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THE EFFECT OF PRODCUT PERFORMANCE ON BRAND IMAGE: CASE STUDY RAZAVI YEAST PRODUCT

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive market, companies are trying to keep their customers. In food industry gaining customer trust and creating a favorable image of brands entirely cause to have competitive advantages through customers. In this study, we examined the effect of product performance on brand image among bakeries in terms of Razavi yeast product in Mashhad. Data via questionnaires among 1955 randomly selected bakeries used brand Razavi were collected. Results showed some components of designed, internal and external properties of yeast product of Razavi brand had a significantly positive effect on brand image.

Keywords: *Product Performance, Brand image, Yeast, Razavi*

Companies tend to create a strong brand image by improving the quality of products (Aker 1991). Emphasis on establishing strong brands and quality of products can strongly affect customer satisfaction and loyalty (Smith et al 1992). Product performance can be effective on brands and cause brands loyalty (Churchill and Suprenant 1982, Oliver 1980). In this study, we examined the effect of product performance on brand image in terms of Razavi yeast product among Mashhad Bakeries. Brands are considered as companies assets and can guarantee success in the market. Therefore, evaluating and understanding the impact of various factors of the product performance on the brand image can be an efficient marketing strategy. Ulrich and Eppinger (1995) have defined product performance based on how well a product is able to provide practical application of the final plan. According to Hobka and Eider (Osteras et al 2006) the products performance components are classified in three categories: 1) Features designed for products (for yeast; swelling power and swelling speed of bread dough, improving aroma, flavor and nutritional properties of bread), 2) internal properties (for yeast, shape, color, maintainability), and 3) external properties (for yeast, safe, sustainable, beautiful, stylish, and a variety of packaging). Measuring the product performance is an important part of product evaluation. Successful product performance has three aspects of concept. Financial measures, customer satisfaction, time-to-market or product lifecycle. Oliver (1980) has stated that the attitude to a product is a function of the initial attitude at the time of purchase and satisfaction with the transaction. So, if a customer recognize a particular brand at the moment of purchasing and in the process after buying (consuming goods) positive attitude persists the image of the brand in the customer's mind can be maintained (Keller 1993). Thus, the product performance is expected to affect overall assessment of brands. The customer's perception of a brand is enhanced when high quality and performance has been experienced (Smith et al., 1992). According to some studies, favorable brand image is always useful to achieve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. (Koo 2003). Zeithaml (1988) stated that sometimes the impact of a successful brand is so strong which causes a product or a service is called with a particular brand (eg Pepsi, FedEx McKinsey, etc). Therefore the brand of a product is measurable.

Product performance are often based on external evaluation indexes like properties of the exterior, brand, price, packaging since the internal properties are not available at the moment of purchase and the evaluation of the internal properties takes time. Selnes (1993) stated product performance affected brand reputation, image, customer satisfaction and loyalty effectively.

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METHODOLOGY

In this study, research methods are descriptive. The samples were selected by simple random sampling and all bakeries have an equal chance of being selected. Data collection methods in this study were self-made questionnaire and Likert scales in 5 options range. Research populations were bakeries consume Razavi yeast within the city of Mashhad. According to Morgan table among 1955 bakeries which consume Razavi yeast, 302 bakeries were selected as the sample size. Territory was the end of September till the end of February 2013. Product performance is the independent variable and the dependent variable is brand image. To determine the reliability of the study, at first a questionnaire was distributed among a 30-member preliminary sample and then using SPSS, Cronbach's alpha coefficient (equal to 0.806) were calculated. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilized. SPSS software was used for statistical inferences. To test research hypotheses one-group t-test used since the data are normally distributed.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The main hypothesis: Product performance affect brand image. (Product: baker's yeast, brand: Razavi)

The first sub-hypothesis: designed properties of Razavi yeast affect Razavi brand image. (Table 1)

H0: Bread swelling power does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Bread swelling power affects Razavi brand image

H0: Bread swelling speed does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Bread swelling speed does affects Razavi brand image

H0: Enhancing the aroma and flavor of bread does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Enhancing the aroma and flavor of bread affects Razavi brand image

H0: Improving the nutritional properties of bread does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Improving the nutritional properties of bread affects Razavi brand image

The second sub-hypothesis: the internal properties of Razavi yeast affects Razavi brand image. (Table 2)

H0: Yeast shape does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Yeast shape affects Razavi brand image

H0: Yeast color does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Yeast color affects Razavi brand image

H0: Maintainability of Yeast does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: Maintainability of Yeast affects Razavi brand image

The third sub-hypothesis: the external properties of Razavi yeast affects Razavi brand image. (Table 3)

H0: safe packaging does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: safe packaging affects Razavi brand image

H0: sustainable packaging does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: sustainable packaging doe affects Razavi brand image

H0: beautiful and stylish packaging does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: beautiful and stylish packaging affects Razavi brand image

H0: variety of packaging does not affect Razavi brand image

H1: variety of packaging affects Razavi brand image

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of respondents are reported in the following frequency distribution graphs. 1-Gender: Respondents are 96.35 percent men versus 3.65 percent women. Figure 2

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shows most customers are men, with an abundance of 96.35 percent. 2- Marital status: Married respondents, 86.72 percent and 13.28 percent were single, which has been shown in Figure 3. 3-Age: The age distribution profile is presented in figure 4 which shows the age group 35 to 45 years is the most with 50.52 percent. 4-Education: In Figure 4 education level of respondents is provided.

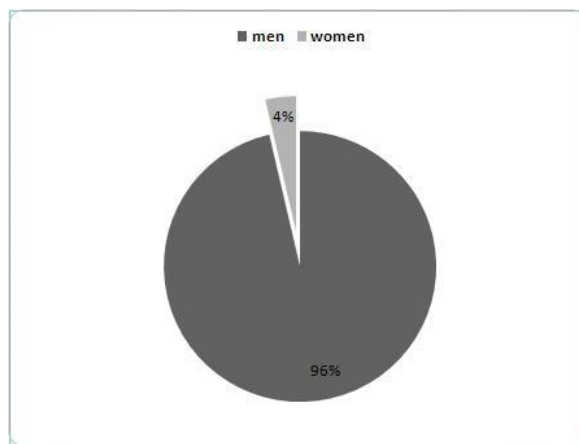


Figure 1: Distribution of Gender

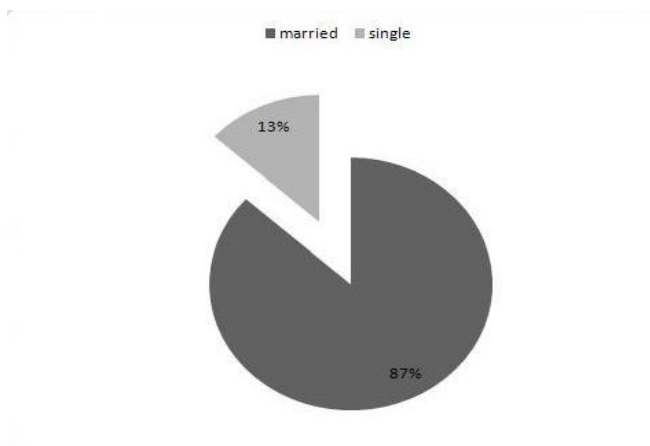


Figure 2: Distribution of marital status

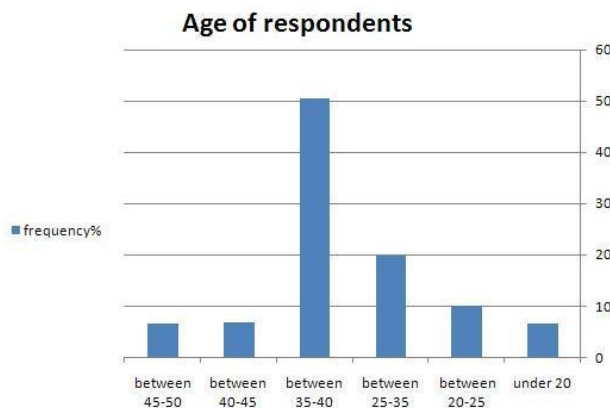


Figure 3: Age of respondents

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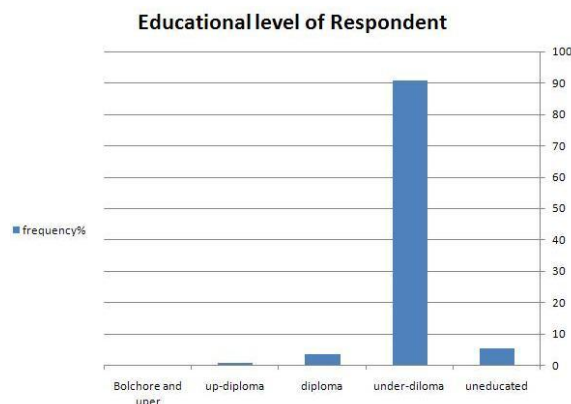


Figure 4: Education levels of respondents

Results (Table 1-2-3) showed some components of designed, internal and external properties of yeast product of Razavi brand had a significantly positive effect on brand image.

Interpretation of Table 1:

The first and second components of designed properties of Razavi yeast according to t test of table 1 are significant at alpha level of 1% (due to the first condition that the sig value is less than 0.01). So with 99% confidence the null hypothesis of the first and second component of designed properties of brand Razavi rejected and we conclude that the first and second component means dough swelling power and dough swelling speed affect Razavi brand image. But the third and fourth component of designed properties of Razavi yeast according to $t = -5.505$ and -16.85 (respectively) is not significant and the null hypothesis is accepted and the third and fourth component does not affect the brand image.

Interpretation of Table 2:

The first and third components of internal properties of Razavi yeast according to t test of table 2 are significant at alpha level of 1% (due to the first condition that the sig value is less than 0.01). So with 99% confidence the null hypothesis of the first and third component of internal properties of brand Razavi rejected and we conclude that the first and third component means yeast shape (powder shape for dry and mold shape for fresh yeast), maintainability affect Razavi brand image. But the second component of internal properties of Razavi yeast according to $t = -8.10$ is not significant and the null hypothesis is accepted and the second component does not affect the brand image.

Interpretation of Table 3:

All four components of external properties of Razavi yeast according to t test of table 3 is significant at alpha level of 1% (due to the first condition that the sig value is less than 0.01). So with 99% confidence the null hypothesis of all four components of external properties of brand Razavi rejected and we conclude that all components of external properties affect Razavi brand image.

Table 1: T-test of the first sub-hypothesis: designed properties of Razavi yeast affect Razavi brand image.

Variable	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Average expected	t	df	Sig
Dough swelling power	302	4.00	0.886	3.00	** 19.51	301	0.000
Dough swelling speed	302	3.98	0.976	3.00	** 17.36	301	0.000
Enhancing the aroma and flavor	302	2.77	1.123	3.00	-3.58	301	0.000
Improving the nutritional properties	302	2.19	1.031	3.00	-13.68	301	0.000

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Table 2: T-test of the internal properties of Razavi yeast affects Razavi brand image

Variable	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Average expected	t	df	Sig
Yeast shape	302	4.00	0.896	3.00	**19.68	301	0.000
Yeast color	302	2.52	1.037	3.00	-8.10	301	0.000
Maintainability of Yeast	302	3.90	1.052	3.00	**14.80	301	0.000

Table 3: T-test of the external properties of Razavi yeast affects Razavi brand image

Variable	Number	Average	Standard deviation	Average expected	t	df	Sig
safe packaging	302	3.97	0.850	3.00	**19.76	301	0.000
sustainable packaging	302	3.93	0.875	3.00	**18.42	301	0.000
beautiful and stylish packaging	302	4.11	0.890	3.00	**21.74	301	0.000
variety of packaging	302	3.88	0.936	3.00	**16.32	301	0.000

CONCLUSION

The results show that speed of swelling, power of swelling, yeast shape (powder shape for dry and mold shape for fresh yeast), maintainability of Razavi yeast affect Razavi brand image while aroma and flavor enhancing, color and nutritional properties improvement of Razavi yeast has no significant effect on Razavi brand image. On the other hand, the results illustrate that all components of external properties of Razavi product strongly affect on brand image. In comparison with research of Smith et al. (1992) which the customer's perception of a brand is enhanced when high quality and performance has been experienced, we can say that the quality and experience of external properties and components of other properties which related to our aim of use have more effect on brand image than the other properties. For example, improving the nutritional properties of designed properties has no dominate effect on brand image result from considering this property is unimportant for respondents, this is the concern of consumers of bread and producers of yeast. To create a strong brand image, we suggest case study to use propose results which were found noticeable in our study. In comparison with Selnes's research (1993), our study shows that some components of product performance have significant effect on brand image and some not, it depends to product.

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