



Issues in the Branding and Advertising Strategies with Application to Kingdom of Bahrain

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Abstract: This research is about the issues in the branding and advertising strategies that are implemented by companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Being in the age of information and the globalization ever expanding, advertising strategies must evolve to face the issues that arise. This paper will study the effects and benefits of using branding over sales-driven advertising strategies. Young consumers were the target of this study as questionnaires were used to obtain the data. The reason for this criterion implemented as the researcher believes that the young generation is the most affected by the changes around the world over the past two decades. The main concepts studied are the importance of the brand to surveyed group, how they conceive brands, how much more they are willing to pay for a branded item, and which medium and language should the companies use to target those consumers. The researcher recommended and validated the branding-driven advertisement to be used by companies, the medium and language of delivering the message while not forgetting the importance of online and social media emergence.

Keywords: Marketing, Branding, Advertising, Strategy, Bahrain

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world, where we are all surrounded by advertisement campaigns showing us what to buy, consume, and even how to live. It is important for companies to brand and position themselves in the brain of consumers as a promise of quality and experience. In order to achieve competitive lead over competitors, a brand differentiates itself by establishing key links in the consciousness of customers (Keller et al. 2002). That is why many companies spend millions of dollars yearly on advertising campaigns targeted at branding their product or service. According to Forbes (2012), Apple Inc. spent \$933 million purely on advertising in 2011.

Branding can add value and benefit both the consumers and the owners (Brassington & Pettitt, 2006). Consumers will be able to identify distinctive products and those products will give them the experience they had sought. Also, it will minimize risks faced by the customers as they are already familiar with the quality and the benefits associated with the product despite the fact that they still have not used it (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Moreover, branding saves consumer time in age of information and speed. To the owners, the brand will help the company to charge premium prices for its goods and services while it offers the possibilities for line extensions.

Most importantly, the creation of consumer loyalty as a businesses struggle nowadays with keeping market shares with all the global competitions faced. Put in short by Jobber and Fahy (2006), the brand adds to the company's value, enhances consumer loyalty, and creates barriers to competition. Advertising addresses the emotions of the target group which are significantly responsible for our purchasing decision makings (Mehta & Purvis, 2006). Hence, when addressed properly, a brand can create the emotional attachment to product which will achieve the loyalty sought. Psychologically, successfully establishing the brand name which helps the customer to in the identification of a new product enhances customer expectations, consequently, increases the probability of trials which in turn reduces the costs of promotions (Sullivan, 1992).

So, what pushes companies into sales-driven advertisement campaigns which are observable in many companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain? It is the appeal of securing a short-term maximum return to investment for the stakeholders mostly used when economies of scale is achieved (Moore K & Pareek N, 2010). With the world opening up and barriers of entry diminishing, companies should look ahead and have a sustainable competitive advantage to survive (Kotler et al. 2001).



This study seeks out to find out the importance of brands to the young in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Specifically, the extend to what premium price they are willing to pay in order to obtain famous or branded products, the representation of brand in their minds, the effect of branded advertising to them, the language and the medium they respond to, and the way they approach their purchases. At the end, recommendations are offered in order to enhance the advertising campaigns of companies who try to reach out to the new generation.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of the research is a mix of quantitative and qualitative data obtained through survey questionnaires distributed to university students. Most questions were based on Likert-scale type of questions with the availability of five options for the surveyed to choose from. With the scale being given numerical equivalents as follows:

Very Great = 4.01 – 5.00

Great = 3.00 – 3.99

Moderate = 2.00 – 2.99

Negligible = 1.00 – 1.99

Very Negligible = 0.00 – 0.99

The selected students were first and second years business students at AMA International University as they offer the convenience and fit the criteria set by the researcher for the target survey group. This method was used as it offers the flexibility, dependability and allows close supervision to the survey.

The questions aim to understand the shopping habits and pattern of the target group in order to capture the value of brands in their lives. There were two open ended questions to present the respondents with the opportunity of expressing themselves and permit the psychological analysis of branding.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered were plugged in SPSS 20 which was used to analyze them. The study is structured in a way that it begins general demographic data followed by specific questions aimed to gather the data to plot them into information that led to this paper.

3.1 Response Rate

It is thought to be that the pattern provided by actual respondents is unlikely to reflect the whole population in social sciences. The high response rate for this study is due to the controlled environment of the surveyed as the questionnaire were distributed to the researcher's classes which offered the self-administration method. The researcher did explain the questions to the respondents beforehand. The respondents were assured that the

individual information given and the language remained neutral and confidential.

125 questionnaires were distributed to the students of 5 different classes of first and second years' students at the university. Out of that, only 6 were undelivered and 11 incomplete (missing responses). Through the efforts of the researcher and constant follow-up, the 86% response rate has been achieved which was helpful for this paper. Table 3.1.1 offers a summary of the response rates.

TABLE 3.1.1: SUMMARY OF RESPONSE RATE

Questionnaires administrated	Number	Percentage
Incomplete	11	8.80%
Undelivered	6	4.80%
Full Responses	108	86%
Total	125	100%

3.2 Profiles of the Respondents

The four major items of the sample's demographic information included: (1) gender, (2) age, (3) sector of employment, and (4) the monthly income in Bahraini Dinars. The schedules below were plotted following the collection of the results according to occurrence and percentage and the demographic variables.

TABLE 3.2.1: GENDER

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Male	64	59.3
Female	44	40.7
Total	108	100.0

TABLE 3.2.2: AGE

Coding	Frequency	Percent
16-20	27	25.0
21-25	65	60.2
26-30	12	11.1
31-35	3	2.8
36+	1	.9
Total	108	100.0



TABLE 3.2.3: SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Government	43	39.8
Private	52	48.1
Unemployed	13	12.0
Total	108	100.0

TABLE 3.2.4: MONTHLY INCOME IN BAHRAINI DINARS

Coding	Frequency	Percent
0-100	1	.9
101-200	5	4.6
201-300	9	8.3
301-400	18	16.7
401-500	34	31.5
501-600	30	27.8
601-700	4	3.7
701-800	3	2.8
801-900	1	.9
901-1000	1	.9
1000+	2	1.9
Total	108	100.0

The tables above show that the majority of responses came from males with 59.3%. It not considered as a vast majority, yet it matches the observational distribution of the classes. 65 respondents out of the 108 completed questionnaires are in the age range of 21-25 which equates to majority with a percentage of 60.2%. It is worth noting that 25% are between 16 and 20 years old. That fits greatly into the researcher's goal of studying the young people of Bahrain.

48.1% of the respondents work in the private sector while 39.8% of them are in the government sector. Only, 12% reported that they are unemployed which the researcher instructed them to answer the monthly income question as how much money that borrow or take from their sponsors or family monthly. A total of 59.3% of responders earn between BHD401 and BHD600 a month. Those two variables are helpful to understand the purchasing powers of the average Bahraini youth.

3.3 Results

TABLE 3.3.1: SHOPPING FREQUENCY (PER MONTH)

Coding	Frequency	Percent
1-2	14	13.0
3-4	44	40.7
5-6	39	36.1
7-8	10	9.3
9+	1	.9
Total	108	100.0

This question was asked to capture on the shopping patterns of the respondents and it shows that 53.7% of the respondents go shopping up to once a week. Notably, 36.1% do some shopping once every five to six days. This pattern shows that Bahraini youths do go shopping quite often. Those numbers can relate to the study done by the Voucher Codes Pro website where they found that 36% of 2,300 Brits surveyed grocery shop once a week (Charlotte Morgan, 2014).

TABLE 3.3.2: BRAND IMPORTANCE

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Not Important at All	1	.9
Not Important	8	7.4
Neutral	22	20.4
Important	35	32.4
Very Important	42	38.9
Total	108	100.0

Essentially for this paper is how important is a brand to the consumers. When surveyed, a total of 71.3% of the respondents view the brand as at least important to them with 38.9% see it as very important. This shows that the Bahraini youth are affected by brands indeed. Following a survey of 2,838 adults surveyed in the United States of America, 29% mentioned that they already wear and prefer a brand's logo (Gensler, 2013).

TABLE 3.3.3: WILLINGNESS TO PAY PREMIUM FOR A BRAND

	Frequency	Percent
0%	3	2.8
1%-50%	7	6.5
51%-100%	17	15.7
101%-150%	48	44.4
151%+	33	30.6
Total	108	100.0



When plotting the results, the researcher found that exactly 75% of the respondents are willing to pay at least double the price of a famous brand item. This aligns with the Gensler (2013) survey where 43% indicated that they are willing to pay more for a brand's product with 29% confirming that they already do.

TABLE 3.3.4: BRAND REPRESENTATION

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Quality	63	58.3
Prestige	14	13.0
Experience	4	3.7
All of the above	27	25.0
Total	108	100.0

Table 3.3.4 shows that over half of the respondents associate the quality to a certain brand with 58.3% of them. Exactly, one quarter of the surveyed believe that it represents prestige and experience alongside quality. Brands do serve as a predictive association to the quality of the brand (C. Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000).

TABLE 3.3.5 ONLINE SHOPPING

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Yes	79	73.1
No	29	26.9
Total	108	100.0

TABLE 3.3.5 PRE-PURCHASING RESEARCH

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Yes	79	73.1
No	29	26.9
Total	108	100.0

Tables 3.3.4 and 3.3.5 show that 73.1% of the respondents do shop online with 66.7% of them believes that they do a lot of research before making the purchase. Those numbers fit the figures that Mintel (2015) found in their report as 69% of Americans do their research before purchasing.

TABLE 3.3.6: ADVERTISING AS A BRAND PURCHASING STIMULATE

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Very Unlikely	3	2.8
Unlikely	10	9.3
Neutral	33	30.6
Likely	46	42.6
Very Likely	16	14.8
Total	108	100.0

When asked, majority of the respondents do feel that advertising would change their opinion towards or drive them to buy a specific brand with 42.6%. It is safe to say that human emotions do influence our decision making significantly (LaDoux, 2002). Since adverts address emotions, consequently, it will drive us and guide us towards a certain purchase, whether than was consciously or subconsciously.

TABLE 3.3.7: ADVERTISING MEDIUM

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Television	51	47.2
Radio	4	3.7
Social Media	31	28.7
Online	17	15.7
Newspapers	2	1.9
Billboards	2	1.9
Mobile Messages	1	.9
Total	108	100.0

TABLE 3.3.8: ADVERTISING EXPOSURE

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Hourly	70	64.8
Daily	31	28.7
Weekly	7	6.5
Total	108	100.0

Despite the fact that the surveyed generation is famous for using the internet constantly and always in social media, the results of the questionnaires show that majority of the advertising seen by them is through television with a percentage of 47.2%. Social Media did come in second with 28.7% but television is still dominant as an advertising mean. This conforms by the study conducted



for MarketShare by Jason Lynch that television is still the most effective advertising medium (Adweek, 2015).

TABLE 3.3.9: ADVERTISING LANGUAGE

Coding	Frequency	Percent
Arabic	80	74.1
English	22	20.4
Other	6	5.6
Total	108	100.0

Although globalization is spreading out around the world and the people of Bahrain getting more knowledgeable and learning other languages, a vast majority of the students do still hear and respond to advertisements in the Arabic language with almost three quarters of them. Consumers prefer companies when a version in their mother tongue is available on the website, even for fluent English speakers of them (Hayward & Tong, 2001).

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Haligi youth do often go shopping on a virtually weekly basis and they view brands as very important where most of them are ready to pay at least double the price of unbranded or non-famous items in seek of quality. They are moving fast towards online shopping and they do plenty of research prior to purchasing. Their conscious purchasing decision making is likely to be influenced by advertisements especially in the Arabic language. They spend most of their time watching television and on social media.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings, the following recommendations are offered by the researcher to the companies which are looking for more long-term profitability, market share, and the loyalty of customers, more specifically, in Bahrain.

Firstly, and most importantly, avoid the temptation of short-term, sales-driven, and cheaper marketing campaigns by concentrating them on brand awareness and building which will achieve customer loyalty and returning customers. Secondly, it is believed that a brand reflects quality. Therefore, focusing those campaigns on the quality of the products and services offered by the company as that is what the Bahraini youth are looking for. Thirdly, the marketers have to take into consideration that the Arabic language is still dominant and it will offer better response rate from customers. Last but not least, an online existence through social media and website both in the Arabic language seem a must to have an edge over competitors as the target group do shop online and read reviews before making a purchase.

All those recommendations should yield at least the double of the revenues the companies are making as they can charge that premium when the brand is associated with quality, prestige and experience.

6. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher is planning on developing this study and there are number of opportunities to further analyze the data available in hand.

For instance, the cross-sectional type of the study can reduce the observational possibilities of the researcher. The study depended on the opinions and the feelings of the consumer themselves eliminating the causations such as the feeling of guilt or pleasure of shopping.

Also, correlation studies will be carried out by the researcher using the same and further data. For example, the correlation of specific individual's income to the perceived importance of a brand.

Finally, how brands are perceived differently among the two genders.

7. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the study is to examine the importance of brands in the minds of the Bahraini youth and to validate the argument of the profitability of marketing-oriented campaigns over the short-term sales-driven ones. The outcome of the current study shows the preferable direction of the company's marketing campaigns to concentrate on increasing it is brand awareness by associating it to quality. It was shown that the target group still prefers television advertisement in the Arabic language despite of the big jump of social media and English literacy. The recommendations offered show the long-term profitability would double with such strategies.

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