Cognitive Development of Brand as a Heuristic*

소비자 휴리스틱을 통한 인지적 발달 관점에서의 브랜드

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The focus of this paper is to investigate cognitive development of brand heuristics in the mind of a young consumer as the consumer matures. This issue was examined by comparing the nature of the set of associations (that form the brand heuristic) given by consumers across four different age groups, with each age group representing a distinct stage of cognitive maturity. It is found that there are fundamental differences in the way the different age groups perceive the brand. The research method uses the novel approach of classifying the elicited associations into the three types of brand associations: attributes, benefits and attitudes. This classification enables comparisons of the nature of brand associations and the changes that occur as a consumer matures. To conclude, implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Key words: Brand, Heuristics, Children, Cognitive development

Ⅰ. Introduction

Brand equity is regarded as a very important concept in business practice as well as in academic research. Marketing practitioners and academics alike view brand equity as a platform upon which to build a competitive advantage, future earnings streams, and shareholder wealth (Keller 1998). Firms that have brands with high equity possess competitive advantage in the form of opportunities for successful extensions, resilience against competitors' promotional pressures, and creation of barriers to competitive

entry (Farquhar 1989). An indication of the importance of well-known brands is the premium asset valuation that they obtain. For example, 90% of the total price of $220 million paid by Cadbury-Schweppes for the "Hires" and "Crush" product lines of Procter & Gamble was attributed to brand assets (Kamakura & Russel, 1993; Schlossberg, 1990). Marketing managers continue to realise the power of brands, manifest in the recent efforts of companies to build strong Internet brands such as amazon.com and msn.com (Narisetti, 1998).

While numerous conceptualisations of brand equity have been proposed, this paper assumes a customer-based definition which sees brand equity "as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand"(Keller, 1998). A company's real value lies outside the business itself, in the minds of potential buyers(Keller, 1993; 1998). The way consumers perceive brands is a key determinant of long-term business-consumer relationships(Founier, 1998). Keller (1993; 1998) refers to consumer perceptions of brands as brand knowledge, consisting of brand awareness (in terms of brand recognition and recall) and brand image. Brand image is defined as the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory(Keller, 1993) These associations include perceptions of brand quality and attitudes toward the brand.

1.1 Use of Heuristics

Companies seek to increase brand knowledge through a two pronged approach: by heightening brand awareness and building brand image through the use of advertisements. In view of the onslaught of persuasive messages from advertisers, people can enter into "a state of information overload"(Baron & Byrne, 2000) when their ability to process information is exceeded. Research has shown that consumers, when faced with some evaluative task such as choosing between several brands in a product category, tend to conserve scarce information processing capacity by using mental shortcuts(Marshall, Ng, & Na, 2002). People often form simple, experienced-based rules, or heuristics, to help interpret information quickly, form judgements and make complex decisions or draw inferences in a rapid and seemingly effortless manner. These cognitive heuristics have been described variously as rules people seem to apply to "reduce complex inferential tasks to… simple cognitive operations"(Cervone & Peake,1986); as "inferential rules of thumb"(Allison, Worth, & King, 1990); and as "simple schemas or decision rules"(Axom, Yates, & Chaiken, 1987).

Two classes of cognitive heuristics are commonly used; "representativeness" and "availability" (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973). The former are used for making judgements based on "the extent (an object) represents the essential features of its parent population"(p163). The latter are

used "whenever (a person) estimates frequency or probability by the ease with which instances or associations comes to mind"(p197). This shortcut suggests that the easier it is to bring something to mind, the more important it is. The amount of information people can bring to mind also seems to matter(Schwarz et al., 1991). In marketing, associations learned through experience are cued by the use of particular colours, brand logos and illustrations. Probably the most frequently invoked heuristic, in a business context, is a brand name.

A brand name can be conceptualised as a recall prompt, or an associative cue for information retrieval. A considerable amount of research has shown that brand names can help consumers recall important product information. For example, a brand name that suggests something about the product's benefits reminds a person about its unique qualities. Brand names can also serve as predictive cues about product performance (Keller, 1993; 1998). In other words, a brand name can act as a cue to trigger a set of relevant associations that together form the brand heuristic(Keller, 1991).

Viewing brand names as both associative prompts and predictive cues presents an additional challenge to brand managers if they want to achieve the desired brand positioning. Brand managers may have to consider how they can manage brand promotion so as to give rise to a brand heuristic congruent with how they want the consumers to perceive the brand. More specifically, the brand heuristic should help the brand achieve the intended position in the minds of the consumers. The question is: 'do the consumers actually perceive the brand as the company intended?' Amongst other things, brand managers need to gain a deeper understanding of how different consumers perceive the message that the brand tries to convey.

1.2 Cognitive development of a brand heuristics as a consumer mature

Our goal is to investigate the development of a brand heuristics as a consumer matures. We want to find out whether people at different stages of cognitive maturity differ in the way they react to a given brand; and if so, how they differ, in terms of the nature of brand associations.

We begin with a discussion of relevant literature, followed by a description of the research design involving in-depth interviews, which was employed to elicit brand associations of two international fast food brands. The effects of cognitive maturity on the nature of brand associations were analysed by classifying the elicited associations according to the brand association model. Finally, a discussion of the results, implications and limitations is provided.

Ⅱ. Prior Research

Brand names and trademarks usually guarantee that products bearing the marks will be of uniform quality(Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998). Branding also enables a producer to obtain the benefits of offering products with unique or superior quality and provides an opportunity to transfer this identifiable relationship to other products or services by brand or product extensions. The value of a brand is indicated by the money paid by firms that have acquired consumer package goods with strong brand names. Procter and Gamble paid 2.6 times Richardson-Vicks' book value, Nabisco sold for 3.2 times book value, and General Foods sold for 3.5 times book value (Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998). All these testify to the fact that the brand is a very important and valuable asset to a company.

Brand equity has been well documented in many research articles(Aaker, 1991; Ambler & Styles, 1996; Feldwick, 1996; Keller, 1993; Simon & Sullivan, 1993; Srivastava & Shocker, 1991). It can be viewed from two perspectives. The first perspective is that brand equity can be used by brand managers to manage and direct their marketing efforts more effectively at consumers. The second is mostly financially based – in terms of incremental discounted future cash flows that would result from a branded product's revenue, in comparison with the revenue that would occur if the same product did not have the brand name(Simon & Sullivan, 1993).

Keller(1993) defines brand equity in terms of the marketing efforts uniquely attributable to the brand, which could include the positive attitudes and goodwill that consumers have towards a particular brand over a generic one. (Rio, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001) found that in the benefits associated to the brand name, consumers observe greater differences between the brands than in the product-associated benefits. Therefore, a well-managed and established brand name enables a company to gain its foothold in the market and, more importantly, in the minds of consumers.

However, for a company to market and promote its products or services successfully, marketers must have a thorough understanding of consumer behaviour as a basis for making better strategic decisions about target market definition and product positioning as well as better tactical decisions about specific marketing mix actions (Keller, 1993). If not, much money, time and effort put into advertising and promotion will be wasted.

2.1 Brand Associations

A brand can be defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to

differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler, 1997). The link between brands and consumer decision-making is the brand knowledge in memory(Alba, Hutchinson, & Lynch, 1991). A dominant concept of memory structure is the "associative network memory model." It views semantic memory or knowledge as consisting of a set of nodes and links. Nodes are stored information connected by links that vary in strength. A "spreading activation" process from node to node determines the extent of retrieval in memory(Collins & Loftus & Loftus, 1975; Raaijmakers, 1981; Ratcliff, 1988).

A node becomes a potential source of activation for other nodes either when external information is being encoded or when internal information is retrieved from long-term memory. Activation can spread from this node to other linked nodes in memory. When the activation of another node exceeds some threshold level, the information contained in that node is recalled. Thus, the strength of association between the activated node and all linked nodes determines the extent of this "spreading activation" and the particular information that can be retrieved from memory.

Consistent with an associative network memory model, brand knowledge is conceptualised as consisting of a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked(Keller,1993). The relevant dimensions that distinguish brand knowledge and affect consumer response are the awareness of the brand and the favoura-

bility, strength and uniqueness of the brand associations in consumer memory. In this research, the main focus is on the development of brand associations, which changes as consumers mature.

According to Keller(1993), brand associations can be classified into three major categories of increasing scope: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. In this discussion, attributes are distinguished according to how directly they relate to product or service performance. Product-related attributes are defined as the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers, hence, they relate to a product's physical composition or a service's requirements. Non-product-related attributes are defined as external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption. The four main types of non-product-related attributes are (1) price information, (2) packaging or product appearance information, (3) user imagery, and (4) usage imagery. Attributes normally relate to the more tangible aspect of the product or service.

Benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes and can be further distinguished into three categories according to the underlying motivations to which they relate(Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986): (1) functional benefits, (2) experiential benefits, and (3) symbolic benefits. Functional benefits are the more intrinsic advantages of product or service consumption and usually

correspond to the product-related attributes. Experiential benefits relate to what it feels like to use the product or service and also usually correspond to the product-related attributes. Symbolic benefits are the more extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption. They usually correspond to non-product-related attributes and relate to underlying needs. Benefits relate to attributes in that benefits are the values that consumers place on the attributes.

The final category of brand associations, and also the most complex of all, is brand attitude. Brand attitudes are defined as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand(Wilkie, 1986). They involve a value judgement on the part of the consumers. Brand attitudes are important because they often form the basis for consumer behaviour (e.g. brand choice and preference). The most widely accepted model of brand attitudes is the multi-attribute model by Fishbein & Ajen (1975) that views attitudes as a multiplicative function of (1) the salient beliefs a consumer has about the product or service (i.e., the extent to which consumers think the brand has certain attributes or benefits) and (2) the evaluative judgement of those beliefs (i.e., how good or bad it is that the brand has those attributes or benefits).

2.2 Cognitive developmental theories

The use of cognitive heuristics indicates some sophistication and experience in the use of language, therefore it seems to follow that the use of heuristics should develop in accordance to the cognitive ability of a developing child (Marshall, Ng, & Na, 2002). Also Children can understand the brand symbolism as they grow up(McAlister &Cornwell, 2010;2006; 2007).

Piaget(1970), one of the most influential researchers in the area of developmental psychology during the 20th century, identified four stages in his Theory of Cognitive Development: the (1) sensorimotor, (2) pre-operational, (3) concrete operational, and the (4) formal operational stages.

The sensorimotor stage occurs in infancy (birth to about two years of age) when intelligence is demonstrated through motor activity without the use of symbols. Knowledge of the world is limited (but developing) because it is based on physical interactions and experiences. In the pre-operational stage, which starts from toddlers to children in their early childhood (two years to seven years of age), intelligence is demonstrated through the use of symbols. Language use matures, and memory and imagination are developed, but thinking is done in a non-logical, non-reversible manner(Hetherington & Parke, 1993). Egocentric thinking predominates. The concrete operational stage occurs in late childhood and early adolescence (seven to eleven years of age) where intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects. Concrete operational thinking develops (mental actions that are reversible) and egocentric thoughts diminish.

Finally, the formal operational stage, which starts from adolescence to adulthood (eleven years and above), intelligence is demonstrated through the logical use of symbols related to abstract concepts(Lefrancois, 1990). Early in the period there is a return to egocentric thought that diminishes later in adulthood.

Based on this cognitive developmental framework, we would expect that the use of cognitive heuristics would increase as a consumer matures from infancy to adulthood. And applying this to Keller's categories of brand associations, because of the different levels of complexity involved from attributes and benefits to attitudes, we would expect that young children in the early stages of cognitive development (i.e., those in the sensorimotor and pre-operational stages) would not be able to process and make evaluative judgements for the latter category (mainly attitude) as well as those in the later stages (i.e., those in the concrete operational and formal operational stages). Ward (1974) also suggested that the progression of conceptual learning moved from simple responses to complex ones, from concrete to abstract, from discrete to systematic. Hence, it follows that the brand associations of younger children would concentrate around attributes and benefits while the older ones would show a tendency towards attitudes. The first hypothesis simply draws upon this basic idea, that differences in cognitive ability would determine the nature of the brand associations a consumer concentrates on.

On line with the McAlister's(2010), we can purpose the 2nd hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: There is a fundamental changes in the nature of brand associations as a consumer mature (from the pre-operational to formal operational stages).

Hypothesis 2: There is a tendency of recognition development from concrete to abstract as a consumer mature (from the pre-operational to formal operational stages).

Ⅲ. Research Design

3.1 Research Technique

The broad purpose of our research is to examine the development of brand heuristics as a consumer matures. Being exploratory in nature, a more complete measure of brand associations would be on a consumer-by-consumer basis, using a depth interview technique to elicit an unbiased picture of a consumer's associations for a brand(e.g. Fournier, 1998).

Associations are measured in industry and consumer research in a number of ways. Aaker (1991) categorizes these measurements as direct methods that scale various brand perceptions, and indirect methods which infer meanings from consumer responses. Since this study is focussed on understanding brand associations from the

consumer's perspective, the indirect approach was used. In order to identify the typology of brand association derived from this study, and to examine the relationship between association characteristics and age, a free association procedure was used. In the free association, subjects were asked to write down whatever came to mind when they thought of the brand in question(Chen, 2001).

3.2 Sample

The overall research design concept is to find out what the subjects associated with the two brands chosen, namely, McDonald's and KFC. The responses are then plotted onto Keller's model of brand associations to check for convergence within the age group itself by interviewing several subjects until convergence was attained. We define convergence to mean the broad direction with which the associations are classified into. For instance, we interviewed several respondents until the responses of two interviewees match up based on their emphasis on the three aspects of brand associations – attributes, benefits and attitudes. We interviewed twenty people to arrive at our four sets of convergent responses.

The final sample consists of eight respondents from middle-income families. Children from better-performing schools were chosen in the first three age groups while undergraduates were selected for the final age group. Care was also taken to pick schools with a history of academic excellence, so as to approximate the intellectual potential of their undergraduate counterparts(Marshall, Ng, & Na,2002).

The respondents were grouped in accordance with the stages of Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational. However, we felt that children under five years of age would not be useful in this research as they would not be able to give a very accurate response due to their inadequate language ability.

There were four age groups beginning with the pre-operational stage with subjects aged five to seven. This was followed by those aged eight to eleven (in the concrete operational stage). Next came those aged twelve to fifteen, who are in the formal operational stage. We have also included another group of subjects, aged sixteen to nineteen, to represent consumers who are cognitively mature.

For a fair comparison across age, the brands we use need to be relevant and familiar to the interviewees. Fast food, in general, has become an integral part of their life. McDonald's and KFC were selected due to their proliferation since the late 1970s, and their high levels of brand awareness among our subjects. Also, to ensure that their experience with the two brands in question were recent, subjects chosen had patronised both restaurants at least once in the past month.

3.3 Procedure

Each of the subjects was interviewed alone, with one of the two interviewers noting down the responses while the other led the discussion. In the first part of the interview, we sought to solicit one-word associations from the subjects by using the free association technique.

Subsequently, we proceeded to use photographs showing (1) the general setting of the restaurants with the signboard and mascot and, (2) the menu board at the counters, to aid the subjects in recalling associations that might have otherwise been neglected. When they look at pictures representing their associations, it becomes easier to find the right words (Supphellen, 2000), especially so for younger children.

For this purpose, a simple, one-page questionnaire was designed. Ratings of the quality of each tub of ice cream were collected from the adults on a single, seven-point semantic differential scale. Subjects were then asked two questions designed to assess their level of involvement with the judgment process, one question phrased positively and the other negatively. Children were asked to express their quality perception by using a non-numeric measurement device. A cardboard strip, with a center-marker dividing a colored portion from an uncolored one, was threaded through a backing card. This strip can then be pulled through the backing board to move the mid-point toward one end or the other. Several backing cards were made up with suitable scale anchors printed on them to measure the desirable and it's importance of attributes, benefits, and values.

IV. Results

The elicited associations were classified into the three types of brand associations: attributes, benefits and attitudes (based on Keller's definitions). This classification enables comparisons of the nature of brand associations across the four age groups. The total number of times that the attributes, benefits and attitudes mentioned by the interviewees within each age group for both brand names were added up for brevity. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage for each type of brand associations. These percentages show the relative importance of each dimension and are used as a basis to track changes across age groups. Finally, the chi-square test of independence is utilized to determine whether the nature of associations and age are independent.

The chi-square test of independence, using a 5% statistical significance level, reveals that significant differences exist in the type of associations elicited across all four age groups. Hence, we can conclude that there are fundamental differences in the way the different age groups perceive the brand.

Inspection of the percentages reveals that

<div align="center">〈Table 1〉 Classification of Elicited Associations</div>

| Age Group	Attributes		% of Attributes to Total	Benefits			% of Benefits to Total	Attitudes	% of Attitudes to Total
	Product-related	Non-product-related		Functional	Experiential	Symbolic			
5-7	24	19		9	3	0			
	55.8%	44.2%	67.20%	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	18.80%	9	14%
	43			12					
8-11	29	7		4	6	0			
	80.6%	19.4%	64.20%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	17.90%	10	17.90%
	36			10					
12-15	18	18		6	0	0			
	36		65.50%	6			10.90%	13	23.60%
	50.0%	50.0%		100.0%	0.0%	0.0%			
16-19	7	24		8	5	3			
	31		44.90%	16			23.20%	22	31.90%
	22.6%	77.4%		50.0%	31.3%	18.7%			

Note: Using the chi-square test of independence. $\chi^2 = 11.56743$

each age group has a varying emphasis on the different aspects of the brand. While the attribute dimension proves to be the most important aspect among all the four age groups, those aged five to seven tend to fo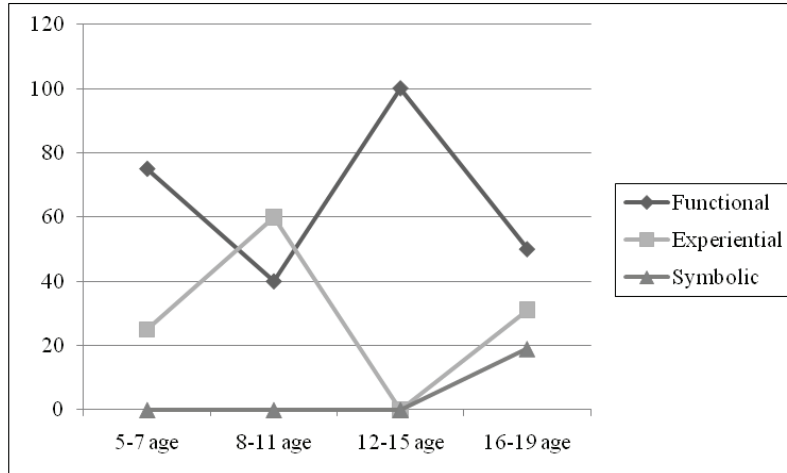cus more on benefits rather than on attitudes. Those aged eight to eleven place equal emphasis on both. Both the age groups twelve to fifteen and sixteen to nineteen focus more on attitudes than on benefits.

Table 2 shows this gradual shift towards attitudes. There is a distinct positive correlation

<div align="center">〈Table 2〉 Changes in the relative importance of each dimension of brand association</div>
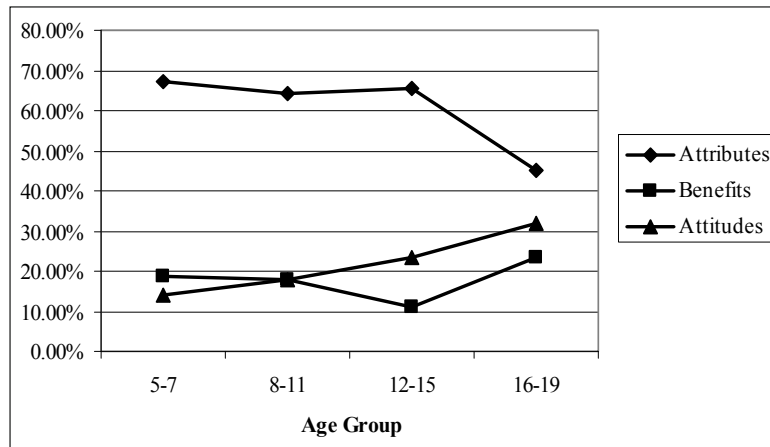
<Table 3> The gradual shift from concrete to abstract in benefit dimension

between age and attitudes. The emphasis on benefits declined but this trend was reversed for those aged sixteen to nineteen. The attributes dimension maintained its importance but dropped drastically for those aged sixteen to nineteen.

To examine hypothesis 2, Table 3 has been re-organized to show the gradual shift from concrete to abstract. By examining the benefit dimension, as we expected, there is a progression of conceptual learning moved from concrete to abstract.

V. Discussion

The results offer support for the hypothesis that there are fundamental differences in the way the different age groups perceive the brand. This difference is less pronounced for the two later age groups. They give similar rankings for the importance placed on each of the three dimensions. However, there are still some notable differences. These will be illustrated below, along with the trends observed in the way the different age groups perceive each dimension of the brand.

5.1 Trend 1: Attributes

Based on the results, attributes form the core associations across all the age groups. Owing to the fact that attributes are the primary features for most products, consumers may still regard attributes as a major source of information about the brand and its products. With the increase in cognitive maturity, attributes can be used as a basis for evaluation and comparison.

The subject matter used could have strengthened this observation. Being self-service in

nature, consumers of fast food are expected to participate more actively in the buying process. Coupled with the abundant images of the products in both the advertisements and posters in the restaurants, the emphasis on attributes and ease of recall is enhanced considerably.

Although the first three age groups (i.e., those aged five to fifteen) place similar emphasis on attributes (in terms of the percentage of attributes to total associations), there is a notable decline in the relative importance of attributes for those aged sixteen to nineteen. Instead of viewing a product simply in terms of its attributes such as its physical composition and packaging, they tend to attach a value judgement to the product. This translates into more emphasis being placed on attitudes.

In addition, there is a significant shift within the attribute category, from product-related attribute associations to non-product-related for the latter age group.

5.2 Trend 2: Benefits

The importance of benefits had been relatively stable. Three distinct characteristics can be observed.

First, 'benefits' is the least important dimension of brand once the children move beyond pre-operational stage (i.e. those within the five to seven age group). Apart from those aged twelve to fifteen, the importance to the other age groups hovers around 20%. The low level of importance can be attributed to the fact that consumers view consumption of fast food as satisfying a physical/basic need. This finding is consistent with the Maslow's Hierarachy of needs, which postulates that once physiological needs (such as needs for food) are satisfied and deficiencies are alleviated, people may focus on other things higher up the hierarchy of needs (i.e. safety, love, esteem and self-actualization).

Second, upon close examination (see table 1), a gradual shift from an emphasis on functional benefits to experiential benefits and from functional and experiential benefits to symbolic benefits can be observed. This trend can be explained by the increasing maturity of the interviewees. Based on Piaget's theory, people in the pre-operational stage tend to think one-dimensionally and do not have the capability to elaborate on experiential and symbolic dimensions which require a more complex cognitive processing.

Third, age group 3 does not fit into the above-mentioned observations. A plausible explanation could be that they are in a volatile growing-up stage, tend to take extreme views and easily influenced by peers. It is at this stage where they gain cognitive maturity and form more stable views, some of which they hold for life. However, we are unable to pinpoint a reason as to why this anomaly is only observed for the benefits dimension and not the other two. This actually runs contrary to Piaget's theory whereby there is a return of egocentric thinking in the early stages of the formal operational

stage. An egocentric thinking would make one more self-centred and focussed on the benefits that one would receive. Thus, we had expected the reverse to occur instead.

5.3 Trend 3: Attitudes

A positive correlation between age and attitudes has been observed. This finding can be explained by an examination of the attitude formation process and the effects of an increase in cognitive ability. Firstly, attitudes, once formed tend to persist, especially if they are strongly accepted and closely related to the interests of the persons who hold them(Crano,1997). Hence, the attitude dimension in general is likely to increase with age. In addition, since the formation of attitude is normally acquired through social or observational learning, the amount of information that can be absorbed by people increases with their age and experiences with the brand. Secondly, with an increase in cognitive ability, people may take a more evaluative approach and exercise independence of thought. They try to see things more objectively and form their own opinions. Hence, this will explain why there is a shift towards attitudes.

5.4 Factors that Influence Brand Associations

We observed that people of different age groups vary in the way they react to a given brand name in terms of the nature of the brand associations. Based on the analysis on how the age of the subjects affect the way they perceive the brand, this difference can be attributed to three factors that influence brand associations: the cognitive maturity of the consumers, experiences with the brand and the environment.

5.4.1 Cognitive Maturity of Consumers

The cognitive maturity of the consumers affects the way they process a given set of information. Since young children in the early stages of cognitive development (i.e., those in the pre-operational stage) are not apt at processing and making evaluative judgements, their attention will be more focussed on the types of brand associations that require less processing effort (i.e., attributes and benefits) while the older ones would show a tendency towards attitudes.

5.4.2 Experience with the Brand

With age comes increased exposure to both the products and the marketing of the brand, through usage and the onslaught of advertising messages that aims to transmit positive brand information to consumers. These experiences increase the amount of brand knowledge that the consumer possesses and can potentially alter certain perceptions of the brand. Hence, the learning process expands or builds up the set

of brand associations.

5.4.3 Environmental Factors

Besides marketing, other external influences that a consumer comes into contact with during their process of maturation could shape brand associations. These contributory factors include the family, community, racial group or sub-group, social class and national culture. For instance, social learning may shape the brand attitudes held by members of the group. Further discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Ⅵ. Discussion

6.1 Summary

The purpose of this work is to investigate the development of brand heuristics as a consumer matures. Given the same brand name, a fundamental difference in the nature of brand associations has been observed as consumer moves through the various stages of cognitive maturity. This difference is represented by a distinct shift in the importance of attributes to attitudes to as a consumer matures. Thus the research hypothesis is supported.

Results provide an indication that brand associations are influenced by the maturity of consumers, the experiences of the brand and the environment. In conclusion, this paper is a step towards a better understanding of consumer perceptions and associations and hence, brand preferences and choices

6.2 Implications for Theory

The present study provides preliminary insights on the development of brand heuristics as a consumer matures. Owing to the exploratory nature of this study, future studies might extend the present study through increased empirical testing, brands from different product categories or service brands, and integrate multiple influences of brand associations.

In addition, the study introduces a new method of tracking brand heuristics by conducting in-depth interviews with regular users of the products and classifying their responses by their association typology. While this method of tracking is difficult and time-consuming, it gives a good idea of the changes (if any) in the brand heuristics. Implementation of these recommendations should result in development of additional theoretical concepts and greater overall understanding of brand associations, development of measurement models that are potentially more testable and predictive and research that is more integrative. Both researchers and practitioners should benefit from these results.

6.3 Implications for Practice

There are a number of practical implications that can be drawn from our work. First, this research can be used as part of the questionnaire development process. When the questionnaire is administered to a larger audience and across time, firms can track how the brand heuristics develop as the product moves through its life cycle or when the marketing strategy takes a new direction. By monitoring the development of the brand heuristics, marketers will be alerted to gaps between common consumer perceptions of the brand and the intended brand image. These gaps include unintended responses to certain aspects of the marketing mix that results from a misaligned marketing focus. Marketers will then be well positioned to use a specific marketing approach to bridge the gaps. For instance, marketing managers of both McDonald's and KFC can make use of the elicited associations of their brands at this point in time and implement a similar study to track changes.

A scrutiny of the free associations that were mentioned by the respondents for the two companies – McDonald's and KFC – reveals some notable comments. An interesting finding was a comment made by a respondent in the five to seven age groups who stated matter-of-factly that she would not patronise KFC because her parents told her that the food there was too oily and the place was filthy. Clearly, this demonstrates a need for KFC to address this problem of consumers' perceived image of their food being unhealthy (oily) and having dirty premises. Perhaps KFC could look into the food preparation process and find ways to make their chicken and other fried items less unhealthy by using olive oil or monosaturated oil that are said to have health benefits. Following that, it can launch a campaign specially targeted at parents to correct the misperception so that the children are not misled by their parents and hold negative views about KFC right from the start.

In the case of McDonald's, the four age groups emphasise different aspects of the restaurant. Those in the five to seven age group tend to treat McDonald's as a high-class restaurant where they get to go when they are well behaved. For those in the eight to eleven age group, it is a place to go for treats and 'Happy Meals.' Those aged twelve to fifteen see it as simply a place to 'hang out with friends' while those aged sixteen to nineteen study and meet up with friends there. Also, the older respondents tend to be more evaluative about the service they get and the ambience in the restaurant. As such, McDonald's has to consider the weights the different target groups place when planning their advertising or promotions. Perhaps McDonald's could play up the 'fun' element when targeting the younger audience and show examples of good food and service when targeting the older crowd.

Second, with a deeper understanding of how the age of their consumers affects the tendency

of their focus and responses, practitioners can consider the best way to reach out to the target customers in different age groups. Some firms may also use age as a determinant to implement multiple marketing campaigns that focus on aspects of the brand that member of a particular age group places a premium. However, we are not suggesting that practitioners use such studies to manipulate the perceptions of their consumers, especially those of young children. Rather, they should focus on areas that are valued by a particular group of consumers and use this information to increase customer satisfaction. Practitioners will then have the best opportunity to create the desired brand image, thereby enhancing brand equity [Faircloth, Capella, & Alford, 2001].

Ⅶ. Endnote

This paper has sought to highlight the relationship between the development of a brand as a heuristic and the maturity of consumers. The results have shown that there exists a positive relationship between the two elements: the nature of brand associations change with an increase in consumers' maturity. We were able to track changes in the nature of brand associations by classifying the elicited associations according to their typology. This novel approach has yielded some interesting results. It would be interesting to see how future re-search can further develop this method of tracking changes in the brand associations. In conclusion, this study enlarges the research done in the area of brand heuristics and promotes a deeper understanding of the practical realities of brand heuristics management. The findings are of relevance to practitioners and have bearings on how best they can execute their marketing campaigns.

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소비자 휴리스틱을 통한 인지적 발달 관점에서의 브랜드

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국문요약

본 연구는 어린이들의 인지 발달 단계상에서 브랜드에 대한 휴리스틱적 사고방식이 어떤 브랜드 정보를 처리하는 지에 대한 연구이다. 이러한 브랜드 휴리스틱을 이용한 브랜드 정보처리구조를 확인하기 위해서 피 연구자들의 인지구조단계에 영향을 미치는 연령별 단계를 활용하여 연구를 실시하였다. 이를 위해서 개인적 관여도가 높은 제품을 자극물로 선정함으로서 기존의 연구들에 비해서 비교적 명확한 브랜드 휴리스틱 과정을 설명할 수 있었다.

본 연구의 결과, Piaget(1970)가 제안한 연령에 따른 인지구조의 변화를 브랜드차원에서도 설명할 수 있었는데 특히 12-15세에 해당되는 피실험자의 경우에 편익과 태도에 대한 정보처리를 중요하게 하는 것으로 나타난다.

한편 어린이들의 브랜드에 대해서 형성되는 휴리스틱 차원을 소셜접근법을 이용하여 파악된 이러한 차원을 다시 분석한 결과 기능적, 경험적, 상징적인 차원에서의 편익으로 구분할 수 있었으며, 이는 기존에 브랜드에 대한 Keller(1991)의 제안을 어린이 차원에서도 검증할 수 있었다. 또한 이러한 차원은 어린이들이 점차 성숙화되어가는 발달단계에 따라서 차이가 발생되며 성숙후기 단계로 접어들면서 브랜드 휴리스틱 차원은 구체적 차원에서 추상적 차원으로 확대 되는 것을 확인할 수 있다.

핵심개념: 휴리스틱, 브랜드, 인지발달

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