The Impact of Brand Recognition on Brand Association: A Case Study of Winmart Consumers in Can Tho City, Vietnam

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Abstract

This research investigates the relationship between brand recognition and consumer associations with Winmart. The six formulated hypotheses (H1 to H6) posit positive influences of brand recognition and recall on attribute-based, benefit-based, and attitude-based associations, all of which demonstrate statistical significance. The research methodology involves constructing a model and designing a survey questionnaire comprising 23 observed variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Evaluation of these measures includes Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's Alpha to ensure their reliability. The research model and hypotheses were tested using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. The sample size is determined following the 5:1 rule, with respondents selected from Can Tho City, familiar with the Winmart brand. Employing both face-to-face and online surveys, strategic face-to-face interviews yield 147 valid responses, supplemented by an online survey generating 62 valid responses. The cumulative dataset of 209 valid survey responses, combining both methodologies, ensures a comprehensive and diverse representation. This research contributes valuable insights to academia and industry. The statistically supported findings shed light on the intricate dynamics between brand recognition and consumer associations, holding implications for strategic marketing decisions not only for Winmart but also for similar brands operating in Can Tho city, Vietnam.

Key words: *Brand recognition, brand association, brand recall, retail, consumer, vietnam.*

1. Introduction

In an era characterized by a saturated marketplace and a deluge of products and services, the significance of brand recognition as a strategic asset cannot be overstated. In the modern retail distribution market, where consumer choices abound, a brand's ability to stand out, be remembered, and evoke positive sentiments is pivotal for its sustained success. This study embarks on an exploration of the intricate interplay between brand recognition and brand association, centering its investigation on Winmart - a prominent sales distribution system under the Massan Group.

The contemporary consumer, inundated with a myriad of options, navigates a complex landscape where brands vie for attention and preference. At the forefront of this competitive milieu is the concept of brand recognition, denoting the degree to which consumers can

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identify or recall a brand based on its distinctive features, logos, or other visual cues (Keller, 1993). Brand recognition is more than a cognitive process; it is a foundational element that shapes consumer perceptions and sets the stage for the development of brand associations.

Brand associations, as posited by Aaker (1991), are the mental linkages consumers establish between a brand and certain attributes, qualities, or values. These associations are not arbitrary; they emerge from the recognition of a brand and are influenced by various factors, including marketing communications, product experiences, and societal influences. Understanding the interplay between brand recognition and subsequent associations is critical for businesses seeking to create a positive brand image and resonate with their target audience.

Within the Vietnamese context, specifically in Can Tho City - a city experiencing remarkable economic growth - these changes have fueled an expansion of consumer choices, making the role of brand recognition even more pertinent. Against this backdrop, Winmart emerges as a significant player under the Massan Group, making it an ideal subject for in-depth exploration. How Winmart leverages its brand recognition to not only capture the attention of consumers but also to shape their perceptions and foster positive brand associations becomes a compelling and timely inquiry.

This research aspires to contribute meaningfully by conducting a comprehensive examination of the Winmart brand and its intricate relationship with consumers in Can Tho City. By delving into the factors influencing brand recognition and unraveling the consequent brand associations, this study seeks to offer nuanced insights that can benefit both academic scholarship and marketing practitioners operating in a dynamically evolving marketplace.

2. Literature Review And Research Model

2.1 Theoretical foundation

There are various perspectives on branding, which can be broadly categorized into two main viewpoints: the traditional perspective and the holistic perspective on brands. The traditional view of branding has persisted for a considerable time, evolving alongside the emergence and development of the marketing industry. However, by the end of the 20th century, there were significant changes in the understanding of brand perspectives. Many researchers argued that the traditional view could not adequately explain the role of brands in a globalized and fiercely competitive economy. This study adopts the holistic perspective on branding, defining a brand as the synthesis of all tangible, aesthetic, rational, and emotional elements of a product, gradually constructed over time and occupying a distinct position in the minds of consumers (Maha Mourad et al., 2011).

The term "brand asset" appeared in the 1980s, introduced by some companies and quickly gained the attention of researchers. Numerous scholars worldwide have conducted scholarly studies on this subject. However, broadly speaking, brand assets are understood from two main viewpoints: the financial perspective and the consumer perspective. This study addresses brand value from the consumer perspective. According to Aaker (1991), brand assets encompass the values attached to the name or symbol of a brand, contributing to increasing (or decreasing) the value of a product or service for the business and its customers. The value of a brand is achieved through high customer loyalty, brand recognition, perceived quality, along with secure associations related to the brand and other assets such as patents, certified trademarks, and distribution channel relationships.

Although there are various definitions of brand assets proposed by other researchers, they

generally align closely with Aaker's (1991) definition. Furthermore, Aaker's (1991) proposed model is one of the most cited and widely applied models to investigate brand assets in various fields. According to Keller (1993), brand value is the differential effect of brand knowledge on customer response to brand marketing activities.

When applying brand assets to the retail distribution sector, most studies have adopted the components of brand assets outlined by Aaker (1991), including brand recognition, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. In this study, the research team focuses on exploring the relationship between two factors brand recognition and brand association.

2.2 Hypothesis and research model

Brand recognition refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the customer's mind (Keller, 1993). Brand recognition includes two components: brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recognition is the ability to identify the brand name among other brand names (Rossiter & Percy, 1987); brand recall is the consumer's ability to remember the brand immediately when asked about the corresponding product line (Keller, 1993).

Brand association encompasses anything connected in the customer's memory about a brand (Aaker, 1991). Brand associations in the retail industry are divided into two groups: product and organizational associations (Musekiwa et al., 2013). Product associations relate to aspects such as price, quality, and usage. On the other hand, organizational associations are linked to the capabilities and social responsibilities of the business. Chen (2001) and Yoo et al. (2000, 2006) argue that brand associations are one of the core factors for building a brand for retail stores.

Previous studies on brand value have primarily focused on analyzing the inherited "framework" model (Aaker, 1991) without delving deeper into the constituent factors of brand value. Therefore, this study delves into the theoretical model of the constituent factors of Aaker's brand value (1991) in depth. Specifically, the aspect of brand association is examined from three dimensions, including attribute-based, benefit-based, and attitude-based association. Brand recognition is detailed into brand recognition and brand recall (Keller, 1993). Based on these considerations, the research hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H1: *Brand recognition positively influences the attribute-based associations of consumers towards Winmart in Can Tho City.*

H2: *Brand recall positively influences the attribute-based associations of consumers towards Winmart in Can Tho City.*

H3: *Brand recognition positively influences the benefit-based associations of consumers towards Winmart in Can Tho City.*

H4: *Brand recall positively influences the benefit-based associations of consumers towards Winmart in Can Tho City.*

H5: *Brand recognition positively influences the attitude-based associations of consumers towards Winmart in Can Tho City.*

H6: *Brand recall positively influences the attitude-based associations of consumers towards Winmart in Can*
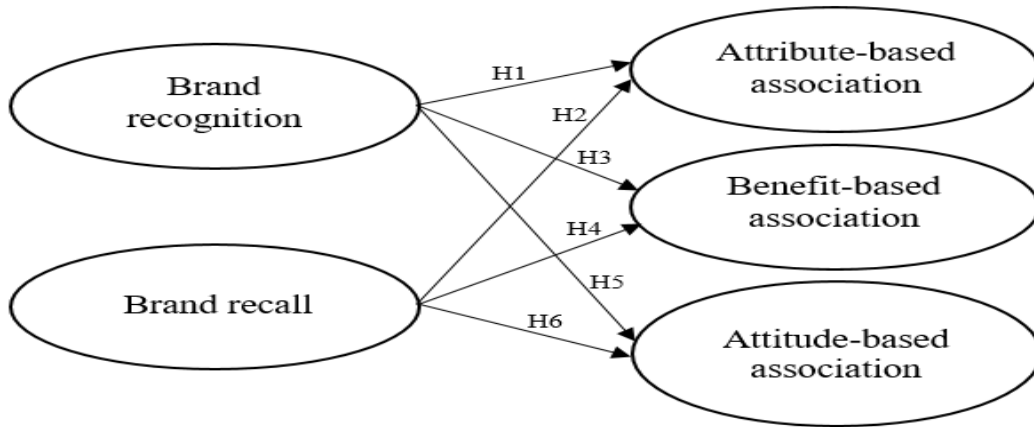
Tho City.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework

3. Research Methods

After constructing the model, the survey questionnaire was designed with 23 observed variables, measured on a 5-point Likert scale. These indices were assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

These measures were evaluated through various tests: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha. Simultaneously, the proposed research model and hypotheses were tested using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method.

Sample Size: Determined based on the 5:1 rule of Bollen (1998) and Hair et al. (1998), which suggests that to ensure good data analysis (EFA), there should be at least 5 observations for each measured variable, and the number of observations should not be less than 100. Thus, with the observed variables in this study, the minimum sample size needed is 23*5=115. Respondents were selected from consumers in Can Tho City who were familiar with the Winmart brand.

To maximize the effectiveness of the survey, the research team employed two methods: face-to-face surveys and online surveys. For face-to-face surveys, the research team conducted interviews with consumers using a paper questionnaire. Locations were chosen in areas with a high concentration of people, such as parks, during leisure hours to ensure that consumers had time to participate. With this survey method, a total of 147 valid responses were collected. To enhance comprehensiveness, the research team also gathered consumer perceptions through an online survey. The questionnaire was created on Google Docs, and the link was sent to respondents. The number of valid responses through the online method was 62. Therefore, the total number of valid survey responses from both methods was 209.

4. Research Results

Results of Cronbach's Alpha Test

According to Nunnally (1978) and Peterson (1994), the acceptability and reliability of a scale require satisfying two conditions: Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the overall scale > 0.6;

Corrected Item-Total Correlation coefficient > 0.3.

Table 1: Scale Reliability Test Results

Factor	Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Total correlation coefficient
Brand recognition (BR)	5	0.891	0.659 – 0.734
Brand recall (BRe)	4	0.834	0.635 – 0.863
Attribute-based association (AA)	4	0.799	0.542 – 0.835
Benefit-based association (BA)	5	0.784	0.629 – 0.821
Attitude-based association (AtA)	5	0.838	0.664 – 0.876

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

After the first run of EFA, one observed variable from the Brand Recognition group and one from the Benefit-Based Association group were excluded from the research model due to factor loading coefficients below 0.5. Therefore, the research team conducted a second run of EFA to ensure optimal conditions. The final EFA results are as follows: The fundamental converging factors, as initially proposed, include 5 factors. All coefficients are ensured as follows: KMO reaching 0.915; P-value achieving 0.000, less than 0.05.

Table 2: Exploratory factor analysis results

Variables	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
BR1	0.574				
BR2	0.639				
BR3	0.720				
BR5	0.783				
BRe1			0.838		
BRe2			0.729		
BRe3			0.683		
BRe4			0.721		
AA1				0.734	
AA2				0.715	
AA3				0.613	
AA4				0.697	
BA1					0.837
BA3					0.811
BA4					0.792
BA5					0.627
AtA1		0.659			
AtA2		0.782			
AtA3		0.763			
AtA4		0.824			
AtA5		0.815			
KMO			0.915		
Total Variance Explained			71.383%		

According to Hair and colleagues (2016), the process of assessing the reliability and convergent validity of the structure involves examining internal consistency, convergent validity, and

discriminant validity. Reliability is evaluated through outer loading coefficients for observed variables/indicators, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and composite reliability. Outer loading coefficients must be greater than or equal to 0.7, and both Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability (CR) should exceed 0.7 (Hulland, 1999). Convergent validity is assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE coefficient should be greater than or equal to 0.5 to confirm convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The test results indicate that all measurement scales exhibit internal consistency (outer loading coefficients for observed variables/indicators are all greater than 0.7, and Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability for all measurement scales are above 0.7). Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all measurement scales is greater than 0.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that both the measurement scales and the research structure achieve convergent validity.

In terms of discriminant validity, previous studies have commonly employed the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess distinctiveness. However, Henseler and colleagues (2015) introduced a method using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, demonstrating its superiority through a model-based approach. Therefore, this study utilizes the HTMT index to evaluate the distinctiveness between measurement scales/structures. The HTMT criterion for pairs of structures to achieve discriminant validity is 0.85 (<= 0.85) (Kline, 2015).

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Coefficients

	BR	BRe	AA	BA	AtA
BR					
BRe	0.047				
AA	0.083	0.284			
BA	0.153	0.017	0.152		
AtA	0.218	0.089	0.287	0.398	

The results in Table 3 indicate that the values of the HTMT index are all below 0.85. Therefore, the structures in the model achieve discriminant validity.

According to Hulland and Bentler (1999), if the model receives a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value less than 0.1, it is considered appropriate for real-world data. Thus, with SRMR values < 0.1, the research model is concluded to be suitable for the study area in Can Tho City. Additionally, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all independent variables is less than 3, indicating that the research model does not exhibit multicollinearity.
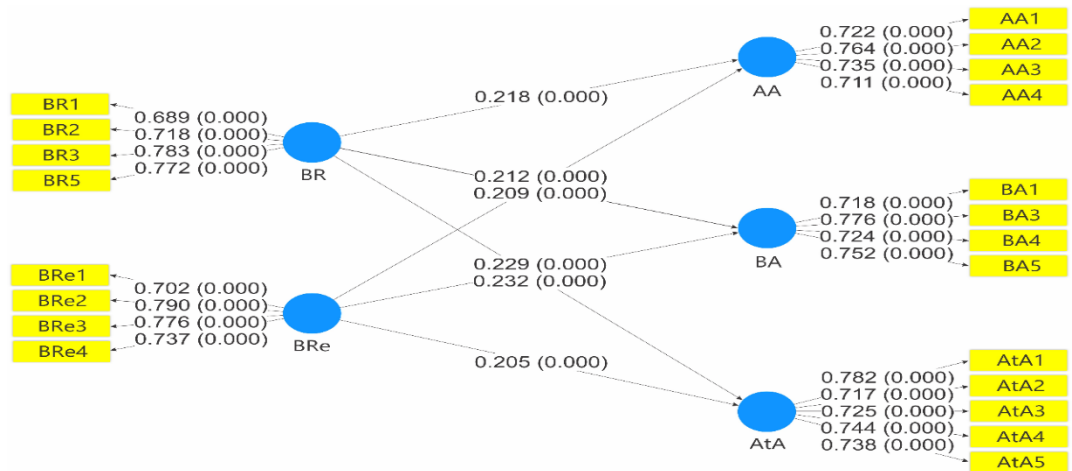
BR1 0.689 (0.000)
BR2 0.718 (0.000)
BR3 0.783 (0.000)
BR5 0.772 (0.000)
BR

0.218 (0.000)

AA
0.722 (0.000) AA1
0.764 (0.000) AA2
0.735 (0.000) AA3
0.711 (0.000) AA4

0.212 (0.000)
0.209 (0.000)

BA
0.718 (0.000) BA1
0.776 (0.000) BA3
0.724 (0.000) BA4
0.752 (0.000) BA5

BRe1 0.702 (0.000)
BRe2 0.790 (0.000)
BRe3 0.776 (0.000)
BRe4 0.737 (0.000)
BRe

0.229 (0.000)
0.232 (0.000)

0.205 (0.000)

AtA
0.782 (0.000) AtA1
0.717 (0.000) AtA2
0.725 (0.000) AtA3
0.744 (0.000) AtA4
0.738 (0.000) AtA5

Figure 2: PLS-SEM Results

The study by Chin et al. (1996) analyzed the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable, not only examining the significance of relationships but also assessing the strength of these relationships for resource allocation purposes. Additionally, to generalize the research findings to the population, the model needs to undergo reliability testing using the Bootstrap method with a sample size of 5000 iterations (Hair et al., 2017).

The study's results, indicating statistical significance for all hypotheses (H1 to H6), underscore the substantial impact of both brand recognition and brand recall on diverse aspects of consumer associations with Winmart in Can Tho City. H1 reveals that brand recognition significantly influences attribute-based associations, suggesting that consumers recognizing the Winmart brand are more likely to associate specific attributes with the brand.

Furthermore, H2 demonstrates a positive influence of brand recall on attribute-based associations, indicating that consumers who can recall the Winmart brand from memory also tend to form associations based on specific attributes. Expanding the scope, H3 and H4 show that both brand recognition and brand recall have a positive impact on benefit-based associations. This suggests that consumers associating the Winmart brand with recognized or recalled benefits are more likely.

Additionally, delving into attitude-based associations, H5 and H6 highlight the positive contributions of both brand recognition and brand recall to shaping consumers' attitudes toward Winmart. This implies that a strong presence of the Winmart brand in consumers' minds, whether through recognition or recall, plays a crucial role in fostering positive attitudes.

In conclusion, the study's findings emphasize the substantial influence of brand recognition and recall in shaping diverse consumer associations, spanning attributes, benefits, and attitudes. These results provide valuable insights for Winmart to strategically enhance brand recognition and recall efforts, ultimately fostering positive consumer perceptions in the competitive market of Can Tho City.

5. Conclusion

This study investigates the intricate relationships between brand recognition and various dimensions of consumer associations with Winmart. The hypotheses, all statistically significant, illuminate critical insights for Winmart's strategic marketing initiatives. Firstly, brand

recognition significantly influences attribute-based associations (H1). This implies that consumers recognizing Winmart are more likely to associate specific attributes with the brand, emphasizing the importance of enhancing visibility in the market (Keller, 1993). Similarly, brand recall positively influences attribute-based associations (H2). This suggests that consumers who can recall the Winmart brand are more likely to associate it with specific attributes, emphasizing the importance of memorable advertising and effective recall strategies in shaping consumer perceptions (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). Moving to benefit-based associations, both brand recognition (H3) and brand recall (H4) exhibit statistically significant positive influences. Strengthening communication about Winmart's benefits is crucial for shaping positive consumer perceptions. Marketing efforts should focus on highlighting specific benefits associated with the brand, contributing to enhanced consumer loyalty and satisfaction (Aaker, 1991). Furthermore, brand recognition (H5) and brand recall (H6) positively influence attitude-based associations. This signifies that consumers who recognize or recall Winmart are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards the brand (Keller, 1993). Therefore, investing in strategies to enhance brand recall, such as memorable advertising campaigns or loyalty programs, can contribute to cultivating positive consumer attitudes.

For Winmart, these results offer strategic insights. Firstly, the brand should intensify efforts to enhance recognition through diversified marketing channels, including advertising and digital platforms. Utilizing memorable advertising campaigns and ensuring consistent brand visibility are imperative. Secondly, the study emphasizes the importance of effective communication about Winmart's benefits, highlighting distinct advantages that resonate with consumers. Strategies should include clearly conveying the unique selling propositions and value propositions associated with Winmart's products or services. Additionally, fostering brand recall through loyalty programs, engaging advertising, and ensuring positive customer experiences could contribute significantly to consumer retention and loyalty. While these insights offer valuable strategic directions, it's important for Winmart to consider the context of Can Tho City. Regional variations in consumer behavior and preferences might influence the effectiveness of these strategies. Therefore, a localized approach, considering the unique characteristics of the Can Tho market, is advisable.

In conclusion, the study's statistically significant results provide Winmart with actionable insights for enhancing brand associations. By leveraging these insights, Winmart can strategically position itself to strengthen its brand recognition, effectively communicate its benefits, and cultivate positive consumer attitudes in the competitive marketplace of Can Tho City.

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