

THE EFFECTS OF SELF EXPRESSION AND BRAND IMAGE ON ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND LOVE

Methaq Ahmed Sallam

College of Administrative Sciences, Najran University, Saudi Arabia

methaq68@yahoo.com

Abstract

Positive customer's self-expression with brand plays an important role to build brand love. In the other way, the use of positive brand image by companies continues to be a popular method to support the customer brand love which leads to build customer's brand loyalty, customer's word of mouth or leads to build the customer's active engagement with brand. This study uses brand image and customer's self-expression to effect on customer's active engagement through brand love. This theoretical paper develops a conceptual framework that explains how independent variable (brand image and customer's Self-expression) effects on dependent variable which is called customer's active engagement when brand love is mediating.

Keywords: Brand Image, Self-Expression, Brand Love, Active Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The goal of any company - in these days - is to build good relationship between Consumer's active engagement with its brand which includes his/her positive word of mouth, visiting brand websites, and buying brand merchandise. The brand love with brand loyalty are considered as important input of active engagement, this study will use only brand love – to lead to active engagement – which is depended on brand image and self-expression.

Brand image has been recognized as an important concept in marketing and consumer behavior research (Hee, 2009). The self-expressive brand is the perception that the consumer has of how a particular brand can increase or reflect their social or inner self (Marquette et al., 2017). This study tries to explore the effect of brand image and self-expressions on brand love, and to illustrate the impact of brand love on active engagement.

Problem Statement

Although many studies have been conducted on this issue, but there are still gaps that need to be filled in the literature. Studies conducted by previous researchers only focused on certain aspects of customer's active engagement process, and the variables used in those studies were segmented in natural in previous studies. In other words, the model proposed in this study is an integrative one, and come from three separate models found in the area related literature, e.g. study of (Marquette et al., 2017) explored the relationship between customer's self-experience and brand love, study of (Loureiro and Lu, 2012) explored the relationship between brand image and brand love, study of (Bergkvist et al., 2010) explored the effect of brand love on active engagement. This means, that three main models of this study were segmented in three different studies, and each one was separated alone, and this study tries to integrate them in one conceptual framework, and this is the contribution of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this days, the companies try to use few ways to make consumers more committed toward their products and services. Brand credibility, brand image, brand loyalty, brand image, brand love, and brand trust to make costumers more and positive engagement with brand of company. This Issues are widely discussed in marketing literature because its play a more and more important role in the marketing. This study tries to use brand image and customer's self-experiences to build brand love which is lead customer to be more engagement with brand. These issues are discussed in details to allay concepts of these concerns here.

Brand Image

Brand image could be defined as a brand that is brought to the consumer's mind by the brand association (Keller, 1993). Brand image can be also defined as consumer's thoughts and feelings about the brand (Roy and Banerjee, 2007). Aaker (1991) asserts that brand image could be a set of association which is significant to the consumers. Based on Bearden and Etzel (1982) as well as Park and Arinivasan (1994) arguments, brand image is closely related to the uniqueness of a particular product classification. According to Hsieh and Li (2008), strong brand image does create a superior brand messages of a particular brand over the rivalry brand. Consequently, customer's behaviour will be affected and determined by brand image (Burmam et al., 2008). Consumers employ a product's brand image in deriving overall perceptions of the specified product, a product with higher brand image may be inferred by consumers as product of superior quality and value (Richardson et al. 1994). Furthermore, Jacoby et al., (1971)

conduct an experiment research and have discovered that consumers' perception of quality and value are significantly affected by brand image.

Self Expression

Self-expression used in the previous studies as one of consequences of brand love like brand loyalty and word of mouth (Bergkvist et al., 2010; Marquette et al., 2017). The self-expressive brand is the perception that the consumer has of how a particular brand can increase or reflect their social or inner self (Marquette et al., 2017).

In addition to that (Sarkar et al., 2014) mentioned that self-expressiveness is a predictor of romantic brand love and jealousy can occur only in the case of loved brands. Self-expressiveness is defined as the consumer's perception of the degree to which the brand enhances one's social self or perceived social identity.

Sarkar et al., (2014) explored that there are few brands that are highly self-expressive and the individual perceives some brands to be more expressive of self-identity. Past research talks about the centrality of identity issues in consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998). The self-expressiveness of a brand is formally defined as "the degree to which the specific brand enhances one's social self and/or reflects one's inner self" (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p. 82). The same study shows empirically that consumers' love is greater for those brands that are perceived to be more self-expressive. Hwang and Kandampully (2012) supported that consumers' love towards luxury fashion brands increases when the consumer perceives those brands as expressing important parts of their selves. Such an identification of the brand with the self helps to create a strong positive feeling towards the brand, particularly brand love. It is also evident in the literature that such a brand identification is one important predictor of brand love. For example, a study conducted by Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) shows that brand identification is a predictor of brand love. The authors defined brand identification as the extent to which the individual sees the perceived self-image overlapping the brand's image or the degree to which the brand image expresses the perceived social image of the person. These studies were conducted in the context of developed economies. This study focus only in the relationship between self-expression and brand love,

Brand Love

Since it was introduced by Shimp and Madden (1988), brand love has been a topic of great interest for brand managers. Customers can view a brand as an individual, so they can love a brand as they love a person (Ranjbarian et al., 2013). On the basis of Sternberg's (1986) tripartite conceptualization of interpersonal love, Shimp and Madden (1988) conceptualized

consumer–brand relationship along three dimensions: liking, yearning and decision/commitment, which correspond to Sternberg's (1986) intimacy, passion and decision/commitment components of inter-personal love. Liking and yearning represent the feelings of intimacy with and passion for a brand, respectively. Similarly, on a cognitive level, decision refers to the individuals recognition of the liking and yearning for the brand in the short-term; whereas commitment is reflected in purchasing the same brand repeatedly over time.

Today companies have recognized that feeling of love toward a brand is a vital factor in establishing a good relationship with a customer, those brands which can make customers love their brands are more successful in gaining sustainable advantage and beating their competitors (Roberts, 2006). Marketing researchers have investigated the concept of brand love (Ahuvia, 2005; Fournier, 1998). Fournier (1998) answers the question of whether consumers can experience a feeling of love toward a brand, she established that such a feeling may exist and consumers may develop strong relationships with brands. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) have stated that brand love is a blend of emotion and passion of an individual for a brand, in addition, they defined love for a brand as “the degree of passionate emotional attachment that a person has for a particular trade name.” Consumers' love includes the following characteristics: “(1) passion for a brand, (2) brand attachment, (3) positive evaluation of the brand, (4) positive emotions in response to the brand, and (5) declarations of love toward the brand” (Albert et al., 2008).

Previous studies had defined brand love as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name (Ahuvia et al., 2005; Wallace et al., 2014). Bergkvist et al., (2009) mentioned that brand love and interpersonal love differ in that brand love is unidirectional, whereas interpersonal love is bi-directional and that consumers are not expected to yearn for sexual intimacy with brands, a feeling generally associated with passionate interpersonal love. Moreover, love is generally regarded as qualitatively different from liking, that is, love is not extreme liking but rather a construct that is different from, but related to, liking (Sternberg, 1987).

Active Engagement

Today, a new perspective for understanding the relationship between consumers and brands is the vision of active engagement. Bergkvist et al., (2010) mentioned that examples of active engagement include WOM, visiting brand websites, and buying brand merchandise. The reason for including the broader construct of active engagement rather than WOM is that it may vary in relevance for different types of products.

For example, Chung and Darke (2006) found that WOM is more likely to occur for self-relevant than for utilitarian products. By using active engagement, our study captures a broader array of behaviours that may be applicable to different types of products. Ahuvia (2005) mentioned that, loved items tended to be objects and activities that demanded a sizable investment of time and energy and Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) found a positive relationship between brand love and WOM, which is one manifestation of active engagement. Thus, increased brand love is expected to lead to increased active engagement.

The Relationship between brand image and Self Expression with Brand love

In terms of brand image and brand love, there is strong relationship between brand image and brand love, for example, (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Ismail et al., 2012; Sallam, 2014) found positive and significant effect of brand image on brand love.

Previous studies considered self- expression as antecedents to brand love e.g. (Marquette et al., 2017). In terms of relationship between self- expression and brand love, previous studies found there is strong relationship between self- expression and brand love, for example, (Marquette et al., 2017;Sarkar et al., 2014) found that self- expression had positive effect on brand love.

According to what mentioned above, the study hypothesizes that both brand image and self- expression have positive effect on brand love.

The Relationship between Brand love with Active Engagement

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)found that brand love is positively related to two outcome variables: brand loyalty and WOM. The present study includes brand loyalty as an outcome of brand love in order to replicate this aspect of their study. Apart from being of value in itself, this also provides evidence of the homological validity of the present study. The present study also includes active engagement that is defined as 'when customers are willing to invest time, energy, money, or other resources in the brand beyond those expended during purchase or consumption of the brand.

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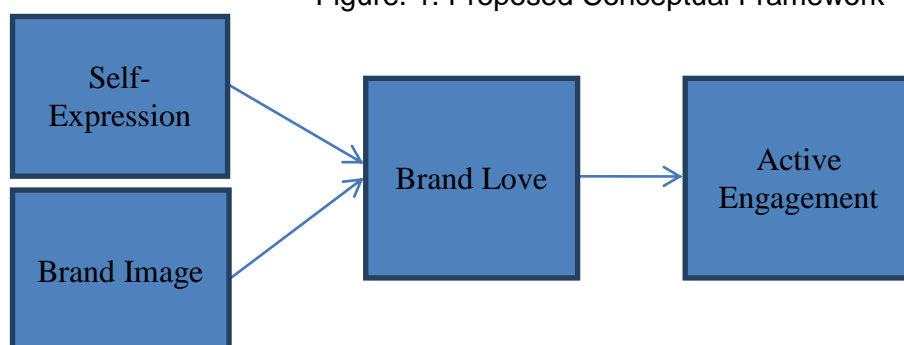
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THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework below is proposed to ensure that self-expression and brand image identification are as the independent variables and effect on brand love which namely mediating variable. Brand love impacts on dependent variable which is called active engagement. This framework serves the purpose of scope for the further empirical studies.

Figure. 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework



CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The purposes of this study were to determine a conceptual framework and to create customer's active engagement by build brand image and self-expression and to illustrate the role of mediating variable which is namely brand love. If the study were applied in practice in the future by one of the researchers, the results inform the company mangers how to use the independent variables e.g. brand image and self-expression and to see its effect on customer's active engagement. In addition, the results of study will give the researchers idea about the mediating role of brand love between brand image and self-expression and customer's active engagement and will try to explore if brand love is full or partial mediating.

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