



THE EFFECT OF SATISFACTION, BRAND IDENTIFICATION AND BRAND IMAGE ON BRAND LOVE AND BRAND EXTENSION: WHEN BRAND LOYALTY IS MEDIATING

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Abstract

The positive image about the brand plays an important role in stimulating customers to buy company's products and services. Brand love is a recent marketing construct, which has been shown to influence important marketing variables such as brand loyalty and brand extension. The aim of this study is to explore the process of purchasing brand by using the antecedents' variables effect e.g. (satisfaction, brand image and brand identification) on brand love and the impact of brand love on brand extension when brand loyalty is mediating, and finally to propose conceptual framework for further studies. When the customers focus on the positive aspects of a company, and they love its brand, they usually form loyalty toward the company and its brand, and this lead them to build positive brand extension toward the products and services of the company.

Keywords: Satisfaction; Brand Image; Brand Identification; Brand Love; Brand Loyalty; Brand Extension

INTRODUCTION

Brand extension is an important concept in business practice as well as in academic research because marketers can gain competitive advantages by adding new products to the same name of brand. Previous studies (Bergkvist, et al., 2009; Ismail, et al., 2012) mentioned that there are few antecedent of brand love e.g. (self-expressive Brands, hedonic product category, brand identification, brand image and customer satisfaction). Customer's satisfaction, brand image

and brand identification play an important role in building the customer's brand love, which leads to form his/her loyalty toward company and its brand and that is reflected on brand extension. This study tries to explain how antecedent variables (viz. satisfaction, brand image and brand identification) affect independent variable which is called brand love. In addition, that framework shows that brand love effect on dependent variable, which is namely brand extension when brand loyalty is mediating.

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 brand extension, 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 four separate models found in the area related literature, e.g. study of (Roy et al., 2012) explored the relationship between customer's satisfaction and brand love, study of (Bergkvist, et al., 2009) explored the relationship between brand identification, brand image and brand love, study of (Carroll, et al., 2006) explored the effect of brand love on brand loyalty, while study of (He et al., 2010) illustrated the effect of brand loyalty on brand extension. This means, that four main models of this study were segmented in four 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

Brand extension is an important variable for the companies, marketers and researchers, and it plays an important topic of research in the marketing area. In addition, consumer satisfaction, brand image and brand identification play an important role in the success of the business of the company, and they contribute in building customer's brand love, customer's brand loyalty and make consumers engage in long relationship with brand. This study tries to explore how antecedents' variables e.g. (satisfaction, brand image and brand identification) effect on independent variable that is called brand love. In addition, that framework shows that brand love effects on dependent variable which is namely brand extension when brand loyalty is mediating.

Brand Identification

Consumers choose products and brands not only for their utilitarian values but also for their symbolic benefits. Brands possess deep meaning (MacCracken, 1989) and serve to build consumers' self-concept or identities. Consumers use brands to construct their selves, present

themselves to others or achieve their identity goals (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). Kuenzel et al., (2010) mentioned that the concept of brand identification is built on social identity theory, which has been employed widely in other disciplines. Identification based on social identity theory is in essence a perception of oneness with a group of persons. Brands possess deep meaning (Albert et al., 2013) and serve to build consumers' self-concept or identities. Brewer (1991) informed that brand identification has been emphasized that identification fulfils the need for social identity and self - identification. Using the identification concept in a brand-customer context can be justified in terms of the social identity theory itself, where identification with an organization can also happen without a need to interact or have formal ties with an organization. Consumers with stronger brand identification are more prone to engage in pro-brand activities, such as supporting the company goals, protecting its reputation, supporting its products and brand loyalty (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003).

Brand identification is defined as the extent to which the consumer sees his or her own self-image as overlapping the brands image (e.g. Sternberg, et al., 1987). Brand identification is also known as self-image congruence and self-connection. Although a number of previous studies (Brown, et al., 2005) have investigated the role of brand identification, none has investigated the relationship between brand identification and brand love. Bergkvist, et al., (2009) informed that brand identification influences consumer's brand love, and they considered that brand identification as antecedents of brand love. Bergkvist, et al., (2009) cited from (Ahuvia et al., 2006) that loved objects are central to people's identity. The informants in his study use objects they love to boost their identity and reconcile conflicting identities. Although Ahuvia does not explicitly discuss causality or causal order, his study suggests that a consumer is more likely to love a brand, the stronger, he or she identifies with. For example, Ahuvia reports how one of his informants requires a „ deep connection with what she sees as her desired identity as a culturally sophisticated bohemian " for her to love a product.

Satisfaction

York et al., (2009) mentioned that customer satisfaction's importance, specifically service encounters, is well documented in the marketing and management literature, it is recognized as an important goal largely because empirical studies establish a relationship between customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and long-term profitability. Specifically, during the past two decades, research centered around exploring customer satisfaction's impact on customer retention and loyalty, branding, profits, market share and growth (Ammar et al., 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that organizations spend substantial resources measuring and managing customer satisfaction (Hasin, 2001).

Aburoub et al., (2011) mentioned that customer's satisfaction in the first place is interested in defining of buying behavior. The research stressed the customer's satisfaction role in focusing on expectation, performance achieved, and satisfaction. Comparison between expectation and performance achieved leads either to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Almossawi (2012) said that many previous studies have been extensively focused on customer's satisfaction e.g. (Oliver, 1980). Kotler and Keller (2008) define satisfaction as “a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his/her expectations”. This definition is supported by many other studies, for example, Oliver (1980). Others define customer satisfaction as the feeling or attitude of customers toward a product/service after it has been used (Hansemark & Albinsson, 2004).

Brand image

Brand image has been recognized as an important concept in marketing and consumer behavior research (Hee, 2009). The customer deals every day with different types of products and services, so, brand image that is primarily responsible for brand differentiation (Morgan, 2004). The companies compete to give good idea about their products and services to build a positive image about their brand in customer's mind. So, good perception of product and service quality would drive the customer to form a positive brand image, (Hee, 2009).

There is a stream of literature that regards brand image as being directly related to the product category within which the brand is marketed (Martinez et al., 2004). Brand management scholars (e.g. Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2005) have argued that brand image is an essential part of powerful brands which enable brands to differentiate their products from their competitors. Brand image is made up of brand association, it is a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumers' memory (Koubaa, 2008). Aaker (1991) defines brand associations as “the category of brand's assets and liabilities that include anything 'linked' in memory to a brand.” Associations are informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory that contains the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller et al., 1998, cited in Koubaa, 2008, p. 141). Keller (1993) goes on to explain that there are three important aspects of image: favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand associations. Moreover, the associations may be formed in one of the following categories: attributes of the product, benefits achieved from the product or attitudes towards the brand. The aim of every firm is to create favorable and positive associations about the brand which results in a positive image of the brand (Keller, 1993). Brand image is defined by Keller (1993, p. 3) as “the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”. In

other words brand image is what comes to the mind of the consumer when a brand name is mentioned. Basically, brand image describes the consumer's thoughts and feelings towards the brand (Roy & Banerjee, 2007). Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) argued that the product image is the result of the interaction between the receiver and the product stimuli. Factors contributing to the development of brand image are: product attributes the firm, the marketing mix, the individual perceptions of the brand, personal values, experience, type of brand users and context variables. Sources of image formation could be either through direct experience with the brand or brand communication (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990).

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 individual's 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 et al., 2006). 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).

Ahuvia et al., (2005) defined brand love as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name. Bergkvist, et al., (2009) mentioned that brand love and interpersonal love differ in that brand love is unidirectional,

whereas interpersonal love is bi-directional 2 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).

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) defined brand love as individuals emotion and passion for a trade name. Bergkvist, et al., (2009) informed that brand love is important in a marketing context because it is positively related to brand loyalty.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a concept that has garnered considerable interest over recent years from both marketing practitioners and academics (Worthington et al., 2009). Brand loyalty has had a rich tradition of research in the field and the construct is identified as being a complex mixture of attitudinal and behavioral elements, brand loyalty might be viewed as a special case of relationship marketing where the customer has significant psychological attachment to the brand consumed (Jacoby et al., 1973; Fournier, 1998). The importance of brand loyalty has been recognized in the marketing literature for at least three decades (Howard and Sheth 1969, p. 232).

Developing and building brand equity is gaining significant attention among the academicians and practitioners. Strong brand with positive equity provides benefits like customer loyalty, higher market share, higher margins, communication effectiveness etc to the firms (Bala et al., 2010). Today worlds' top brands namely Microsoft, IBM, GE, INTEL, and Nokia etc. are well recognized world over and their brand value is much higher than any other brand (Interbrand, 2007). Brand loyalty is the final destination of brand management, and if a company wants to test the weakness or strength of its customers' loyalty, it can easily check whether consumers still favor its product in contrast to competitors (Kuang et al., 2009).

According to Aaker (1991) brand loyalty reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or product features. There are many advantages of brand loyalty. According to Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001) the interest in brand loyalty derives from the value that loyalty generates to companies in terms of: * A substantial entry barrier to competitors, * An increase in the firm's ability to respond to competitive threats, * Greater sales and revenue, and * A customer base less sensitive to the marketing efforts of competitors. Further, Rowley (2005) identifies the benefits of brand loyalty, * Lower customer price sensitivity, * Reduced expenditure on attracting new customers, and * Improved organizational profitability.

Brands have become valuable assets while the efficiency of brand management is considered essential for any company's success. Therefore, the development and longterm enhancement of brand loyalty is a target function of any business that wishes to maintain a competitive position in the market and increase the overall brand equity and enterprise's market value (Ovudiu et al., 2011). Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) note that more than 50 different operational definitions of brand loyalty have been employed in hundreds of studies on the subject. Some confusion undoubtedly stems from inherent attitudinal and behavioral aspects of the concepts. Brand loyalty refers not only to one's tendency to repurchase the same brand time after time, but also to have a psychological commitment or attitudinal bias toward the brand (Denise et al., 2004), thus, the brand loyal customer not only buys the brand, but refuses to switch even when a better offer comes along.

Upamanny et al., (2012) mentioned that brand loyalty can be defined as relative possibility of customer shifting to another brand in case there is a change in product's features, price or quality. As brand loyalty increases, customers will respond less to competitive moves and actions. Brand loyal customers remain committed to the brand, are willing to pay higher price for that brand, and will promote their brand always. A company having brand loyal customers will have greater sales, less marketing and advertising costs, and best pricing. This is because the brand loyal customers are less reluctant to shift to other brands, respond less to price changes and self- promote the brand as they perceive that their brand have unique value which is not provided by other competitive brands.

Brand loyalty is: (1) the biased (i.e. nonrandom); (2) behavioral response (i.e. purchase); (3) expressed over time; (4) by some decision-making unit; (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands; and (6) is a function of psychological processes. Oliver (1999, p. 34) defines brand loyalty as a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.

Brand Extension

Keller (2008) defines brand extension as the use famous brand names in the launch of new products. This forms part of brand strategy, which can be divided into 5 categories: extension of product lines, brand extension, multiple brands, new brands and co-branding (Kotler and Armstrong, 2000). Based on this definition, brand extension has both positive and negative effects on the products' parent brand. The positive impacts include developing a greater market

share, greater advertising efficiency, increased ease to enter new product categories; and increased brand recognition (Chen et al., (2011); and Hemand Iversen (2008).

The terminology of brand extension has been used inconsistently in the literature (Grime et al., 2002). Aaker and Keller (1990) refer to “extension” as the general term for both line and brand extensions. A Line extension applies an existing brand name to a product in one of the firm’s existing categories (ex. Ponds cold cream and Ponds fairness cream). Whereas brand extension strategy consists of using an established brand name to launch new products (Keller, 2007). The study adopts, brand extensions which are introduced in a different category from the existing business (De Pelsmacker et al., 2007). Now-a-days marketers are more likely to obtain the recognition of the brand name and the loyalty of those consumers who are already loyal to the parent brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Loyal consumers already have a prior association and knowledge about the brand or the brand product categories that make them enable to perceive a similarity between the extension and the parent brand or brand category. Brands enable consumers to efficiently encode their functional and emotional values in their minds (Aaker, 1991).

Brand extension may be defined as utilizing an existing and successful brand name for entering a new product category. However, as mentioned earlier, brand extension is defined differently by different academics. Aaker and Keller (1990) define it as, “brand extension occurs when a firm uses an established brand name to introduce a new product into a new product category”. According to Farquhar (1989), brand extension may be classified into two classes: line extension and category extension where a line extension occurs when the parent brand name is used for a new product that targets a different market segment within the same product category in which the new product is a new variety in the product line whereas a category extension occurs when the existing brand name is used to enter a new product category. Line extensions occur when new sizes, flavors, etc, are introduced to a firm’s present product category using an existing brand name (Tauber, 1981, p. 36). Tauber (1981, p. 37) also uses the term franchise extensions to imply brand extensions and defines it as “taking a brand name familiar to the consumer and applying it to products that are in a category new to the parent firm”.

The Relationship between Brand Image, Satisfaction, Brand Identification and Brand Love

Previous studies considered customer's satisfaction and brand identification as antecedents to brand love e.g. (Bergkvist et al., 2009). In terms of customer's satisfaction and brand love in general, many previous studies referred that consumer satisfaction leads to brand love, and

they pointed at the same time that the love of the brand leads to consumer satisfaction e.g. (Roy et al., 2012). But in terms of specific relationship between consumer satisfaction leads to brand love, few previous studies insure that there is strong relationship between customer's satisfaction and brand love, for example, (Bulik, 2012) found positive and significant effect of customer's satisfaction on brand love. In terms of brand identification and brand love, also, previous studies found there is strong relationship between brand identification and brand love, for example, (Bergkvist et al., 2009; Kressman et al., 2006) found that brand identification had positive effect on brand love.

According to what mentioned above, this study proposes that both customer's satisfaction and brand identification have positive effect on brand love.

The Relationship between Brand Love and Brand Loyalty

Loureiro, et al., (2012) referred that brand love had strong relationship and significant effect on loyalty. Bergkvist, et al., (2009) informed that brand love is important in a marketing context because it is positively related to brand loyalty. Carrol and Ahuvia (2006) model the relationships between brand love and both its antecedents and consequences. They propose that brand love is influenced by a hedonic product and self-expressive brand and has a positive effect on brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. Anyway, many previous studies explored the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty and they found that brand love had positive effect on brand loyalty e.g. (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Roy et al., 2012; Bergkvist, et al., 2009).

According to what mentioned above, this study proposes that brand love has positive effect on brand loyalty.

The Relationship between Brand Loyalty and Brand Extension

Brand extension still new variable and there are little studies used it with brand loyalty. Hem and Iversen (2009) investigated the relationship between brand loyalty and brand extension and found that brand loyalty was positively related to brand extension.

Jiang et al. (2002) explored the relationship between brand loyalty and brand extension. They tested whether hotel customer loyalty can be increased by brand extensions. They stated brand extensions can increase customer loyalty because a brand extension strategy can reduce the switching costs from a particular brand family to a competitor's brand. They measured brand extension as the number of brand names in the product lines because they expected the chance of switching to brands outside the family brand decreased as the number of brands in the family increased. They found that brand loyalty could be positively related to brand extension when the member of brand extensions is approximately three.

The Proposed Framework and Hypotheses:

The conceptual framework below is proposed to ensure that brand image, brand identification and satisfaction are antecedents of the independent variables which is called brand love. Brand love effects on dependent variable which is called brand extension when brand loyalty is mediating.

Based on what have been presented in the literature above, the following framework (Figure 1) and three hypotheses have been developed for the study.

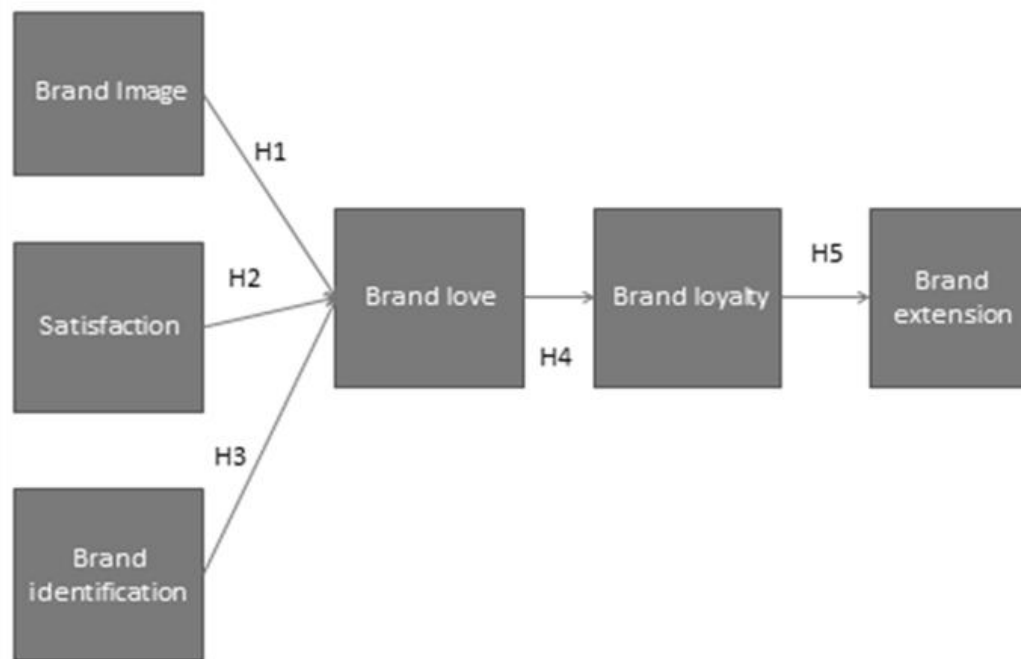


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Conclusion

This study aims to determine a conceptual framework, create brand's extension to build new products yonder the same name of the brand. In this study brand extension will be created by using brand image, brand identification, and satisfaction. And to illustrate the role of mediating variable which is namely brand loyalty between brand love and brand extension. If the study were applied in practice in the future by one of the researchers, the results will inform the company mangers how to use the antecedents variables e.g. (brand image, satisfaction and brand identification) well, to explore their effects on brand love, and to illustrate which one has the strong effect on brand love. In addition, the study will give the researchers idea about the mediating role of brand loyalty between brand love and brand extension whether partial or full mediating.

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