

Knowledge Metrics of Brand Equity: Critical Measure of Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to identify factors that can positively influence brand attachment and brand attitude strength. Brand creation through an effective marketing strategy is necessary for creation of unique associations in the customer's memory. Customer's attitude, awareness and association towards the brand are primarily focused while evaluating performance of a brand, before designing the marketing strategies and subsequent evaluation of the progress. In this research, literature establishes a direct and significant effect of Knowledge metrics of the Brand equity, i.e., Brand Awareness and Brand Association, on creation of Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength and this factor becomes more effectual while introducing and promoting new brands. Finding of this research imply that for achieving desirable outcome through creation of Brand attachment and Brand Attitude Strength in the target audience and for designing more effective and fruitful strategies, managers and policy makers should pay more focus on creating strong Knowledge metrics amongst the target audience.

Key words: Brand association, brand attachment, brand attitude strength, brand awareness

INTRODUCTION

Brands are created to obtain uniqueness in the products with regard to their competitors and developing an attachment of their customers to the products by building up their attachment, empathy and loyalty. Research shows that it is six times more expensive for organizations to attract new customers than to retain the ones you already have; hence retaining existing customers in this competitive era is gigantic challenge confronted to almost all businesses. Now a days, Brand attitude strength is positivity/negativity (valence) of an attitude which is weighted by certainty or confidence in the product (i.e., extent with which a brand is considered valid, (Briñol and Richard, 2009). Prior research reflects that brand attitude strength is a predictor of interest in firms, which includes consideration for the brand, intention for buying the respective brand, purchase behavior of the customer, and brand choice (Priester *et al.*, 2004).

Brand name of a product is outcome of the marketing effects or outcomes in comparison with those that would have been build up if same product was considered without that respective brand name. These marketing effects are meant to target the consumers' knowledge of the brand. It may also be interpreted as consumers' knowledge about a brand influences manufacturers/marketers adopt appropriately feasible measures or respond in a different way for the marketing of their brands.

Three types of Metrics are associated with branding; Knowledge, Preference and Financial Metrics. This paper focuses on the Knowledge Metrics of the brand equity; which measures a awareness and associations to a brand during multiple stages of its' recognition, aided, unaided and also the top call to the mind for the brands. Likewise, the emotional and practical associations with a brand may be considered as important drivers of the brand equity. This is why scoring high in these attributes, id est. awareness and association, is considered mandatory for brands for their survival and subsequent growth. Knowledge metrics of brand equity is divided into two subsets known as Brand awareness and Band association.

Brand knowledge affects the potential purchases by means of a brand relationship pursuit including the brand satisfaction driven, trust on the brand and brands attachment. Advertisers use reiteration for the sake of impressing "advertised name in the mind of the consumers' consciousness and making potential customers at ease with the brand."It may also be assumed that advertisers anticipate that awareness keeps brand in the consumer's stirred up set and may add to the probability of consequent purchase of the Brand.

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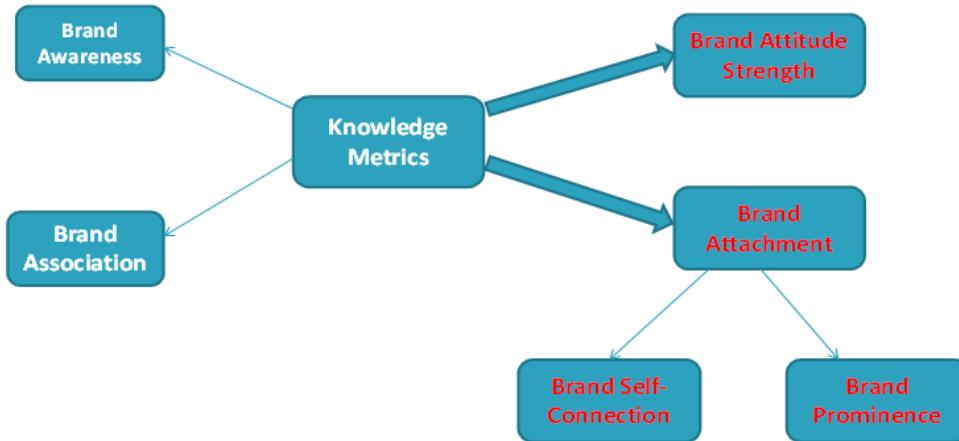


Fig. 1: Research model 1

strategies, managers and policy makers should pay more focus on creating strong Knowledge metrics amongst the target audience (Fig. 1).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand attachment: Academic practitioners and researchers pose momentous interest in studying brand and consumers' attachment (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008; Thomson, 2006). Brand attachment is critical as a construct describing the potency of the bond connecting the consumer and the brand, as it also affects the behaviors and fosters the profitability of the brand and lifetime values of the customers (Thomson, 2006). Research in marketing suggests that consumers can also develop attachments to marketplace entities, including product brands (Fournier, 1998; Keller, 2003; Schouten and James, 1995), celebrities (Thomson, 2006). It is worth mentioning here that brand attachment and the brand attitude strength of a brand hold separate behavioral implications. Brand attachment envisages the intent of the consumers to act in such a way that may consume substantial resources of consumer (id est. monetary resources, time and reputation). When compared with brand attitude strength, Brand attachment also acts as a stronger predictor of consumer behaviors (Deborah and Park, 2005).

Consumers might remain attached to a product, just as they may be attached to material possessions. Attachment of consumers with any specific material brand involves psychologically contended belongings are self-extensions and also based upon any personal history among possession and the consumer. Personal history might be developed through daily applications and may get associated also with emotional and memorable.

Attachment then grows as they mount up memories associated with the perfume.

Brand-self connection: Brand Attachment involves a relationship (brand as part of self) and suggests that an important facet of attachment involve an emotional and cognitive relationship between the two, i.e. brand and the self, and it is defined as the brand-self connection (Escalas, 2004). When one categorizes a brand as part of ones' self, resultant development of a sense of oneness in the customer with the brand establishes cognitive associations which connect self and the brand. Although this brand-self linkage is represented as cognitive, however it is emotional; inherently (Mikulincer, 1998; Thomson, 2006), involving potentially complex feelings regarding the brand, which may be in form of gratification or comfort from the brand-self proximity, and psychological delight derived from brand-self display or may be in form of anxiety or sorrow resulted from brand-self separation.

It is also worth noticing that consumers may get coupled with a brand as it may project who the customers are (e.g., an identity basis) and this may also be on the requisites that because using the product is significant in light of the consumers' objectives, his personal concerns or his life projects (Mittal, 2006).

Brand prominence: Prior research puts forth that brand attachment represents the extent with which the constructive feelings or memories pertaining to the association with the brand are at top of mind. Positive memories have proved to be more prominent in people who are well attached with an attachment object when compared with those who have relatively weak attachment. It is also established that brand-related

feelings and beliefs and constitute memory's part of a person and vary in the perceived fluency or the ease that is brought to the mind and it supports the concept that brand-self connections are built over time through practical experience. This component is named "brand prominence": it represents salience of cognitive and emotional bond connecting the brand and the self. This salience is represented by the perceived ease and frequency of the brand-related beliefs and approaches are present in the mind.

Brand attitude strength: Positive or negative attitude of an individual with respect a brand, depicted by the confidence and firmness with which a brand is used and the extent of which the consumer considers it preferable, reliable and valid. Literature also reports that brand attitude strength is a predictor of behaviors of the customers, which also includes the brand consideration, choice and intention for buying the brand.

Brand awareness: Brand Awareness is a marketing concept used for measuring consumers' knowledge regarding existence of a brand. It also shows the familiarity indexation of the brand (Laurent *et al.*, 1995). Bogart (1986) says that advertisers exercise reiteration to stir "advertised name on the consciousness of the consumers and getting them comfy with the brand". It is also presumed that advertisers anticipate that awareness will retain brand in the evoked set of the consumers and may also inflate the likelihood purchasing of the brand.

Brand association: Knowledge about a specific brand that is stocked up in consumers' memory and uses in buying decisions is one of the most significant market based asset. It may also be conceptualized as association which is linked with a brand name according to the Associative Network Theories of Memory (Keller, 2003). It is also found that these associations generally have two most important functions which are acting in retrieving a brand name from memory in form of consideration set entry and secondly helping for the brand assessment process which leads to buying of the product.

When customers use a brand's associations in buying situations, it results in favoring purchase of a certain brand. Brand knowledge is also considered as a major element of Consumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) (Aaker, 2003; Keller, 2003). The desirable characteristics of brands' association are favorability, vitality and uniqueness (Keller, 2003).

Hypothesis: Literature is evident that Brand attachment and the Brand Attitude strength are considered very fundamental, vital and imperative in branding and play a

crucial role in success of the branding campaign and ultimately in flourishing the business as a success. Research is also evident that Knowledge metrics of the Brand equity is influential in creating and then maintaining brand attachment as the constructs of the metrics are mandatory, i.e., until unless awareness of the brand is being created and an association is developed among the customers and the brand the advertisement campaign may not prove fruitful and no attachment or self association be developed among the two. The impact of the Knowledge Metrics on the Brand Attitude strength and Brand attachment may be been hypothesized as follows:

- H-1:** Knowledge Metrics of Brand Equity has a significant impact and serves as good measure of Brand Attachment.
- H-2:** Knowledge Metrics of Brand Equity has a significant impact and serves as good measure of Brand Attitude Strength.

DISCUSSION

This research assumes Brand attachment and Brand attitude strength as dependent variables while Knowledge metrics of the brand equity as Independent variable. Brand attachment is a construct describing strength of the bond connecting the consumer and a particular brand. Attachment is also critical as it results in behaviors fostering the brand profitability, association, acceptance and lifetime value of the customers (Thomson, 2006).

This also depicts the marketing efforts and outcomes building up a product and its brand image in comparison to those products that would come up if the same product was not having the respective brand name. The objective of these marketing effects is grasping space in the consumers' knowledge. Or we can say that consumers' knowledge pertaining to a brand prompts the manufacturers/advertisers of a brand to respond differently or may compel them to adopt appropriately proficient measures for effective marketing of the brand.

Attracting the consumers' attention in order to put up strong brand awareness in customers' memory is important for constructing strong brand equity. The most important market based asset for a business is the knowledge that exists in the consumer markets regarding a particular Brand and consumers possess in their memory and use while buying situations and decisions. Usage of brand's associations by customers during buying will hopefully prompt the customers in favoring purchase of a certain brand.

A strong Brand image proves as strength for a business and differentiating from the other brands is a challenge for businesses and a strategy of hunting,

acquiring and then communicating those unique qualities of the brand would lead to marketers ignoring the attributes that fulfills consumers' essential category needs (Keller, 2003).

It is expected by customers that high equity brands offer something that other brands do not. Exceptional associations, even at minor stages, prove beneficial for the high equity brands (Broniarczyk and Gershoff, 2003). Hence, it is obligatory for new entrants into a market to offer anything unique for the customers, which also provides some good justified reason for buying that brand instead of sticking with their current portfolio. Hence, building perceived brand uniqueness is a valuable and important strategy in maintaining and improving performance of the brand. But still, one thing counts more than that and if that phenomenon remains unaddressed, the brand may suffer difficulties in making its worth and gaining attention from the possible customer; that is creation of awareness and the association with the brand and its' unique offerings in target market and customers.

Building brand awareness is a practicable strategy for advertising intended at increasing brand-choice probabilities. Two approaches preferably are initiated for achievement of brand differentiation. When customer thinks that what additional this brand is offering other brands are not offering the same; it will become the uniqueness of the brand. The second is based on brand dominance, where the consumer is aware of the other brands with same attributes, and still perceive one brand to be better than the others (Sharp and Dawes, 2001). In either case, long term worth of investment in demarcation only when it is sustainable, otherwise it is also a possibility that brands may not be attract and afterwards retain a loyal customer base (Aaker, 2003).

Dall'Olmo *et al.* (1997) argue that brand-attribute links vary systematically in individuals over the period of time, even in ordinary category attributes, i.e. even if 'everyone knows' that Coca-cola has a great taste, there is still value in projecting the salience of the brand through continuous refreshment of that and other memory links (Romanik and Sharp, 2004). This also supports the previous argument for need of creation of Market awareness and then building an association in the market for achieving brand attitude strength and brand attachment.

When a consumer possesses no prior knowledge or awareness regarding any brand in a choice set, easy and reliable choice tactics may be fewer immediately available. This lack of knowledge would most likely result in a more effortful decision-making process. By creation of Brand awareness and Association, this perceived difficulty may be encountered tactfully and successfully. So literature supports that creation of a Brand Awareness and then Knowledge among the

customers and target market will be helpful in generating market demand and then further lead to development of Brand Attachment.

Deborah and Park (2005) found that strong attachments require time, repeated interactions, and memories relating in particular to the object, encouraging target customers to invest in it with greater perceived value.

Managerial implication: Considerable resources are being spent on customer attraction and retention. This research implies that Brand managers should employ considerable resources for measuring of brand awareness, association, attachment and brand image. It is also established and recommended for practitioners to use brand relationship measures, initiate and develop strategic and tactical initiatives which will surely consumers are attracted towards the Brand, satisfied with it, trust and feel attached to it.

Consumers' knowledge of a brand influences manufacturers and advertisers to respond differently and adopt appropriate adept measures for marketing of the brand and strong focus on the implications and regular assessment of the Knowledge metrics of Brand Equity will be helpful for Managers, advertisers and policy makers in calculations and designing marketing strategies and strategic goals in accordance to the target population and markets.

CONCLUSION

First Hypothesis (H-1) of this study assumes that Knowledge Metrics of Brand Equity has a significant impact and serves as good measure of Brand Attachment e.g. if a customer posses awareness regarding a Brand strong associations are developed with the brand, ultimately the customer will become hardcore loyal with that specific brand. Literature fully endorses this Hypothesis and recommends for Brands for creation of awareness regarding the uniqueness and qualities offered by the Brand to make it more discriminative from other available competitive Brands in the market.

Second hypothesis states that Knowledge Metrics of Brand Equity has a significant impact and serves as good measure of Brand Attitude Strength. Research endorse that if a Brand succeeds in creating strong bond of between it and the target audience in the market and customers start considering Brand as a part of his personality.

So, if a Brand succeeds in creating awareness through its' strong word of mouth and developing attachments and strong associations, his hardcore loyalty will result as outcome to the whole exercise and may lead to the acceptance of the brand and in maintaining emotional attachment and loyalty of the potential customers.

RECOMMENDATION

Future researchers may implement the findings of the research in distinct markets and among mutually exclusive so as the further exploration of the relation of Knowledge metrics may be undertaken. Researchers may also establish effects of various factors playing part in extending or moderating the effects of the Knowledge metrics on Brands. Additional research is also required to shed light on the behavioral effects of the remaining Brand metrics may also be examined and their impact on the creation of Brand attachment and Brand attitude strength also be checked.

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