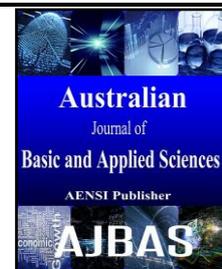




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### Brand Awareness of Higher Educational Institutions towards Engineering Entrants

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#### ABSTRACT

The study has been designed to examine socio demographic variables of the respondents on brand awareness towards higher educational institutions. Questionnaires were distributed to 635 first year undergraduate engineering students in Tamilnadu, India. The collected data were computed and analysed through descriptive statistics and Chi-square. The respondents' socio demographic variables like gender, first graduate in the family, education of the parents and the opted course in engineering were tested to identify the association with the brand awareness. The findings show that first graduate in the family and the opted course in engineering has significant association with brand awareness whereas, gender and education of parents have no significant association with the brand awareness. This will contribute to the brand management, academic administrators and edupreneurs to improve on their present marketing strategies to increase the enrollment at higher educational institution.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Branding is one of the most important concepts in marketing. Higher educational institutions started utilizing branding for the growth and sustainability of their institutions. Brand Awareness is the core construct of Brand equity (Keller, 1993). Quality of service rendered by higher educational institutions becomes an important trigger for brand awareness. Aaker (1996) opines that strong branding helps the organization to build its identity and establish itself in the market. Higher educational Institutions in India are carrying out massive changes to attract students for enrollment in the colleges and universities. These changes have an effect on the functioning of higher educational institutions and it is the driving force for healthy competition in the market. Kotler and Fox (1995) mentions that the actual problems in most of the higher educational institutions are that, they are not market oriented and focus only on improving the quality of service and updating facilities.

In view of all the change that higher educational institutions are faced with, it has been realized that institutions will have to become more market oriented. Every year, millions of plus two (+2) students join colleges and universities. With an increasing number of institutions competing for students, every potential competitive advantage

counts. This research focuses on brand awareness of higher educational institutions towards engineering entrants.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The literature review has been conducted to identify and evaluate existing studies of brand awareness of colleges and universities in general. The present investigation empirically evaluated the respondents' socio demographical variables and brand awareness towards higher educational institutions.

Aaker (1991), mentioned the five dimensions of brand equity are namely, brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association and other proprietary brand assets. Bateson (1991) suggested internal and external risk reduction strategies for service organizations. Internal strategy for reducing risk mainly consists of reducing uncertainty in the consumer's past experience with the brand. External strategies for reducing risk include enhancing reputation, strong advertising campaigns, public relation exercises and publicity activities. De Chernatony (2001), described that the brand in the service organization can be identified and reinforced in the behavior, voice, appearance, style, beliefs and attitudes of the staff. These aspects are translated into the minds of the consumers and

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create a brand image. Customers' selection is not only based on the functional aspects of the service but also on the emotional values created by the brand. Keller (2003) argued that power of brand is in the minds of the customers, what they learnt and experienced about the brand over time. He defines customer based brand equity as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand". Brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand image. De Chernatony and McDonald (2003), contend that the "student life is a web of interconnected experiences which overlap and influence student satisfaction". An institution's product is the sum of the student's academic, social, physical and spiritual experiences. The challenge of branding services and goods are not same. Educational services makes somewhat difficult to brand. Bulotaite (2003) explained that in higher education, the branding is to create image, not to sell the products and services. It communicates and develops identity of the organization to help in promotion and increase the enrollment. Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) remarked that branding is in initial stages and it has to be developed and adapted in higher education sector.

#### Objectives of the Study:

- To study the association of socio-demographic variables with brand awareness towards higher educational institutions.

#### Hypotheses:

The researchers have constructed the following hypotheses in order to test the variables:

*H01: The gender of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

*H02: The first graduate in the family of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

*H03: The education of the father of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

*H04: The education of the mother of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

*H05: The course opted in engineering of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

#### Research Design:

The study used descriptive research. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first is concerned with the socio-demographic details of the respondents. The second part consists of brand awareness measures on a five-point rating scale, ranging from 5 for "very high" to 1 for "very low".

#### Data Collection:

Taro Yamane (1967) suggested minimum sample required for problem solving is at least 200 samples. Thus, we have used the recommendations of Taro Yamane (1967), which are at least 200 samples. 700 questionnaires are given to first year engineering students in Tamilnadu, India. Respondents are randomly selected. However, only 635 valid samples are used for the analysis.

#### Data Analysis:

For the purpose of data analysis, SPSS is used for descriptive statistics and Chi-square analysis.

#### Results:

##### Descriptive statistics – Socio Demographics:

The distribution of socio demographic variable of the sample indicated that among 635 respondents, 62.2 percent are male (n=395) 37.8 percent are female (n=240). 55 percent (n=351) are first graduates in the family, 27 percent (n=171) fathers had high school (9-10) education and 23 percent (n=146) mothers had no education. More than 54 percent (n=168 and n=173) belong to Mechanical and Electronics and Communication Engineering courses. The ratio of respondents to the selected brand awareness is: 13.1 percent for very high, 41.7 percent for high, 26.9 percent for neutral, 15.6 percent for low and 2.7 percent for very low which roughly reflects the brand awareness in the higher educational institutions.

##### Association Test between Brand awareness and Socio demographic variables:

The distribution level of brand awareness among engineering students based on different groups of socio demographic variables is studied and presented in the following tables. The research hypotheses are tested for each socio demographic variable separately and inferences are drawn.

**Table 1:** Gender and Brand awareness.

Variables	Group	Very		High		Neutral		Low		Very		No.	$\chi^2$ Value	df	Asymp. Sig	Sig.
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%					
Gender of the Respondent	Male	52	13.2	166	42.0	102	25.8	62	15.7	13	3.3	395	1.983	4	.739	Ns
	Female	31	12.9	99	41.3	69	28.8	37	15.4	4	1.7	240				

Source: Primary Data Ns-Not significant (p>0.05), \* - Significant at 5% level (p<0.05), \*\* - Significant at 1% level (p<0.01)

*H01: The gender of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

Chi square test is applied to find whether there is significant association between gender and the level

of brand awareness. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, it is inferred that there is statistically no significant association between gender of the respondents and the level of brand awareness. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 2:** First graduate in the family and Brand awareness.

Variables	Group	Very		High		Neutral		Low		Very		No.	$\chi^2$ Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Sig.
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			No.	%					
First Graduate in the	Yes	43	12.3	140	39.9	83	23.6	75	21.4	10	2.8	351	21.071	4	.000	**
	No	40	14.1	125	44.0	88	31.0	24	8.5	7	2.5	284				

Source: Primary Data Ns-Not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), \* - Significant at 5% level ( $p<0.05$ ), \*\* - Significant at 1% level ( $p<0.01$ )

*H02: The first graduate in the family of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

Chi square test is applied to find whether there is significant association between first graduate of the family of the respondents and level of brand

awareness. Since p-value is less than 0.05, it is inferred that there is statistically significant association between first graduate of the family of the respondents and level of brand awareness. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 3:** Education of the father and Brand awareness.

Variables	Group	Very High		High		Neutral		Low		Very Low		No.	$\chi^2$ Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Sig.
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			No.	%					
Education of Father	No education	9	7.8	43	37.4	33	28.7	25	21.7	5	4.3	115	41.077	28	0.053	Ns
	Primary (1-5)	5	12.2	17	41.5	10	24.4	8	19.5	1	2.4	41				
	Secondary (6-8)	9	17.6	18	35.3	15	29.4	8	15.7	1	2.0	51				
	High School (9-10)	22	12.9	77	45.0	38	22.2	29	17.0	5	2.9	171				
	Higher Secondary (11-12)	13	13.4	41	42.3	21	21.6	20	20.6	2	2.1	97				
	Graduate	19	19.6	36	37.1	33	34.0	6	6.2	3	3.1	97				
	Post Graduate	1	2.9	21	61.8	9	26.5	3	8.8			34				
Professional	5	17.9	11	39.3	12	42.9					28					

Source: Primary Data Ns-Not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), \* - Significant at 5% level ( $p<0.05$ ), \*\* - Significant at 1% level ( $p<0.01$ )

*H03: The education of the father of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

Chi square test is applied to find whether there is significant association between education of the father and the level of brand awareness. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, it is inferred that there is statistically no significant association between education of the father of the respondents and the level of brand awareness. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

*H04: The education of mother of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

Chi square test is applied to find whether there is significant association between education of the mother and the level of brand awareness. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, it is inferred that there is statistically no significant association between education of the mother of the respondents and the level of brand awareness. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

*H05: The Course opted in engineering of the respondents has no significant association with their level of brand awareness.*

Chi square test is applied to find whether there is significant association between courses opted in engineering and the level of brand awareness. Since p-value is less than 0.05, it is inferred that there is statistically significant association between the opted course in engineering of the respondents and the level of awareness. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

### Conclusions:

In higher educational sector, brand awareness plays a major role in the minds of students and their family members because of its capacity to convey, top of the mind information about the higher education institutions. The analysis revealed that the respondents' socio demographic variables like gender, first graduate in the family, education of the parents and the opted course in engineering were tested to identify the association with the brand

awareness. The finding shows that first graduate in the family and the opted course in engineering has significant association with brand awareness whereas, gender and education of the father and mother has no significant association with brand awareness. The higher educational institutions can promote local brand awareness by organizing events

and activities at schools and in the public. The brand awareness at local level vitalizes their standing in the society and community. Edupreneurs and brand manager can put into action these marketing strategies to increase the enrollment at higher educational institutions.

**Table 4:** Education of the mother and Brand awareness

Variables	Group	Very		High		Neutral		Low		Very		No.	$\chi^2$ Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Sig.
		N	%	N	%	No.	%			No	%					
Education of Mother	No education	12	8.2	58	39.	41	28.	27	18.	8	5.5	146	39.804	28	0.069	Ns
	Primary(1-5)	5	9.1	24	43.	14	25.	11	20.	1	1.8	55				
	Secondary (6-8)	9	12.	31	42.	21	28.	10	13.	2	2.7	73				
	High School (9-	15	12.	58	46.	25	20.	26	20.	1	.8	125				
	Higher Secondary	19	17.	43	39.	24	22.	19	17.	3	2.8	108				
	Graduate	17	21.	29	36.	28	35.	3	3.8	2	2.5	79				
	Post Graduate	4	11.	16	47.	12	35.	2	5.9			34				
	Professional	2	13.	6	40.	6	40.	1	6.7			15				

Source: Primary Data Ns-Not significant (p>0.05), \* - Significant at 5% level (p<0.05), \*\* - Significant at 1% level (p<0.01)

**Table 5:** Students' Opted course in engineering and Brand awareness.

Variables	Group	Very		High		Neutral		Low		Very		No.	$\chi^2$ Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Sig.
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			No.	%					
Opted Course in Engg.	Mechanical	12	7.1	106	63.1	21	12.5	23	13.7	6	3.6	168	198.434	32	.000	**
	ECE	30	17.3	67	38.7	54	31.2	20	11.6	2	1.2	173				
	EEE	3	4.8	25	39.7	18	28.6	13	20.6	4	6.3	63				
	CSE	6	6.4	31	33.0	48	51.1	9	9.6			94				
	IT			3	16.7	9	50.0	5	27.8	1	5.6	18				
	Civil	4	6.8	25	42.4	10	16.9	17	28.8	3	5.1	59				
	Mechatronics			1	20.0	3	60.0	1	20.0			5				
	E & I			1	20.0	3	60.0	1	20.0			5				
	Others	28	56.0	6	12.0	5	10.0	10	20.0	1	2.0	50				

Source: Primary Data Ns-Not significant (p>0.05), \* - Significant at 5% level (p<0.05), \*\* - Significant at 1% level (p<0.01)

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