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A Study on the Association between Brand Awareness and Consumer/Brand Loyalty for the Packaged Milk Industry in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Brand awareness remains fundamental to consumer life as the interaction initiation point to the brands. This paper put forwards the relationship of brand awareness on consumer/brand loyalty in the packaged milk brands in the urban Pakistan. There is evidence of brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty on brand equity. The approach takes into account sources of brand equity-brand awareness, consumer/brand loyalty and image (perceptions / associations) on the sample of consumer households. This paper suggests that in Pakistan among the packaged milk brands there is no relationship between brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty. In addition, testing relationship by setting perceptions as the mediating variable between brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty results the same. For practicing managers and marketers it is important to note that there is a need to update their understanding of the nature and role of brand awareness on convenience products which has random switch purchase behavior and low-involvement. In the current era, marketers must develop branding strategies for commodity-products such as milk packaged brands by investing and strengthening its supply chain system, to create and increase brand awareness for the milk brands in-turn to build consumer/brand loyalty than trying to directly build consumer/brand loyalty by heavy spending on promotional tools.

Key Words: brand awareness; consumer/brand loyalty; brand equity; brand perception

JEL Classification: M31; M39

INTRODUCTION

The area of research for this paper focuses on empirically studying the relationship of brand awareness on brand/consumer loyalty, which constitutes the success of a brand. This relationship between brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty has been studied in Pakistan focusing on the geographical region of Karachi in the context of fast moving consumer products such as packaged milk brands.

Brand Equity and its interrelationships with brand awareness has been an important area of study in extant literature (Keller, 2003, 2006; Aaker, 1991, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001, 2000; Moore, 2002; Srivastava & Shocker, 1991; Ailawadi, Lehmann & Neslin, 2003; Srinivasan, Park & Chang, 2005).

Brand Equity, as the focus of this study is defined as comprehensive set of values attached by the consumers creating differential effects to the brand which creates revenue in the competitive market (Aaker, 1991). In this connection 'Brand Awareness' is the primary dimension of brand equity and is vital for the purpose.

Brand equity is initially built by laying a foundation of brand awareness - eventually forming positive brand images - and is ultimately maximized by high levels of brand loyalty (Strategic Marketing and Research Techniques, 2008). In other words, by understanding the locus of brand loyalty the practicing managers can redirect their efforts towards factors that contribute to brand loyalty. The present research, uses packaged milk-brands because, firstly milk is an everyday commodity and secondly, it is heavily advertised by packagers of milk. Also to substantiate the low involvement decision settings helping creating the level of brand awareness for the particular product choice, even in the absence of a well-formed attitude (Betteman & Park 1980; Hoyer & Brown 1990; Park & Lessig, 1981). It is, therefore, pertinent to address the issue of consumer/brand loyalty in packaged milk industry and thus develop an informed opinion of the heavy advertising expenditures witnessed in the industry.

Therefore, this paper aims to study "The association between Brand Awareness and consumer/brand loyalty: A Study of Packaged Milk Brands".

The overall relationships of the brand awareness construct on consumer/brand loyalty of packaged milk brands in the industry has been empirically analyzed and resulted.

Literature Review

Concept of Branding

The concept of Branding holds tremendous importance since many years; it is the key to distinguish the goods and services from one to another. Customer's simple understanding of brand is to associate and reckon with easy information processing about products purchasing and being certain about the brand to build their trust with time (Logo Design works, 2007).

This reflects the greater need from the organization's point of view to have strong brands build through proper brand management resulting from effective marketing programs to create brand equity.

The modern concept of branding grew out of the consumer packaged goods industry and the process of branding has come to include much more than just creating a way to

identify a product or company. Branding today is used to create emotional attachments to products and companies (Dolak, 2003; Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). Branding efforts create a feeling of involvement, a sense of higher quality and an aura of intangible qualities that surround the brand name, mark or symbol (Aaker, 1991; Dolak, 2003).

Brands basically create perceptions in the mind of the consumer that it is unique and there is no other similar product or service in the market. Therefore, a brand is to say to be strong entity if it is consistent over a long period of time in providing the product or service which consumers and prospective purchasers can rely and trust, which will lead to a Brand promise (Srinivasan, Park & Chang, 2005).

Brand Equity

The most important assets of any business are intangible - including its base of loyal customers, brands, symbols & slogans and the brand's underlying image, personality, identity, attitudes, familiarity, associations and name awareness. These assets along with patents, trademarks and channel relationships comprise brand equity and are a primary source of competitive advantage and future earnings (Aaker, 1991; Neal & Strauss, 2008).



Source: Strategic Marketing and Research Techniques, 1992-2008. Brand and Image Assessment

Figure 1: Strategic Marketing & Research Techniques, 2008.

The Brand Loyalty is the result of the success of the Brand Equity which is built as shown in the pyramid of the various variables, which makes the brand more stronger and satisfying to be consumed more often thus expanding its value in the longer run through generating profits.

The importance of brand equity consists of numerous benefits for companies that own brands. Brand equity has positive association with brand loyalty. More precisely, brand equity increases the probability of brand selection, leading to customer loyalty to a specific brand (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995).

Factors that Influences Brand Equity

The following are the five major factors said by Aaker (2002, p.7) to influence the Brand Equity as 'Brand Equity (like company equity) is the set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand that adds or subtract from the brand value. Aaker (1991) originally outlined five

components of brand equity:

1. Name Awareness:

- o Share of mind

2. Perceived Quality:

- o Seen as better / best fit for me (functionality, trust, long lasting)

3. Brand Loyalty:

- o Enduring preference

4. Positive Associations:

- o Sponsorships, admired people using the product, corporate citizenship.

5. Other Assets:

- o Trade marks, exclusive channels, merchandising systems (Paul, 2005).

Brand Awareness

"Brand awareness refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind" (Aaker, 1996, p.10). It is a measure of the percentage of the target market that is aware of a brand name (Bovee, 1995). Marketers can create awareness among their target audience through repetitive advertising and publicity (Stryfom, 1995). Brand awareness can provide a host of competitive advantages for the marketer. These include the following (Aaker, 1996):

-Brand awareness renders the brand with a sense of familiarity.

-Name awareness can be a sign of presence, commitment and substance.

-The salience of a brand will decide if it is recalled at a key time in the purchasing process.

-Brand awareness is an asset that can be inordinately durable and thus sustainable. It may be extremely difficult to dislodge a brand that had achieved a dominant awareness level (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness is vitally important for all brands but high brand awareness without an understanding of what sets one apart from the competition does one virtually no good (Aaker, 1996, p. 174).

Brand Awareness study by Aaker

Organizations can generate brand awareness by, firstly having a broad sales base, and secondly becoming skilled at operating outside the normal media channels (Aaker, 1996).

Brand awareness is measured according to the different ways in which consumers remember a brand, which may include brand recognition, brand recall, top of the mind brand and dominant brand (Aaker, 1996).

* **Brand recognition:** It's related to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to that brand when given the brand a cue. It requires that consumers can correctly discriminate

the brand as having been previously seen or heard.

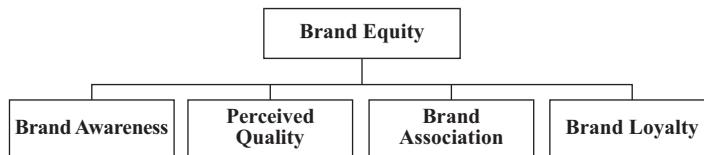
* **Brand recall:** Brand recall relates to consumers' aptitude to retrieve the brand from memory given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category or a purchase or usage situation as a cue. It requires consumers to correctly generate the brand from memory when given a relevant cue.

* **Top-of-mind brand:** This is the brand name that first comes to mind when a consumer is presented with the name of a product classification.

* **Dominant Brand:** The ultimate awareness level is brand name dominance, where in a recall task most consumers can only provide the name of a single brand. Therefore the challenge facing the marketers is to build awareness and presence both economically and efficiently (Aaker, 1996).

Brand Awareness and the Customer perspective

Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2000) define brand equity as brand assets linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to, or subtract from, a product or service. According to them, these assets, shown in Figure, can be grouped into four dimensions: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty.



Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000
Figure 2: Francisco Guzman, 2004

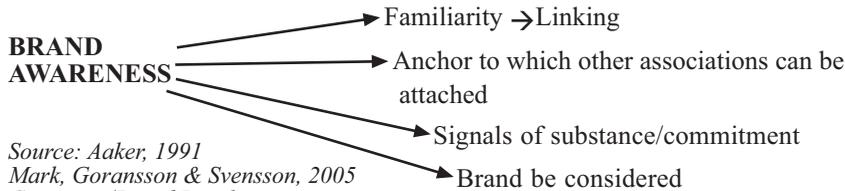
These dimensions have been commonly used and accepted by many researchers (Keller 1993; Motameni & Shahrokhi 1998; Yoo & Donthu 2001; Bendixen, Bukasa, & Abratt 2003; Kim, Kim, & An 2003). Brand awareness affects perceptions and taste, People like the familiar and are prepared to ascribe all sorts of good attitudes to items those are familiar to them. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000).

The Importance of brand awareness in brand choice

Taking Aaker's (1991) study on brand awareness that enlightens the theory of brand equity's integral part that is brand awareness. Aaker (1991) covered petite aspects of this topic to clarify its purpose of being there and why it has been so important and in fact gaining more insights by the organizations which are investing a lot in the brand share and its value which is caused from the initiation point of bringing awareness to the consumers about the brands in the market until its trial, adoption and re-purchase to the loyalty aspect which has been covered thoroughly.

Brand awareness as into further elaboration is the capacity of consumers to recognize or remember a brand and there is a linkage between the brand and the product class, but the

link does not have to be strong. Brand awareness is a process from where the brand is just known to a level when the consumers have put the brand on a higher rank; the brand has become the "top of mind" (Aaker, 1991).



*Source: Aaker, 1991
Mark, Goransson & Svensson, 2005
Consumer/Brand Loyalty
Figure 3*

As expressed earlier regarding brand equity, brand loyalty is the part of it. Brand loyalty affects the consumers' choice of brand to a high extent.

In simple words, when consumers are loyal to a certain brand they buy it at regular basis. Being Loyal translates saying no to other brands in the same product-category whether they are better than the chosen brand. Loyalty gives an advantage to the firms, as they can handle competition in lower price and improve products much better when having loyal consumers (Usiner, 2000). It means :

- low brand equity → if buyers don't care about the brand.
- high brand equity → consumers are focused on the brand and other elements of the brand (logo, jingle etc)
Also having lesser respect of other brand offerings (Aaker, 1991).

Aaker (1991) further explains that loyalty is basically a measured capacity of how much a purchaser can be emotionally involved in a brand. It shows how much a consumer is willing to change to another brand, when other brands are offering more than the brand being in use. By time, the loyalty gets higher, the consumers' platform and the competition against competitors gets stronger. Brand Loyalty indicates the sale which is the future profit of brand equity. The types of loyalties are:

- Passive loyal: Buying the brand out of habit.
- Fence sitters: indifferent between two or more brands.
- Committed: Truly loyal to the brand.

Aaker (1991) tells that brand awareness, perceived quality and clear effective brand identity can contribute to higher loyalty (Aaker, 2002 ; Mark, Goransson & Sevensson, 2005).

Brand awareness and brand image to be ascendant to brand satisfaction and brand trust. That is, both brand satisfaction and brand trust require brand knowledge; unless a consumer has a representation of the brand in memory including awareness and a positive image he

or she cannot be satisfied by the brand or trust the brand (Chaudhuri, & Holbrook, 2001).

At this point in the literature review it is appropriate to suggest that in all the theories and models discussed so far, brand awareness assumes paramount significance. More or less all material point to the fact that brand awareness is the foremost step in creating brand equity as reflected in consumer/brand loyalty.

Brand Awareness and Consumer/Brand Loyalty

Finally, brand awareness affects consumer loyalty and decision-making by influencing the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image created through the different information attached to the brand in memory.

Based on these and other opinions of different authors on brand awareness and its importance to the company in turns of gaining market share through brand loyalty by consumers strong perceptions and associations which is caused by the awareness of brand through different forms signifies its research essential study on the brands in competition.

In practice companies use aided and unaided awareness, image and branding marketing research studies to determine the extent to which consumers are familiar and positive opinions about their products or services. In many industries, companies with the highest awareness levels also control the largest market share.

Keeping in mind the importance accorded to the concept of "Brand Awareness" by various authors and practitioners, its research implications are well established (Market Research Worldwide, 2009). Awareness levels, measures whether consumers know about and are familiar with a company, organization, product, or service. Unaided awareness is the degree to which consumers think of a company or product on a top-of-mind basis. For example, When you think of companies that provide these categories of products, which first come to mind? (Market Street Research, 2004).

Aided awareness on the other hand is the degree to which consumers who know about a company or product are familiar with that company or product. For example a question asked could be, *How familiar are you with this product? Would you say you are very familiar, somewhat familiar, or not familiar?* (Market Street Research, 2004).

Focusing on the relevance of brand awareness that is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in memory, as reflected by consumers' ability to identify the brand under different conditions (Rossiter and Percy 1987). In other words, how well does the brand identities serve their function.

In particular, brand name awareness related to the likelihood that a brand name will come to mind and the ease with which it does so.

Brand awareness consists of brand recognition and recall performance. Brand recognition is related to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the name as a cue. Brand recall relates to consumers' ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe or a cue (Dolak, 2003).

The reason for studying brand awareness the important role it plays in consumer decision making/perceived value/ consumer loyalty for three major reasons:

First, it is important that consumers think of the brand when they think about the product category. Raising brand awareness increases the likelihood that the brand will be a member of the consideration set (Baker, 1986; Nedungadi, 1990), which are the handful of brands that receive serious consideration for purchase.

Second, brand awareness can affect perceived value and decisions about brands in the consideration set, even if there are essentially no other brand associations. For instance, consumers respond strongly and decide to buy only familiar, well-established brands (Jacoby, Syzabillo, & Schach, 1977; Roselius, 1971).

In low involvement decision settings, a minimum level of brand awareness may be sufficient for product choice, even in the absence of a well-formed attitude (Betteman & Park 1980; Hoyer & Brown 1990; Park & Lessig, 1981). Using elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) suggest that consumers may base choices on brand awareness considerations when they have low involvement, which could result from either a lack of consumer motivation or lack of consumer ability. A brand with high awareness and with positively distinguishing associations will have a high added value for consumers (Riezebos, 2003).

Research Hypotheses

After reading the literature, it noticeably seems that 'brand awareness' is the major factor in forming the purchase decision/behavior and choice of the brand.

In the research model, a selection was made from factors that according to the theories influencing the consumers for purchasing everyday commodity i.e. for packaged milk brands the research model would be tested with the developed hypotheses.

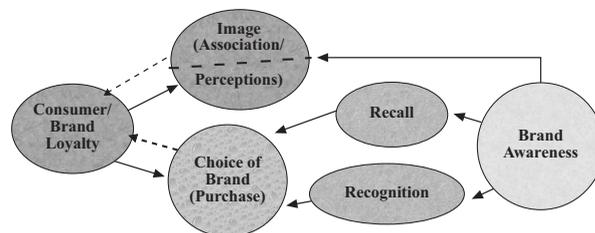


Figure 4: The model on "Brand Awareness" can be developed as above

This model has a purview of commonality of 'Brand Awareness', which shows a relationship impact on consumers' responses and benefiting both the consumers and the firm. The objective is to test brand awareness and its importance against the consumer/brand loyalty factor found in the literature.

Aaker's model (1991) is focalizing on brand equity five factors, which are Name Awareness, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty, Brand Image and other brand assets. As the model explains the implication of the awareness, which can be seen by the selection the consumers make regarding a known and an unknown brand, the reason being is the reliability and being savvy to the recognized brand. The marketing programs (forms of advertising) are made keeping in point, the concept of brand awareness in the mind of the consumers by

drawing perceptions. As mentioned in the literature review above, Brand awareness has the two core variables, 'Recognition' and 'Recall' for hypothetical purposes.

As discussed in the literature and primarily from Aaker's (2002) clear study on Brand equity and brand awareness construct, the research model has been outlined. It clearly points out the major factors of brand awareness - Brand recall and recognition, last but not least they help the consumers in choosing the brand amongst the competition through other variables Image (associations/perceptions) and Consumer/Brand Loyalty.

For this study (image) perceptions was tested as the mediating variable/other factor to impact brand awareness on consumer/brand loyalty. Hence, the prime purpose of the study is to analyze 'Brand Awareness' and 'Consumer/Brand Loyalty', according to Michael, Mothersbaugh & Beatty (2002) the constructs of consumer/brand loyalty has four variables: 1- Intention to probably buy 2- Intention to definitely buy 3- Repeat Purchase of a regular milk brand & 4- Repeat Purchase of a favorite milk brand, which are tested and resulted for the purpose.

The variables have two-way linkages to the purchase of the brand, which can be seen by the dotted arrow and plain arrows.

The plain-arrows illustrate the influence of all these variables cause the consumer to purchase the brand. The dotted-arrows shows that once the consumer is aware of the brand, one wants to know more about these factors for the brand to be purchased in future buying-decision due to which prices vary, quality of the brand is monitored, promotional campaigns are brought in for consumers to remember the brand in such a huge clutter of the particular product-category.

One can depict the stated summary of hypotheses for testing purposes for the study of brand awareness's relationship with consumer/brand loyalty & also the mediating role of perception variable between brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty.

Relationship between Brand Awareness and Consumer/brand loyalty

Table 1:

H1-A:	Brand awareness as defined by brand recall, is significantly related to "Intention to buy"
H2-A:	Brand awareness as defined by brand recognition, is significantly related to "Intention to buy"
H3-A:	Brand awareness as defined by brand recall, is significantly related to "Repeat Purchase"
H4-A:	Brand awareness as defined by brand recognition, is significantly related to "Repeat Purchase"

Methodology

The nature of research is inferential. The aim is to determine the relationship and analyze the associations between variable (brand awareness) on the other variable (consumer/brand loyalty).

To conduct this research, primary data was collected in the form of 'questionnaires-survey' as the research tool from users knowing and using packaged milk brands in Karachi. The total of 280 questionnaires with cover letters having handy instructions attached was

hand delivered to the respondents.

Pearson Chi-square (test of independence) is used to test the relationship between brand awareness dimensions & consumer/brand loyalty dimension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To find the association between the two variables the Pearson chi-square test were used. The equation of Pearson chi-square is:

$$X^2 = \frac{(N-1) SD^2}{\sigma^2}$$

Where,

X^2 = Chi-square value

N = Total no. of observations

SD = Standard deviation

σ = Variance

As shown in Table 2, the Pearson Chi-square tests (H1-A through H-4A) suggest that there is no significant relationship at 5% significance level between brand awareness and its consumer/brand loyalty.

Keeping the objective of this paper in mind the aim was to check direct relationship between the two variables: brand awareness and loyalty.

Result of all four hypotheses mentioned above suggest that the relationship between these variables (brand recall with Intention to buy/repeat purchase) and (brand recognition with intention to buy/Repeat purchase) are statistically not significant except in the case H1-A in relation to one milk brand (Haleeb). For this one packaged milk brand the hypothesis seems to hold and shows that a significant relationship does exist between variables (recall) and (intention to buy).

As the majority of the brands did not demonstrate any relationship between the variables (brand recall with Intention to buy/repeat purchase) and (brand recognition with intention to buy/Repeat purchase), the result is not in line with the proposition put forward by Aaker (2002), where brand awareness is directly linked to consumer behavior as defined by intention to buy and repeat purchase. Having said this, the present result indicates that at least in the case of packaged milk in the context of Pakistani consumers there is no significant relation except in case of brand 1 (Haleeb).

However, the present study does suggest that there is a minimum recall ability requirement of the consumers viz a viz the consumption of the packaged milk brands.

In the opinion of this paper, this could result from the rationale that those consumers who buy packaged milk brands make their choice randomly where exposure and giving a cue (recognition & recall respectively) in a buying situation, may not be necessary.

The other way of explaining this result is that consumers while making purchase intention are not highly involved in the brand itself and are more concerned with the products usage, while only brand Haleeb in this case, which proves an exception to this rule may result from longevity of its advertising. Therefore, the paper cannot draw a generalizable conclusion from this conception and can only suggest that in brands where the product is low involvement

and considered a commodity; awareness of a brand may not constitute a significant factor for purchase behavior. Further, such purchases are normally made by servants and as such milk is brought and not a brand. This is similar to the production concept in the marketing literature where consumers are more interested in the product than its features.

TABLE 2: Chi-square analyses
Summary Assessment of Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Milk Brands	Chi-square Pearson value	Pearson Chi-square Significance $p \leq 0.05$	Pearson R Value	Pearson R Value Significance $p \leq 0.05$	Empirical Conclusion
Relationship between Brand Awareness & Consumer Loyalty						
H1-A: Brand awareness as defined by brand recall, is significantly related to "Intention to buy"	B1	10.60	0.03	-0.197	0.08	Accepted
	B2	3.807	0.43	-0.34	0.77	Rejected
	B3	7.304	0.12	-0.075	0.51	Rejected
	B4	3.893	0.42	4.4	0.70	Rejected
	B5	4.679	0.32	-0.09	0.43	Rejected
	B6	3.909	0.42	-0.032	0.78	Rejected
H2-A: Brand awareness as defined by brand recognition, is significantly related to "Intention to buy"	B1	6.291	0.18	-0.095	0.40	Rejected
	B2	1.981	0.74	0.108	0.34	Rejected
	B3	4.712	0.32	0.033	0.77	Rejected
	B4	4.656	0.32	-0.086	0.45	Rejected
	B5	7.322	0.12	-0.163	0.15	Rejected
	B6	2.028	0.98	-0.065	0.57	Rejected
H3-A: Brand awareness as defined by brand recall, is significantly related to "Repeat Purchase"	B1	4.762	0.35	0.11875	0.31	Rejected
	B2	3.794	0.57	0.1575	0.27	Rejected
	B3	6.285	0.26	0.11275	0.41	Rejected
	B4	4.526	0.68	0.06425	0.57	Rejected
	B5	3.606	0.48	0.151	0.23	Rejected
	B6	2.641	0.61	-0.017	0.56	Rejected
H4-A: Brand awareness as defined by brand recognition, is significantly related to "Repeat Purchase"	B1	1.792	0.79	0.0285	0.56	Rejected
	B2	7.149	0.24	-0.0088	0.57	Rejected
	B3	1.549	0.85	-0.0275	0.59	Rejected
	B4	6.662	0.19	-0.0625	0.27	Rejected
	B5	2.433	0.64	0.06375	0.57	Rejected
	B6	5.810	0.72	0.07725	0.52	Rejected

Definitions of Variables

B₁: Haleeb **B₃:** Nurpur **B₅:** Goodmilk
B₂: Nestle MilkPak **B₄:** Olpers **B₆:** Pakola milk

Aaker & Blanco (1999) have also indicated that brand awareness indirectly affects purchase behavior, as it has a positive influence on perceptions and attitudes towards the brand recall and retrievability to impact to the purchase of the brand i.e. repeated purchase behavior which creates consumer/brand loyalty.

Implication for managers is that they need to strengthen the distribution system rather than try and build brand loyalty.

On the other hand advertising should be focused at creating strong brand awareness through favorable, unique associations (perceptions) in the mind of consumers so that they can remember and differentiate the milk brands as mentioned by Aaker (1991), thus giving the brand a unique identity by making it i) memorable ii) symbolic exposure iii) promotional tools such as use of jingles, sponsorship, publicity iv) repetition can be another implication for managers and marketers to adopt.

On the contrary, the rejected hypotheses in terms of having no relationship between the two main constructs that are brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty shows that in the milk packaged industry brand awareness is not playing a significant role to impact a commodity product such as milk to make a repeated purchase, due to random switching purchase behavior and low involvement in buying a convenience product which offers no differentiation amongst the brand.

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