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Marketing Overload: The Impact of Information Overload on Brand Recall (A Case Study of Students of the University of Swat)

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Abstract: *Marketers promote their products using a different medium to circulate their advertising message to customers in order to inform and persuade customers to buy their products. The emergence of new technology and social media platforms has made it much easier for marketers to reach more audiences than ever before. This excessive advertisement has emerged as a new phenomenon known as infobesity, advertising overload, or marketing overload. The purpose of this study is to find out the effect of Information overload on brand recall, for which a quantitative method was used with a sample size of 148 students and SPSS 21 for analysis of the data. The survey was conducted, and questionnaires were distributed among the students of the University of Swat. The study reveals that a negative and significant relationship exists between information overload and brand recall. This study also reveals that excessive bombardment in advertisements results in a decline in the effectiveness of the advertising message and goes against brand awareness and brand recall. The correlation analysis ($r= -0.353$, $P<0.05$) and regression analysis (beta = -0.415, $P<0.05$) reveal that information overload negatively impacts customer brand recall.*

Introduction

An old proverb said by experts that Excess of everything is bad in anything, either in any form of an excessive advertisement on any media or excessive information floating on the internet. When purchasing a certain product, a brand name coming to the mind of customers indicates higher brand equity and higher awareness of the brand (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991). Mass marketing and emerging changes in media platforms have not only changed the way of communication but have resulted in the bombardment of advertisements to customers (Barry, 1993). The feelings which are recalled by marketing efforts such as advertisements have an effect on customers' responses while purchasing a certain product (Kirmani & Campbell, 2009).

The evolution of social media and internet advertising has made it much easier to advertise and target large customers than ever before, but this advancement in technology is also the main reason for floating too much information (Evaristo, Adams & Curley, 1995). This evolution in technology has changed the way of modern communication and has given rise to social media and internet platforms (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). The rapid increase in the use of the internet and social media applications being joined by millions of users has made the attention of marketers use these technological channels for advertisement (Fan & Niu, 2013).

Today customers are bombarded with many advertisements and promotional messages on different platforms, which direct to turn down in advertisement efficiency as customers are currently avoiding these too many advertisements. Customers today are facing too many marketing messages and publicity, which as a result, has affected the efficiency of advertisement messages because customers today avoid the excessive form of advertisement (Khan, Dongping & Wahab, 2016; Chang, Chen & Tan, 2012). The rapid growth of online advertising has changed the means of communication, but this has also led to too much information resulting in a decline in advertisement effectiveness and making it almost impossible for customers to recall a certain brand while purchasing a product (Rosengren, 2000; Tuten & Solomon, 2015). This study intends to find the relationship between information overload and brand recall as excessive information is floating in the market, and customers have very limited cognitive power to be aware of it, which makes it difficult to recall from their mind at the time of purchase.

Problem Statement

By studying the prior work, which was done by Gregory D. Salyer (2013) and Darius Lazauskas & Huynh Tran (2017), some gaps were identified. The first function of advertisement is to inform the customers about the products and services being provided by the marketers, but the heavy advertisements on social media platforms are decreasing the perceived quality of the advertising message and going against brand awareness and brand recall, a phenomenon known as banner blindness (Benway, 1999; Akar & Topcu, 2011) and marketing avoidance (Kem et al., 2013, p.93).

Research Questions

- What is the impact and relationship of information overload on brand recall?

Research Objectives

- To test the relationship between information overload and brand recall.

Significance of Research

The significance of this study is that it will highlight the impact of information overload on brand recall and will contribute to a solution to the problem at hand. This study will also be beneficial to marketers by building effective advertisement messages so that customers may recall certain products easily at the time of purchase.

Literature Review

Information Overload

In ordinary language, the term "information overload" means receiving too much information (Vollmann, 1991), Communication Overload (Meier, 1963), Sensory Overload (Libowski, 1975), Knowledge Overload (Hunt & Newman, 1997), and information fatigue syndrome (Wurman, 2001) which describes the level of difficulty faced by an individual while making a decision or understanding a certain issue caused by excessive information provided. Information overload takes place when the information provided by the advertisers exceeds the processing capacity of the customers resulting in poor decision quality of the customers (Speier et al., 1999). the data in information is particularly organized for a particular purpose (Dean & Webb, 2014), whereas excessive information, known as infobesity, directly affects the customer's ability to perform a specific task or obtain specific data to complete a task. The rapid growth in information technology may be the main reason for causing information overload due to its ability to circulate specific information to a large audience than ever before (Hiltz & Turoff, 1985; Evatisto, Adams, & Curley, 1994).

The basic idea behind information overload is that customers buying a specific product have a very limited cognitive ability to remember information provided by the companies, and customers use that information in time of need. When the limits exceed, infobesity or knowledge overload occurs, which results in confusion and poor decision-making (lincoln, 2011). Therefore, providing too much information will certainly lead customers to dysfunctional performance.

Mengis and Eppler (2003) have pointed out the five main reasons which cause infobesity or knowledge overload, the personal qualities of the customer, the characteristics of information provided such as uncertainty, diversity or intensity, etc., the design of the company that how the information floats, the parameters and task in the state of information are given and lastly the information technology by which the information is communicated to customers.

Farhoomand Drury (2002) found that customers having difficulty understanding information can impact their ability to manage irrelevant and complex information. Brand awareness through a digital network behaves like a backbone for structuring a marketing plan for a certain organization. Marketers not only focus on creating a single buying opportunity, but somehow they also grow brand awareness and brand recognition with the companies and with the products they provide. The trend of online advertisement is at its peak, and of which too much information is being circulated in the digital environment, which is difficult for a single individual to fully absorb, known as marketing overload or advertising overload. This excessive information starts contradiction and decline of perceived quality decisions which works in the opposite direction of brand awareness and brand recall. It has been recognized that too much information results in banner blindness or advertising avoidance, have created an extensive gap between companies and their target audience (Lincoln, 2011).

From the above discussion, it can be understood that an excessive amount of advertisement which is done by companies to promote their products or services makes it difficult for customers to select the best option to meet their needs and wants. Moreover, this bombardment of advertisements of products and services to create brand awareness in customers is actually causing an impact on the company's marketing plan. From the above literature, it can also be understood that information in an excessive advertisement by the companies will have an impact on brand recall.

Brand Recall

Brand recall is defined as the ability of customers to recall a certain brand from their mind while purchasing a product (Prashar et al., 2012); in simple it is the ability of a person to remember the advertising and other information messages that have been circulated by several advertising mediums about a brand. A brand recall is the ability of a customer to recall a specific brand from its memory when some cues relating to the brand are given, requiring that the customer will correctly trigger out the brand from memory (Baumann, Hamin & Chong, 2015; Keller, 1993).

A recall can be aided recall, or it can be an unaided recall. When a brand name is given to a customer, and it is in the form of an advertisement, it indicates the aided recall, and when an unbranded advertisement is given to a customer for knowing the brand name, it is called an unaided recall. Almost every company advertises its products to create brand awareness, and it is a subset of brand awareness which is the degree to which the brand can be recognized by potential customers (Keller, 2009). Brand awareness and recall lead to brand equity and reside in the customer's mind in the form of memory nodes, and it usually reflects the customer's ability to identify various brands at the time of purchasing (Aaker, 1991).

The information in the customers' minds resides in the form of retrieval cues (Crowder, 1976), and these cues get generated by customers at the time of purchase. Generally, two types of retrieval cues are there. The first cue consists of the specific attributes and benefits of the product, and the second cue consists of the concept of the product class. When it comes to brand recall, the usage situation has more influence on it. Consumers who have used a product of a certain brand in a particular situation make the brand recall considerably easier (Rossiter & Percy, 1997).

Marketers are moving towards the "consideration set" instead of the "knowledge set" of the customers because brand recall helps to establish top-of-the-mind recall. The company objectives are fulfilled if a customer can recall a company's product at the time of purchase or consumption. Brand recall can be measured by various methods used by researchers, in a recent study conducted by (Pitts and Slattery, 2004) discussed the capability to recall a specific brand by the aided method.

It is understood from the above literature that customers create a positive or negative association with the brand after consuming a product of a specific brand. When a customer consumes a brand and gets familiar with it, the chances are high that the customer may also purchase the brand next time. The information provided in the advertisement creates brand awareness, and customers recall the brand from their memory nodes when a clue is provided to them about the brand. The literature also shows the relationship between information overload and brand recall.

Relationship between Information Overload and Brand Recall

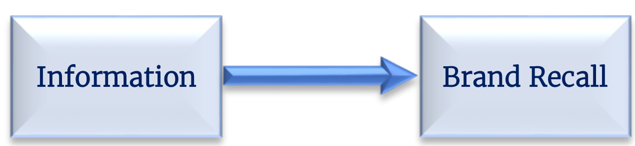
The former work done by the researcher suggests that when information from a certain level increases, it affects the absorption ability of the customer and thus results in the form of information overload. The load of information in advertisements used by marketers is too much on customers resulting in banner blindness (Benwey, 1999), advertising avoidance (Chatterjee, 2008), and marketing overload (Cho & Cheon, 2004). When the customer is engaged in a digital environment and receives too much information will ultimately hinder the brand recall, and the customer will try to ignore the information provided by the marketers. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between information overload and brand recall when a product or service is given to customers in a digital environment.

Theoretical Basis for Information Overload

The Distraction Conflict Theory (DCT) was developed by (Baron, 1986), and it states that when distraction occurs, it facilitates the performance of a simple task, but it averts the performance of a difficult task. When the information increases, this will decline the cognitive capacity of the customers and will affect the decision quality.

The information overload theory, which was proposed by (Schneider, Dumas & Shifrinn, 1984), suggests that when a customer receives too much information in an advertisement, the absorption capacity of a single piece of information is at the expense of another piece of information.

As suggested by both the DCT theory and information overload theory, we assumed that too much information would result in a decrease in brand recall customers. Information overload is an independent variable, and brand recall is a dependent variable. The model for this is given proposed below:



Theoretical Framework

H0: Information overload has an insignificant impact on brand recall.
H1: Information overload has a significant impact on brand recall.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Research design is like a blueprint for conducting research, and it is like a framework for collecting and analyzing data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The study is quantitative in nature, and questionnaires were distributed among the management students at the University of Swat. The data were analyzed by using SPSS 21.0 software, a sample size of 148 students, and a survey method was used to collect the data. This study is also explanatory in nature, which means that hypotheses will be tested to state the causal relationship among the variables.

Research Population and Sampling

The population of this study was the students of the University of Swat who were exposed to several advertisements containing excessive information. The students at the university were about 4000. A sample is a portion of the population that represents the whole population. A nonprobability convenience sampling technique was used for sampling. A sample of 148 students with management sciences backgrounds was selected using Raosoft online calculator.

Data Collection and Analysis

The secondary data was collected from the previous work done by the researchers, like journals, articles, research papers, etc., and primary data was collected through a survey. A five (5) point Likert scale was used, and questionnaires were distributed among the students to get their responses. The questions regarding information overload were adopted from the study conducted by Sarah Alarabi and Samantha Gronbland (2012), and the question of brand recall was adopted from the study conducted by Gregory D. Salyer (2013). The data was analyzed through the statistical software SPSS 21.0 based on a quantitative approach and correlation. Regression etc., was used to interpret the results.

Results Summary

Demographic Information

Demographic information of the survey participants is given below.

Table 1

Gender of Respondent

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	137	92.6	92.6
Female	11	7.4	100.0
Total	148	100.0	

Among the 148 students, most of them were males, with a number of 137 and 11 females.

Table 2

Age of the Respondent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	20.00	23	15.5	15.5	15.5
	21.00	48	32.4	32.4	48.0
	22.00	22	14.9	14.9	62.8
Valid	23.00	26	17.6	17.6	80.4
	24.00	11	7.4	7.4	87.8
	25.00	5	3.4	3.4	91.2
	26.00	8	5.4	5.4	96.6

	28.00	5	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	148	100.0	100.0	

The age of respondents was mostly young, and their ages were between 20 to 24

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Devn	Cronbach Alpha
Information Overload	2.1791	.83556	0.841
Brand Recall	3.5524	.98079	0.896

(Note: Scale range from 1=Strongly Agree to 5=Strongly Disagree)

The results in the above table show that information overload is above average (M=2.179, SD=.835), and on the other hand, there is low brand recall (M=3.552, SD=.980). According to Peterson (1994), the minimum acceptable criteria for Cronbach alpha should be between 0.6 and 0.8. The above table shows the Cronbach alpha of greater than 0.7, which shows that the questionnaires have good reliability.

Table 4

Correlation Analysis

		Information overload	Brand Recall
Information Overload	Pearson Correlation		$-.353^{**}$
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		148
Brand Recall-	Pearson Correlation	$-.353^{**}$	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	148	
	1		

The above correlation table shows that there is a significant and negative relationship among the variables, i.e., Information Overload and Brand Recall, with a coefficient of value -0.353, and its significance value P is less than 0.05 ($r=-.353$, $P<.05$).

Regression Analysis

Table 5

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.456	.212		21.021	.000
Information Overload	-.415	.091	-.353	-4.565	.000

R= 0.353
Rsquare= 0.125
Fstat= 20.838(0.000)

The constant of 4.456 in the above regression table shows the average brand recall is 4.456, and it is significant because its P value is less than 0.05, and it shows that if there is a 1% change in information overload, it will result from a change in brand recall of -0.415%. The model is fit and significant as the F value is above four and the P value is less than 0.05 (Fstat= 20.838 >4, P<0.05). The value of R is 0.353, which means that both the variables are 35.3% associated, and the value of R Square shows that the independent variable Information Overload explains a 12.5% change in the dependent variable, Brand Recall

Conclusion

The study found that excessive advertisement will result in advertising clutter, advertising avoidance, marketing overload, etc., and will thus decrease the impact of the informative message of the advertisement. The study also found that the bombardment of advertisements will be ignored by the customers because excessive advertisement results in dissatisfaction and irritation of the customers. This study also supports the hypothesis that information overload has a negative and significant impact on brand recall, and when a customer is exposed to excessive promotional messages is less likely to recall a specific brand from their mind at the time of purchase.

Discussion

This study focuses on triggering the impact of excessive information floating in advertisements on various mediums on the brand recall of customers. The study also concluded the same results as the study conducted by (Benway 1999) and Rafiet al. (2011). The study also supported the Distraction Conflict Theory (baron, 1986) and also supported the Information Overload theory by (Schneider, Dumas & Shifrinn, 1984). Moreover, this study shows us that when more information is provided in the form of excessive advertisements to customers on various mediums, the customers are less like to notice that sort of advertisement.

Recommendations

The advertising agencies or companies may focus on creative, simple, and cyclical advertisements. The idea of excessive advertisement may be avoided to avoid the distraction and ignorance of the advertisement message in customers. The advertisement should be based on the customer's perspective, and it should also be interesting to get the attention of the customers. Companies should build trust and make advertisements of their products simple and clear.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

This study was geographically limited to a specific area with a sample size. The future study can be based on a large area with a larger sample size. There are also other methods through which the study can be conducted, and these variables can be measured. The study may be conducted in a more controlled environment by using the same space and equipment, which will help the researcher to collect the data more consistently from the respondents.

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