or commonly pronounced as psychometric scale usually involved in research that employs questionnaires. The measures of level agreement in 7 likert scale are (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Neutral, (5) Somewhat Agree, (6) Agree and (7) Strongly Agree.

Independent variable in this study is brand awareness which are consists of brand recall, brand recognition and top-of-mind awareness and dependent variables is decision making.

5.3. Correlation

The correlation is a statistical measure that indicates the extent to which two or more variables change together. A positive correlation shows the extent to which those variable s increase or decrease in parallel; a negative correlation indicates the extent to which one variable increases as the extent to which one variable increases as the other decreases. This study used correlation measurement to see how the two variables are related. This technique can show how much the relationship of brand awareness and decision making are related.

6. Findings

6.1. Descriptive Analysis

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to all student selected in Klang Valley. All 346 questionnaire were returned (86.50% respondent rate).

Table 01. Demographic Data

Demographic Data	Categories	Frequency (F)	Percentage Of Sample (%)
GENDER	Female	268	77.5
	Male	78	22.5
RACE	Malay	300	86.7
	Chinese	12	3.5
	Indian	32	9.2
	African	1	.3
	Other	1	.3
AGE	Below 20 Year	73	21.1
	21-23 Year	237	68.5
	24-26 Year	36	10.4
	Above 27 Year	-	-
YEARS IN ATTENDANCE STUDY	1 Year	13	3.8
	2 Years	113	32.7
	3 Years	196	56.6
	4 Years	21	6.1
	5 Years	3	.9
CURRENT CGPA	Below 1.99	-	
	Between 2.00 - 2.49	6	1.7
	Between 2.50 - 2.99	58	16.8
	Between 3.00 - 3.49	163	47.1
	Above 3.49	119	34.4
DEGREE/ DIPLOMA	Bussiness	117	33.8
	Sci. Computer	69	19.9
	Eco & Finance	51	14.7
	Engineering	98	28.3
	Others	11	3.2

According to the result, the highest of respondents were female (77.7%) and male (22.5%). Based on race, malay respondent (86.7%) follow by indian (9.2%) then Chinese (3.5%) while African and other get same percentage (0.3%). The majority of age were in age 21-23 years (68.5%) followed by aged below 20 year (21.1%), 24-26 years (10.4%) and no respondent in age above 27 years. Years in study for year 3(56.6%), year 2 (32.7%) then for year 4 (6.1%) year 1 (3.8%) and year 5(0.9%). Current CGPA that they get for the highest is above 3.49(34.4%), 3.00-3.49(47.1%) followed by 2.50-2.99(16.8%) and the lowest is 2.00-2.49(1.7%). Respondent in Business course (33.8%) then Engineering course (283%), followed by Science Computer (19.9%), Economic and Finance (14.7%) and others (3.2%).

6.2. Reliability Analysis

Table 02. Reliability Analysis

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Brand Awareness	.681	10
Decision Making	.875	5

Table 2 show that the Cronbach`s alpha coefficient of the independent variable (Brand awareness) as computed for (N=10) IS 0.681, and dependent variable (Decision Making) as computed for (N=5) is 0.875 which is implies a relatively a accepted internal consistency.

6.3. Correlation Coefficient

Table 03. Correlation Analysis

		Brand Awareness	Decision Making
Brand Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.696[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	346	346
Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	.696[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	346	346

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the table 3, shows the estimated Pearson correlation for the general hypothesis is significant at 0.696**, implying a moderate relationship between Brand Awareness and Decision Making. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is positive significant relationship between Brand Awareness and Decision Making.

Therefore, the main research objective is accepted. According to the previous research, Brosekhan at. el., (2016) pointed out that brand awareness is one of the process the marketer need to follow and implement to have a positive connection with decision making of the consumers.

There are many of the researcher agreed that brand awareness is one of the important element toward the decision making. One of them is Vasilescu (2011) said that a in getting profitability and revenue by selling the goods and services markerter once needs to understand and identify the true consumer. According to Appelt et. al., (2011), the consumer buying decision influence on consumer brand awareness preferences, attitudes, effort to commitment and intentions.

7. Conclusion

In this study, the research explored the relationship between brand awareness and decision making: a case study of university. After collecting all the information and result, the reliability analysis shows that the variables are reliable and valid. While the correlations tested shows the results of the independent variable has a positive relationship with the decision making.

Moreover, finding from this study may be able to contribute the understanding toward the relationship between brand awareness and decision making to an organization.

Hence, brand awareness is the vital elements before the organization become well known. So, the organizations especially the higher education industry need to build and create their own awareness to form the bonding between the organization and the consumers.

Last but not least, brand awareness should be applying and be implementing in the organization not only for the education industry but in any kind of organization to achieve the good bonding with the consumers. When the good bonding has been created, the strong relationship between the organization and consumer cannot be isolated. It will lead to the loyal consumer to the particular organization.

This research has scientific significance. The result of this study can be used to guide the high education industry to improve their brand awareness in education to attract student to the organization. The findings of this study will help the organization to consider that brand awareness plays an important role in decision making. Thus, the organizations that apply the recommended approach derived from the result of this study will be able to give a positive impact in decision making to the organization. In addition, this study gives benefits to researchers in the future about the effect of consumer decision making in the context of improving brand awareness.

The recommendation is organized in integrated marketing communication (IMC). According to Bornmark et. al., (2005), IMC is too many and most of them is effective and efficient when we using it. For example, we can use direct marketing, advertising or mobile marketing to create the awareness about the brand to the consumer. With this kind of awareness, the consumer will remind and recognize that organization or higher education industry itself. It will position the brand in the consumer mind and it gives the good impact to the organization.

This research also can be used for regulation in developing the effectiveness in the organization. This can be used to develop awareness in order to position in consumer minds. We recommending the future researcher do the longitudinal for this study.

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