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**BRAND AWARENESS OF DIAGNOSTICS LABS AMONGST PATIENTS IN DELHI /NCR REGION**

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**ABSTRACT**

In Today's global market, brand awareness plays a crucial role in winning orders and in turn gaining sales numbers. A brand that has some level of brand awareness is far more likely to be considered, and therefore chosen, than brands which the consumer is unaware of. Additionally, the strength of awareness of the brands within the consideration set can also be significant. Every organization invest in this aspect to attract major chunk of consumers by creating awareness about their brand. Brand Awareness remains fundamental to consumer life as it is the interaction initiation point with the brand. In the present work, a study was carried out to identify the methods adopted presently for the brand awareness amongst the diagnostics centres of NCR. The main purpose of this study was to find out the importance of doing Brand Awareness amongst diagnostics labs where socio-and economic stratum of customer was identified through primary research. The statistical analysis of data is based on descriptive analysis and ANOVA. The results indicates a positive and significant relationship between the Brand Awareness and stimulus for seeking services, frequency of visits, modes of services, location, diagnostics centers selection, lab@home services). The results further revealed that the major consumer expectation were quality, benefits and discount offerings.

**Keywords:** Brand, Perception, Awareness, Loyalty, Diagnostic, Respondent.

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## Introduction

For centuries, companies have used branding to differentiate their goods from their competitors' goods. The word brand is derived from the Old Norse word brand which means "to burn", as brands were and still are the means by which owners of a livestock population mark their animals to identify them. According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or some combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition." Aaker (1991) defines a brand as "a set of assets/liabilities linked to a brand's name/symbol that adds to the value provided by a product or service". The website Buildingbrands.com defines a brand as "a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer".

Consumers' knowledge about a brand makes consumers respond differently to the marketing of the brand. The study of brand equity is increasingly popular as some marketing researchers have concluded that brands are one of the most valuable assets of the company. Branding only takes place when these perceptions are managed strategically to influence consumers' perceptions, attitudes or behaviour with the purpose to create commercial value by means of marketing communication.

The concept of Branding holds tremendous importance since many years; it is the key to distinguish the goods and services from one to another. Customer's simple understanding of brand is to associate and reckon with easy information processing about products purchasing and being certain about the brand to build their trust with time (Logo Design works, 2007). This reflects the greater need from the organization's point of view to have strong brands build through proper brand management resulting from effective marketing programs to create brand equity.

The most important assets of any business are intangible — including its base of loyal customers, brands, symbols and slogans — and the brand's underlying image, personality, identity, attitudes, familiarity, associations and name awareness. These assets — along with patents, trademarks, and channel relationships — comprise brand equity, and are a primary source of competitive advantage and future earnings (David Aaker, 1991; Neal & Strauss, 2008).

## Brand Awareness in Decision Making

In a situation where the consumer is aware of a number of brands which fit the relevant criteria, he or she is unlikely to expend much effort in seeking out information on unfamiliar brands. A brand that has some level of brand awareness is far more likely to be considered, and therefore chosen, than brands which the consumer is unaware of. Additionally, the strength of awareness of the brands within the consideration set can also be significant. Wilson (1981 cited in

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Woodside & Wilson 1985) confirmed the importance of top-of-mind awareness in a study which found that the higher the position of the brand in the consumer's mind measured by unaided recall, the higher the purchase intention and the higher the relative purchase of the brand. In another study, increases in brand awareness were shown to increase the probability of choice even without any accompanying change in attitude or perceptions.

**Brand awareness enhances perceived quality:** A further way brand awareness may affect choice within the consideration set is by influencing perceived quality. In a consumer choice study by few authors over 70% of consumers selected a known brand of peanut butter from among a choice of three, even though another brand was 'objectively' better quality (as determined by blind taste tests), and even though they had neither bought or used the brand before. This result is even more surprising considering the subjects were given the opportunity to taste all of the brands. Just being a known brand dramatically affected their evaluation of the brand. Intuitively, this makes sense: a consumer may rationalise that if they have heard of a brand, the company must be spending a fair sum on advertising. If it is spending a lot on advertising, then the company must be reasonably profitable which means that other consumers must be buying the product and they must be satisfied enough with its performance; therefore the product must be of reasonable quality. Stokes (1985) found that for a low involvement product (rice) familiarity had a greater magnitude of effect on the quality perception of a brand than either price or packaging. And further, that familiarity had a significant effect on purchase intention whereas price and package design did not.

**Brand awareness benefits marketing:** Brand awareness should be an important goal of the marketing communications efforts of a firm as it has a number of important functions. It is widely acknowledged that without brand awareness occurring, brand attitude and brand image cannot be formed. However, equally important but less widely recognised is the importance of brand awareness as a heuristic which can affect inclusion in the consideration set, and in many situations may be sufficient by itself to determine choice from the consideration set ,i.e., brand awareness can determine not only entry to the consideration set, but can also determine which brand is chosen from the consideration set. However, there is difficulty in demonstrating the value of assets such as brand awareness to managers. Aaker (1991a) complains the problem is that, firstly, enormous pressure exists for organisations and their brands to demonstrate short-term profit results. Brand managers are often given a one to three year time horizon and little incentive to make strategic brand building investments. And secondly, demonstrating the long-term value of brand building is "exceptionally difficult" (Hogarth 1980, Aaker 1991a). Even managers, who claim that they are concerned with the brand building activities of their firm, find difficulty in gaining support and resources for these activities.

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In the light of Aaker's findings, a study by Kelly (1991) is very interesting. Kelly carried out a series of interviews with Australian marketing managers. Many of the managers he interviewed "maintained that their advertising was directed towards building the longer term effects of favourable brand image and strong brand loyalty". Other managers were quoted as saying that they "were not looking for short-term results" but that advertising provides them with the opportunity "for corporate branding and image building which is very much oriented to the longer term" (Kelly 1991 p.5.). In other words, these managers claimed the long-term goals of brand-building and brand image to be of greater interest to them than short-term objectives such as sales. However this research was based on discussion with managers, and might obviously suffer from managers saying what they felt they *should* do, rather than what they actually do, especially when talking to a marketing academic.

The importance of brand awareness in the mind of the customers can be evaluated at various stages e.g. recognition, recall, top of mind, brand dominance (they only call that particular brand), brand knowledge (what brand means to you) (Aaker D. , 1996). Brand awareness is very important because if there will be no brand awareness no communication and no transaction will occur (Percy, 1987). Some of the consumers can make rules to purchase only those brands which are famous in the market (Keller, 1993).

**Importance of brand awareness in brand choice:** Taking Aaker's (1991) study on brand awareness enlightens this theory of brand equity's integral part that is brand awareness. As his studies had profoundly covered petite aspects of this topic to clarify its purpose of being there and why it has been so important and in fact gaining more insights by the organizations which are investing a lot in the brand share and its value which is caused from the initiation point of bringing awareness to the consumers about the brands in the market until its trial, adoption and re-purchase to the loyalty aspect which has been covered thoroughly.

**Brand awareness and consumer/brand loyalty:** Finally, brand awareness affects consumer loyalty and decision-making by influencing the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image created through the different information attached to the brand in memory. In practice companies' use aided and unaided awareness, image and branding marketing research studies to determine the extent to which consumers are familiar and positive opinions about their products or services. In many industries, companies with the highest awareness levels also control the largest market share. Keeping in mind the importance accorded to the concept of "Brand Awareness" by various authors and practitioners, its research implications are well established (Market Research Worldwide, 2009). Awareness levels, measures whether consumers know about and are familiar with a company, organization, product, or service.

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In low involvement decision settings, a minimum level of brand awareness may be sufficient for product choice, even in the absence of a well-formed attitude (Betteman & Park 1980; Hoyer & Brown 1990; Park & Lessig, 1981). Using elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) suggest that consumers may base choices on brand awareness considerations when they have low involvement, which could result from either a lack of consumer motivation or lack of consumer ability. A brand with high awareness and with positively distinguishing associations will have a high added value for consumers (Riezebos, 2003).

**Customer satisfaction:** Satisfaction results from customers' good experiences. According to (Westbrook 1981), satisfaction is "a state of recognition to feel appropriate or inappropriate experience for the sacrifice adequately," or an "emotional response which is not only affected by the whole market, but also affected by products' characteristics, service, and seller when shopping or doing similar behaviour." Oliver (1997) discusses satisfaction as "a general psychological state which is about the expectation for feelings and experience from shopping behaviour." Various studies note that when products or services exceed than customers' expectations, the repurchase rate is high. Customers who have confidence in a company will continue to buy its products or services that satisfy them.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

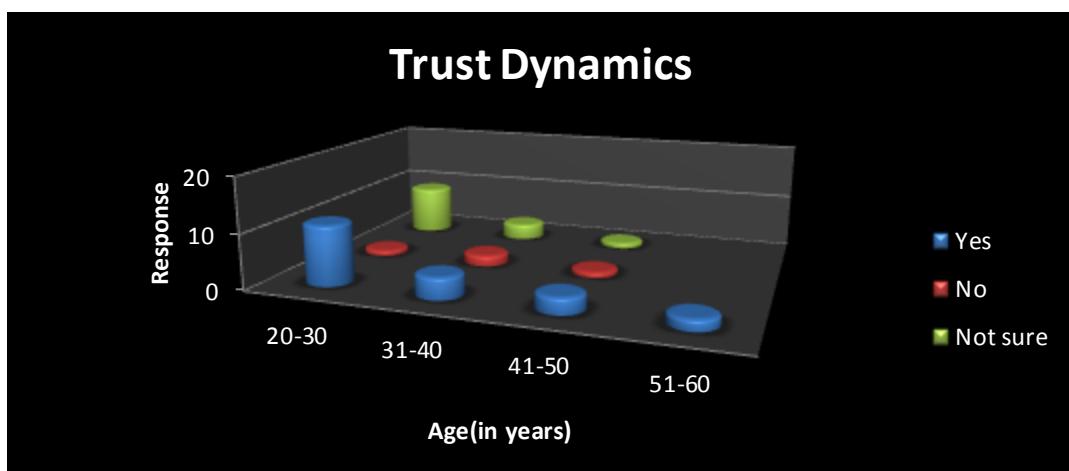
People prefer going to their regular labs generally and then to the diagnostic centres referred to them by their doctors. Prescription is evidently the sole most criteria to go for any kind of diagnosis and very uncommonly people go for self-prescribed diagnosis.

As per the sample study ,it can may be infer that people still are not very aware of lab@home services and those who knows do not really trust them. n youth. People of age group 20-30 are most aware of lab@home services and the awareness gradually decreases with increasing age, i.e. age is inversely proportional to the awareness.



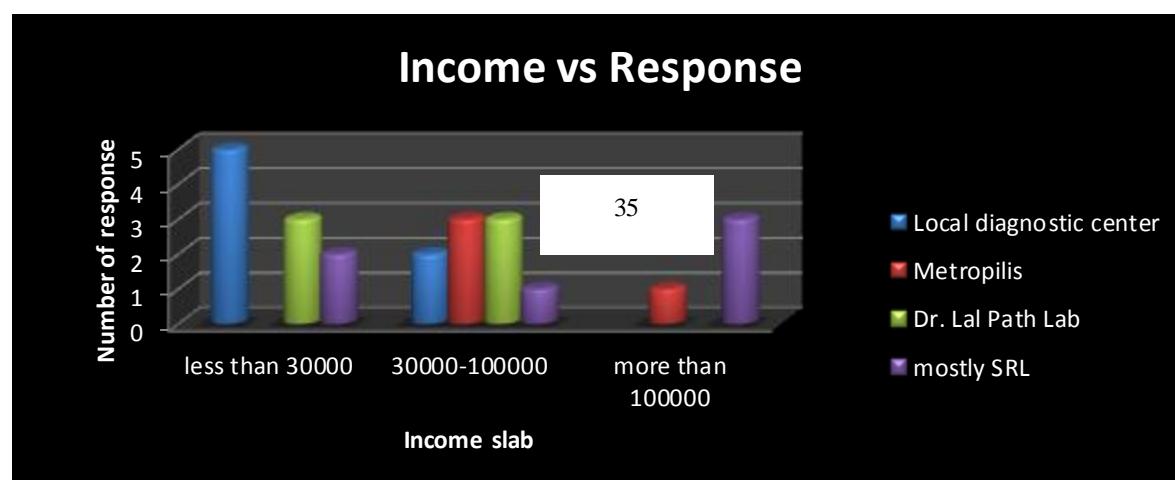
**Chart 1: Lab at home services awareness**

As the awareness similar pattern was observed in trust dynamics. Most acceptances of the services are in younger age group people than in elderly people.



**Chart 2: Response vs Age relationship**

Respondent's choice varies greatly with their income. The respondents earning or having more family income greatly believes in quality thus the choice of diagnostic centre is mostly SRL.



**Chart 3: Income and response relationship**

People are brand/name loyal, the diagnostic center they go to they refer it to others too and does consider it their family lab. Since, their trust and loyalty builds up on the particular name. More than accuracy or reports people tend to go for word of mouth, i.e., their doctors or sometimes friends and families advice.

**Central Delhi :** Most of the respondents do believe and choose the lab suggested by the doctors and as the Dr. Lal Path has been serving since many years it has a good hold in the market and

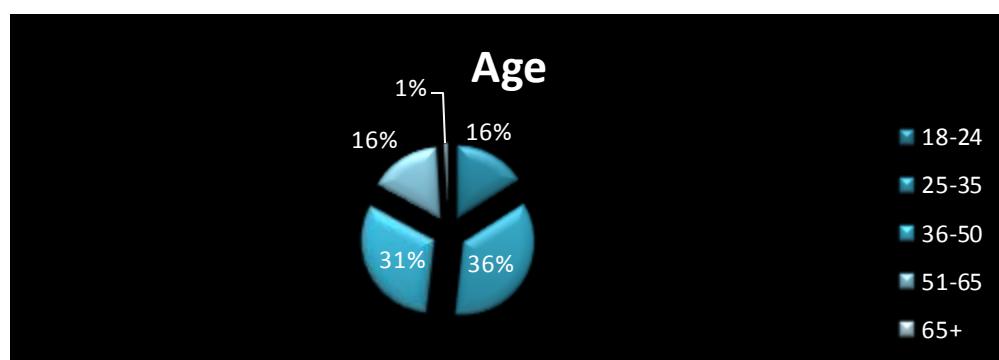
thus reliable and convenient for the patients to easily choose from existing labs.

**Table1: Labs according to rank given on the basis of responses**

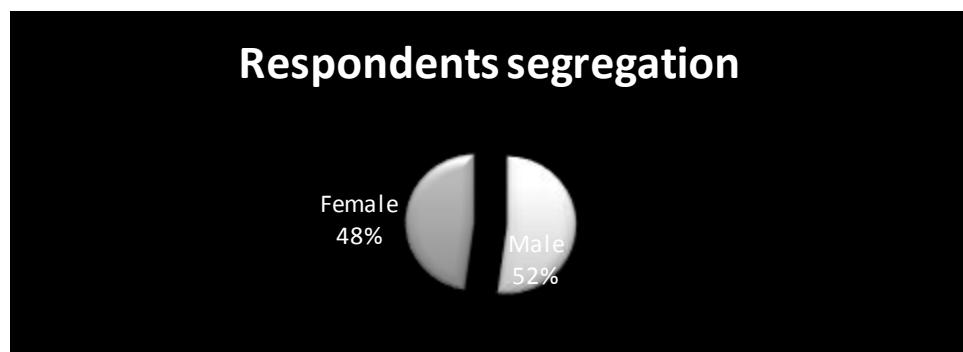
Lab	Rank
Dr. Lal Path	1
SRL	2
Metropolis	3
Other	4

“Lab at Home” is not known by many but yes when explained about the concept mostly young population were able to acknowledge the service. Price for the tests offered are really not an issue because when compared the tests prices they all stand more or less the same.

**Noida:** Respondents visit a diagnostic centre after every 3 months whether due to some illness or for other necessary checkups. The preference of choosing a diagnostic centre is as per the doctor's advice ,also a opinion from friend/relative who already had an experience with a diagnostic centre. The parameter for selecting a diagnostic centre depends upon the doctor's advice or a concern from a family member or relatives. People are not well aware about the lab@ home services. The only market leader being observed was Dr.lal Path Labs. Respondent's segregation basis their age group was:

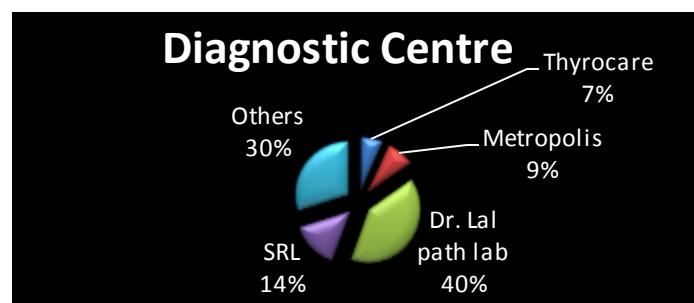


**Chart 4: Age segregation of respondents**



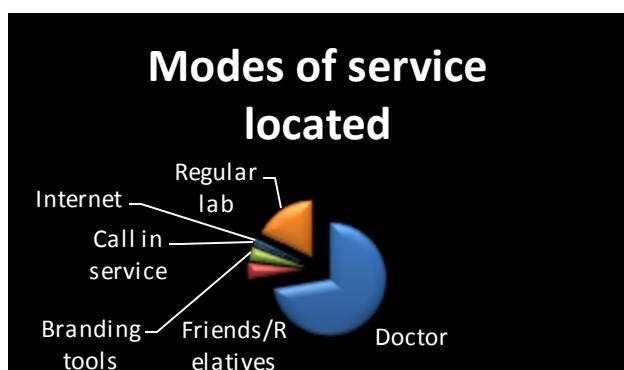
**Chart 5 : Respondents segregation**

Most preferred diagnostic centre in Delhi/NCR region is Dr. Lal path. The ranking as per the responses came out to be:

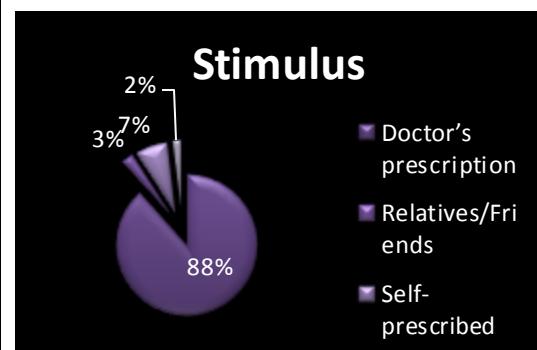


**Chart 6: Diagnostic center preference**

It was observed that doctor's prescription/suggestion plays the major decisive role in the selection of diagnostic centers services rendered and the need of services required.

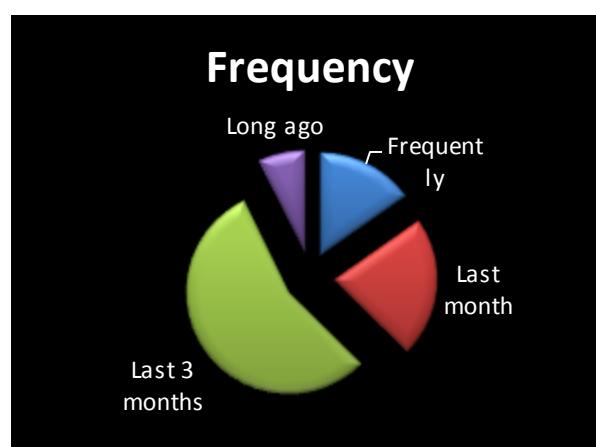


**Chart 7: Modes of Services Located**



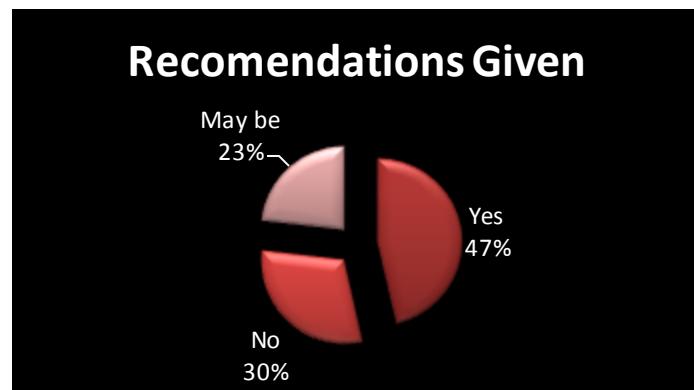
**Chart 8: Stimulus for seeking services**

Also, it was observed that there is a positive relationship between more frequent visitors and brand awareness levels.



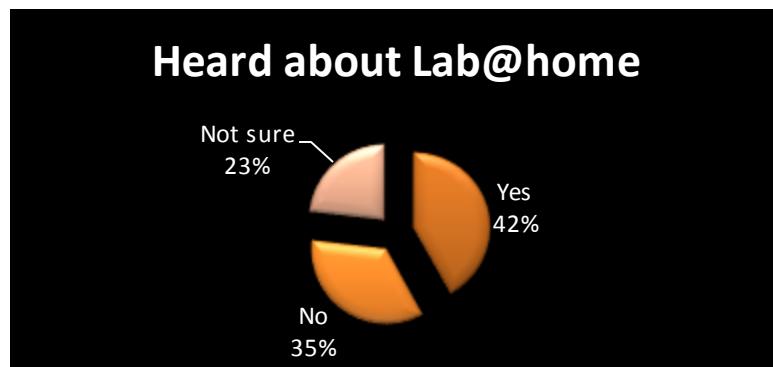
**Chart 9: Frequency of visits**

47% of the respondents give recommendation of the diagnostic centers they are most aware off.



**Chart 10: Recommendations given to others**

Majority of the respondents were aware of lab at home services, in which 23% were sskeptic about their surety regarding the awareness or knowledge.



## Results

In the following pages, the results of the questionnaire are shown. As can be seen in Table two items stand out. The item that was rated highest is '**Heard about Lab@home service**' & '**Any lab recommendation you've given**'. The average rating for these item are high, 37.33. Other items that really matter to patients when choosing a diagnostic centre are "**Stimulus for Seeking Service**"(28) & "**Last Time Path Service Used**" (28).

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**Table 2: Results of the Questionnaire**

Factors	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
<b>Q.2 Stimulus for Seeking Service</b>	28	47.4
<b>Q.3 How is a service located</b>	18.67	31.3
<b>Q.1 Last Time Path Service Used</b>	28	23.7
<b>Q.6 First name of the lab that comes to mind</b>	23.4	16.9
<b>Q.8 Heard about Lab@home service</b>	37.33	10.59
<b>Q.12 Any lab recommendation you've given</b>	37.33	13.31

Another finding of the research is that some items turned out to be not important. “**How is a service located**” (18.67) are items that are not important for patients when choosing a diagnostic centre.

**Table 3: Depicts Minimum and Maximum Error**

Factors	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Stimulus</b>	4	28	47.4	23.7	2	99
<b>Modes of service located</b>	6	18.67	31.34	12.79	1	81
<b>Frequency</b>	4	28	23.7	11.85	8	62
<b>Which hospital</b>	5	23.4	16.94	7.5	8	47
<b>Heard about Lab@home</b>	3	37.33	10.59	6.11	26	47
<b>Recommendation</b>	3	37.33	13.31	7.68	26	52

Minimum Standard Error depicts that the quantum of the fluctuations is decreasing. The maximum mean value shows there is association between specific factors and brand awareness. It displays these are the main factors which will affect the brand value of diagnostic According to the above table the two factors with highest mean shows both of them affect the brand awareness of diagnostic centres, depends on them and their standard deviation at

minimum displays these factors have some association with reputation and awareness of brand. We have proved it with the help of F-test. So we have to assume hypothesis to check the accuracy, whether different factors and brand awareness have been related to each other.

**Hypothesis (H0): There is significant difference between various factors and brand awareness of diagnostic centers at 5% significance level.**

H1: There is relationship between factors and brand awareness.

**Table4: shows the ANOVA results**

**ANOVA**

Factors					
	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1129.973	5	225.995	.285	.916
Within Groups	15069.867	19	793.151		
Total	16199.840	24			

Interpretation: The significant value according to ANOVA table is 0.916, which is more than 0.05 that proves there is some relationship among factors and brand value.

If these diagnostic centers will change the quality as well as the quantity of these factors, it will affect brand awareness of diagnostic centers either in positive or negative way. The results indicate the value of F is .285 which confirms the association of relationship in this study model at a level of Significance 0.916

## **Conclusion**

From above result ,it has been proved that Brand Awareness is very important for all kinds of costumer either experienced or Inexperienced. The customers will always select renowned service centre. If customers are not familiar with brand ,still they will tend to select high quality brand. If patient satisfies with quality of services provided at lab and at home, then he will visit every time in same centre . Hence this paper proves that patient satisfaction is directly associated with brand loyalty.

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