

"Effects of Brand Image and Awareness to Buying Habits and Usage of Bath Soap Products Among its Customers: SEM Model"

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ABSTRACT

The quantitative study aimed to identify effects of brand image and awareness to buying habits and usage of body soap products among its customers using structural equation modelling technique. Data were gathered through interview and treated in depth. Brand awareness affects usage of the bath soap product as presented in the SEM figure.

The proponents determined based on the findings that Image of the bath soap product significantly affects the usage of the product. So much so with image of the bath soap product is not significantly correlated with the brand awareness of its customers. Brand usage affects a lot of factors as presented in Table 3. As a recommendation, since benefits reflect the image of the bath soap, the proponents suggest companies should intensely focus on improving the benefits derived from using the bath soap. So that customers will continuously buy their product.

The results achieved by the study need further evaluation of brand image of bath soap products. It is hereby recommended by the researchers to use other factors such as brand equity and advertising factors in determining percentage of brand users. Brand awareness does not positively affect brand usage among customers. As recommended by the proponents, companies need to regularize their spending on advertisements as a medium periodically seen by customers.

Companies should therefore, concentrate on improving the image of the product and review advertising plan to target right market for advertisements.

KEYWORDS: Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Brand Usage, Buying Habits, Structural Equation Model

1. INTRODUCTION

Research studies allow a company to see their commercial value from the eyes of the clients or buyers. They are used to test the effectiveness of a company's image, brand or advertising campaign. By determining buyer perceptions toward the company/brand, the way they perceive the company/brand (image), and how or

how frequently they use the company/brand, the proponents can uncover motivations and drivers of usage. From this point of view, one can accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative, leading more consumers to your brand, product or service [dela Cruz, 2007].

Brand image is the impression in the consumers' mind of a brand's total personality. Brand images developed overtime through advertising campaigns with consisted theme, and is authenticated through the consumers' direct experience.[businessdictionary.com]

Brand awareness has a stronger impact on the subsequent purchasing choices, if the product once tried out fulfilled the consumer's expectations. [Maciej Koniewski]

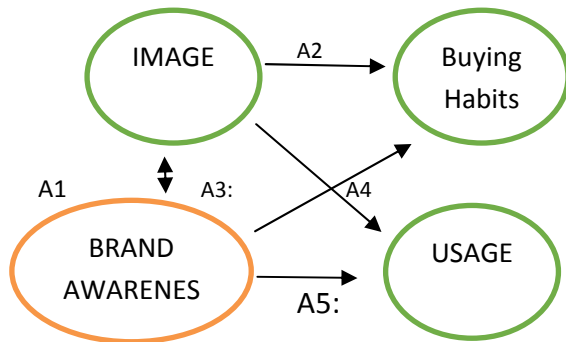
Brand awareness and usage are critical tools for market researchers that help understand the effectiveness of current marketing campaigns, brand recognition, and even public image of a company. Brand image in market research is an underlying belief that a person has pertaining to a product or service. It is often an assertiveness about a product, the person may have positive or negative feelings that are commonly connected with a visual image referencing the product it recalls [Behrall, 2008].

When concerning approaches that consumers may have about a product, basic concerns are very important. These include: the perception of product quality, value of a product, and relating an image to a particular product. Measuring brand image and usage can be achieved through various survey methods ranging from "have you ever heard of brand Z" question types, to which brand comes to the "top of your mind" first. These surveys are critical in assessing how effective a company is at marketing their products by examining the brand image consumers have and the effect these may contain on considerations for product purchase or usage.

The proponents used Structural equation models (SEMs), commonly called simultaneous equation

models. These models are multivariate (i.e., multi equation) regression models [Fox, 2002]. The proponents decided to use this model to further explore possibilities of getting accurate and reliable conclusions for better implications and assessment of variables mentioned.

2. DESIGN/SIMULACRUM:



Assumptions of the Study:

- A1: Image of the bath soap product correlates with the brand awareness of its customers.
- A2: Image of the bath soap product influences buying habits of its customers.
- A3: Image of the bath soap product persuades usage of the product.
- A4: Brand awareness contributes to the buying habits of its customers.
- A5: Brand awareness affects usage of the bath soap product.

The proponents sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between brand image and brand awareness among bath soap customers?
2. Is there a relationship between brand awareness to consumer buying habits and usage of the bath soap?
3. Is there a relationship between brand image using its product characteristics to consumer buying habits and usage?

The paper applied sequential equation model to evaluate answers of respondents. The proponents assessed the effects of brand image and awareness to buying habits and usage of body soap products among its customers.

2.1 Selection and Study Site

The proponents chose to interview and distributed the survey questionnaire to families of selected college students in gathering primary data for the research study. Five hundred copies of the survey were distributed and four hundred ten copies were returned with complete answers.

2.2 Data Measure:

Data gathered were tabulated and computed using SPSS and Amos software applications namely chi square, regression analysis and structural equation model respectively. [Lindenman 2008] Instrument used is composed of Likert scale applying open ended questions with 1 as highest rating and 5 as lowest rating. Survey questionnaire includes also several profile inquiries of the respondents.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Survey questionnaire forms were distributed to college students. Personal interview was also utilized to gather information. Likewise, email addresses were also used to collect the answers to the interview questions formulated by the proponents.

3. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

Results of computed tables are shown below:

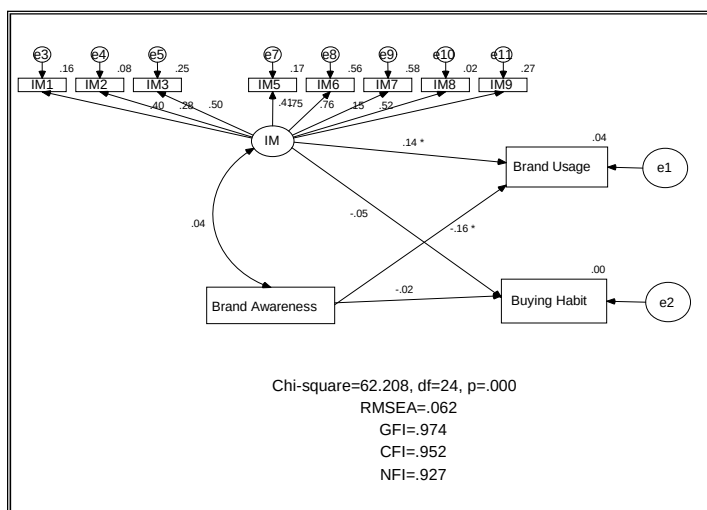


Figure 1

SEM Model of Brand Usage, Awareness and Buying Habit

Legend:

IM1: Manufacturer IM2: Scent IM3: Availability at stores
IM5: Popularity IM6: Endorser IM7: Size
IM8: Influence by friends IM9: Influence by relatives, neighbors

The proposed model was assessed using structural equation model. It was found out that the model fits the data very well. Chi-square over the degrees of freedom (cmin/df) is 2.592, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) is 0.062, goodness of fit index (GFI) is 0.974, comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.952, and normal fit index (NFI) is 0.927. These results indicated that a well-fitted model could be used in testing the relationship between the variables under investigation.

Based on the structural equation model presented in Figure 1, results showed that image of the bath soap product is not significantly correlated with the brand awareness of its customers. The model also revealed that image of the bath soap product does not affect the buying habits of the customers but it significantly affects the usage of the product. It was also found out that although brand awareness does not contribute significantly to the buying habits of the customers it significantly affects usage of the bath soap product.

TABLE 1
Analysis of Variance on Bath Soap Brand Image

Variables	F Value	P value
Gender	17.66	0.000**
Age	0.172	0.953
Socio Economic Status	7.110	0.000**

Work Status	.037	0.964
Educational Attainment	3.250	0.007**
Position in the Family	7.613	0.000**
Total Socio Economic Status	9.330	0.000**

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 1 shows the computed F values which are used to determine if there are differences in the preferences of the customers regarding brand soap images when they are grouped according to their profile. There is significant difference between the brand image according to Gender, educational attainment, SEC Status, position in the family and total Socio Economic status. There is no significant difference between the brand image according to age group and work status.

TABLE 2
Brand Usage of Bath Soap Users

Variables	Chi-square (χ^2) Value	P value
Gender	61.818	0.000**
Age	97.391	0.000**
Socio Economic Status	47.631	0.000**
Work Status	24.606	0.000**
Educational Attainment	155.715	0.000**
Position in Family	180.614	0.000**
Total Socio Economic Status	54.782	0.000**

** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 2 presents the chi-square results used to test the association between the customers frequency of brand usage and their profile. A significant relationship between brand usage and Gender (gender), age, socio economic status, work status, educational attainment, and position in the family and total socio economic status were established.

TABLE 3
Buying Habit of Bath Soap Users

Variables	Ch-square (χ^2) Value	P value
Gender	6.014	0.198
Age	121.447	0.000**
Socio Economic Status	92.196	0.000**
Work Status	20.815	0.008**
Educational Attainment	69.323	0.000**
Position in Family	53.605	0.000**
Total Socio Economic Status	108.152	0.000**

** Significant at 0.01 level

Furthermore, table 3 shows that using the chi-square test, it was found out that there is no significant relationship between buying habit and Gender (gender). However, there is significant relationship between buying habit and age, socio economic status, work status, educational attainment, position in the family and total socio economic status.

4. DISCUSSION

Figure 1 presented findings of the paper namely, image is not correlated with brand awareness. This evidently clarifies that even if the image of bath soaps is positive, there is no effect to brand awareness among bath soap customers. Brand awareness can be attributed to the different sources of information provided by bath soap companies specifically to its advertisements in various media.

Image does not affect buying habits. This brings to an impression that image of bath soaps have nothing to do with how much or how often customers buy their brand of bath of soap.

Image affects the usage of the product. This implies attributes beneficial to customers. Image reflects services contributed by the bath soap to its market. If customers are satisfied with the benefits provided by the bath soap, they will eventually be loyal consumers.

Brand awareness does not affect buying habits of customers. Awareness level is imperative to reach to its height which would result to economically high sales returns. However, findings of this study proved that brand awareness has little or less effect over buying habits. This shows that buyers have different buying habits which could not be contributed to the company's efforts of disseminating information about the bath soap product.

Brand awareness significantly affects usage of the bath soap product as presented in the SEM figure. Results reveal consumers' brand usage

experiences contribute to brand awareness, implying experience precedes awareness in some contexts [Huang, 2012]. Related paper allowed the researchers to discern if the product usage and presentation meet all of the customer's expectations or if shortcoming(s) exist. [Rogan 2006]

Studies of brand awareness, attitudes, and usage (AAU) enable marketers to quantify levels and trends in customer knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, intentions, and behaviors.[Moos 2012] In most companies, the results of these studies are called "tracking" data because they are used to track long-term changes in customer awareness, attitudes, and behaviors.[Kidder 2003]

This paper allows statistical cross checks by gender, age, and educational and socioeconomic level, among others. In those cases where similar studies from previous years exist, it allows comparisons in order to track trends over time.[Roberts, 2010] Factors such as age and work status relatively does not affect brand image as presented in Table 1. Remarkably noted that all variables in Table 2 has significant difference to bath soap brand image. This explains why brand image is a very imperative feature to be deliberated by manufacturers of bath soap.

Results also allow a clear and objective appraisal of the current status of buying habits among bath soap users, as well as an evaluation of what comparative advantages these have over the competition. Likewise, buying habit has no relationship with gender of bath soap users. [Sipkoff 2008]

5. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The researchers determined based on the findings that Image of the bath soap product significantly affects the usage of the product. Nevertheless, image of the bath soap product does not affect the buying habits of the customers. [Rex 2004] So much so with image of the bath soap product is not significantly correlated with the brand awareness of its customers. Brand usage affects a lot of factors as presented in Table 3. As a

recommendation, since benefits reflect the image of the bath soap, the proponents advocate companies focus on refining the benefits derived from using the bath soap. So that customers will constantly purchase their product.

The optimistic affiliation of brand awareness on the perceived brand image for consumers is not significant. The proponents recommend that companies should focus more on refining benefits as image of the bath soap more than spending money on bath soap advertisements. Consumers of bath soap have determined the position and influence of brand awareness in their buying habits.[Murray 2011].

The outcomes achieved by the learning need further valuation of brand image of bath soap products. It is hereby endorsed by the researchers to use other aspects such as brand equity and advertising factors in determining percentage of brand users. Brand awareness does not positively affect brand usage among customers. As recommended by the proponents, companies need to regularize their spending on advertisements as a medium periodically seen by customers.

Companies should therefore, concentrate on improving the image of the product and review advertising plan to target right market for advertisements. The proponents recommend that there will be further studies pragmatic to using conjoint analysis of the variables mentioned in the study to better help companies involved in their management decisions.

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