THE EFFECTS OF SATISFACTION AND BRAND IDENTIFICATION ON BRAND LOVE AND BRAND EQUITY OUTCOME: THE ROLE OF BRAND LOYALTY

(PROPOSING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK)

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Abstract

Brand love is a recent marketing construct, which has been shown to influence important marketing variables such as word-of-mouth and purchase decision making. The aim of this study is to explore the process of purchasing brand by using the antecedents variables effect e.g. (satisfaction and brand identification) on brand love and the impact of brand love on brand equity outcome when brand loyalty is mediating. 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 equity outcome toward the products and services of the company. This theoretical paper develops a conceptual framework that explains how antecedents variables (satisfaction 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 equity outcome when brand loyalty is mediating.

Keywords: Brand Relationship Management; Satisfaction; Brand Identification; Brand Love; Brand Loyalty; Brand Loyalty Outcome

INTRODUCTION

Brand equity is regarded as a very important concept in business practice as well as in academic research because marketers can gain competitive advantages through strong brands (Wang et al., 2008). 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 and customer satisfaction). Customer's satisfaction and brand identification play an important role in building the costumer's brand love, which is lead to form his/her loyalty toward company and its brand and that is reflected on brand equity outcome. This study try to explain how antecedents variables (viz. satisfaction 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 equity outcome 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 equity outcome 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 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 and brand love, study of (Carroll, et al., 2006) explored the effect of brand love on brand loyalty, while study of (Arjun et al., 1999) illustrated the effect of brand loyalty on brand equity outcome. 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

One of the most essential topics in marketing management is the subject of brand equity (Severi et al., 2013). Research interest in brand equity and branding has been an important topic of research in the marketing area (Rios et al., 2008). In addition, consumer satisfaction and brand identification play an important role in the success of the business of the company, and they also contribute in building customer's brand love, customer's brand loyalty and his/ her brand equity outcome. This conceptual paper try to explore how antecedents variables e.g. (satisfaction and brand identification) effect on independent variable which is called brand love. In addition, that framework shows that brand love effect on dependent variable which is namely

brand equity outcome when brand loyalty is mediating, and these issues are discussed in details to allay concepts of these concerns here.

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; Lee, 2005).

Aburoub et al., (2011) mentioned that customers satisfaction in the first place in 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 customers satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customer.

Almossawi (2012) said that many previous studies has 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 Identification

Consumers choose products and brands not only for their utilitarian values but also for their symbolic benefits. Brands possess deep meaning (MacCraken, 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 brand's image (e.g. Sternberg, et al., 1987; Bagozzi, et al., 2006). Brand identification is also known as self-image congruence (Sirgy et al. 1997) and self-connection. Although a number of previous studies (e.g. Algesheimer, et al., 2005; 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.

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).

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, 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 also reflects an attitudinal aspect (Newman and Werbel, 1973). Jacoby and Kyner (1973) first defined brand loyalty as having six necessary conditions. These are that

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 Equity

The content and meaning of brand equity have been debated in a number of different ways and for a number of different purposes, but so far no common viewpoint has emerged (Vazquez et al, 2002; Keller, 2003). Developing and building brand equity is gaining significant attention among the academicians and Practitioners (Chahal et al., 2010). Initially brand equity was recognized by Farquhar (1989, p. 24), he stated that brand equity brought added value to the product. Brand equity is often created by products or services that bring value directly or indirectly (Kapferer, 2005 and Keller, 2003).

Brand equity is an important intangible asset of a company therefore creating it is a wise investment. Some companies such as Coca Cola, Amazon.com and eBay, are believed to be worth substantially more because of this intangible asset rather than other measurable tangible benefits (Interbrand, 2006).

A memorable, unique and sustainable experience with a brand creates strong brand equity, especially for credence-attribute dominated service like healthcare. Building strong brand equity is essential for differentiating a firm's offerings from its competing brands (Yoo et al., 2000). The greater the credence attributes of service, the greater is the importance of brand equity as a source of competitive advantage (Bharadwaj et al., 1993). Brand equity empowers companies to negotiate lower costs of distribution, increased effectiveness in marketing communication, and expanded growth opportunities from brand extensions and licenses (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). The "brand equity" refers to the added value a brand name gives to a product or service (Aaker, 1991). Various definitions of brand equity have been proposed, some defined from a psychological point of view under the assumption that brand equity is constructed in the mind of individuals, whilst others define it from a financial perspective. Brand equity, as first defined by Farquhar (1989, p. 24), is "the added value to the firm, the trade, or the consumer with which a given brand endows a product", and market facts conceive brand equity, similarly to loyalty, as "the willingness for someone to continue to purchase your brand or

not". Perhaps the most widespread definitions are those suggested by Aaker (1991) and Keller (2003).

Arjun (1999) said, Almost all conceptualizations of brand equity agree today that the phenomenon involves the value added to a product by consumers' associations and perceptions of a particular brand name, this, in turn, results in greater value for the brand name from the firm's perspective, thus, there are two aspects to brand equity - one from the point of view of the firm and the other from that of the consumer. The firm/trade aspect of brand equity appears to be built around brand equity outcomes such as price and market share, whereas customer based brand equity (Keller, 1993) appears to have attitudinal associations at its core.

A causal modeling approach is used to analyze the direct and indirect influences of brand attitudes, habit and brand loyalty on brand equity outcomes such as market share, shelf facings and price (Arjun, 1999). The outcome of brand equity in this study are: price and market share.

Brand equity is defined as the marketing effects or outcomes that accrue to a product with its brand name compared with those that would accrue if the same product did not have the brand name, the authors state that these outcomes can be related to consumers (e.g. attitudes, awareness, image and knowledge) or at a firm level (e.g. price, market share, revenue and cash flow) (Cravens et al., 2001).

Aaker (1991) divides brand equity into five major asset categories: brand name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty and other proprietary brand assets. The aim of this study is to illustrate the process of purchasing brand by using the antecedents variables effect e.g. (satisfaction and brand identification) on brand love and the impact of brand love on brand equity outcome (e.g. price and market share) when brand loyalty is mediating.

Fouladivanda et al., (2013) mentioned that there is another important area of considerable analysis in the extent literature is the concepts of brand loyalty, because it constitutes the heart of brand equality. So, in next, the study explains the relationship between variables.

The Relationship between 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; Roy et al., 2012). In terms of customer's satisfaction and brand love in general, many previous studies referred that consumer satisfaction leads to brand love, and also they pointed at the same time that the love of the brand leads to consumer satisfaction e.g. (Alber, et al., 20113). 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, (Roy et al., 2012; 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; Albert et al., 2013) 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 Equity Outcome**

Allaway et al., (2011) mentioned that one of the most visible themes in the marketing literature in recent years has been a merging of the research streams linking consumer-based brand equity, customer equity, and loyalty. If customer has loyalty toward the brand, this leads him/her to build brand equity, and the companies must help to form this asset. Few previous studies explored the relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity, e.g. (Juntunen, et al., 2010) found that corporate brand loyalty had positive effect on corporate brand equity. According to study carried out by (Atilgan et al., 2005) he asserted that brand loyalty affect both positive and negative the brand quality of a products. Arjun (1999) found that there is positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity outcome such a price and market share.

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

THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework below is proposed to ensure that customer's satisfaction and brand identification are as antecedents of the independent variable which is namely brand love e.g. (Bergkvist, et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2012). Brand love impacts on dependent variable which is called brand equity outcome when brand loyalty is mediating.

Figure. 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework
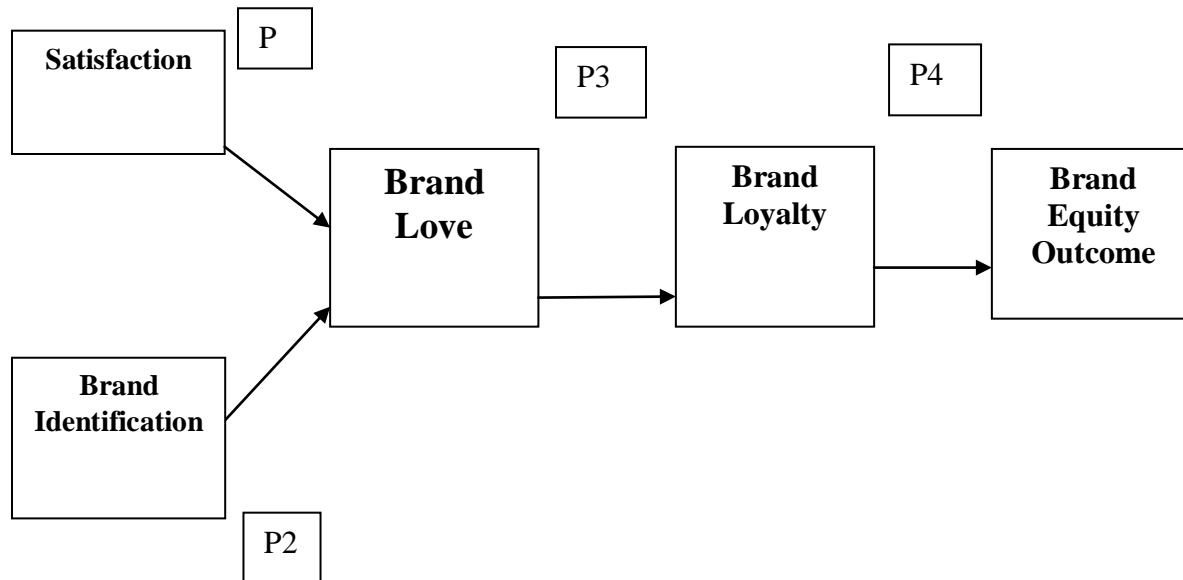
CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The purposes of this study were to determine a conceptual framework and to create brand equity by build consumer's brand love and to illustrate the role of mediating variable which is namely consumer's brand loyalty. 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 antecedents variables e.g. (satisfaction and brand identification) and to see their effect on brand love and to explore which one has the strong effect on brand love. In addition, the results of study will give the researchers idea about the mediating role of brand loyalty between brand love and brand equity and will try to explore if brand loyalty is full or partial mediating.

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