

Will brand experience predict brand love?

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Abstract

The development of consumer–brand relationship has been a focus of branding theory (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Franzen, 1999) in recent years. Relationship marketing has prompted brand managers to seek innovative ways to create mutually beneficial relationships with consumers (Mitchell and Orwig, 2002). The traditional method of brand marketing mostly appeals to functional links with consumers, but consumers now wish for a more compelling experience (Schmitt, 1999).

Franzen (1999) stated that the consumer–brand relationship is formed by consumer experience and brand knowledge (or brand meanings). Brand experience is conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments (Brakus et al., 2009) and brand meaning includes brand personality, brand association, brand attitude, and brand image) in the minds of consumers (Chang and Chieng, 2006). In the current, a conceptual framework has been developed, to be empirically validated, to test the relationship between brand experience and brand personality and brand image.

In this study, brand personality will be defined as the set of human characteristics (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1998; Petromilli and Michalczyk, 1999) and quasi-human traits that are associated with a given brand (e.g., Keller, 1998) those traits are formed through consumer

experience (Aaker, 1997; Berry, 2000; Keller, 1993). Brand image defined as a subjective, perceptual phenomenon of brand that is reflected by a network of associations in the memory of the consumers (Aaker, 1991; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 1998). Brand love is a new marketing construct that assesses satisfied consumers' passionate emotional attachment to particular brands (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

This potential study will be conducted on a sample of real consumers in Zurich, Switzerland and London, England to demonstrate how brand experiences affect brand personality, brand image and brand love to formulate a positive word of mouth. The study will select NIKE brand as a popular brand among youth population in the two countries. Also, NIKE brand has been rated as a strong experiential brand in a study conducted by Brakus, et al. (2009).

The study will follow a two-step approach as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The first step in this approach is to assess the measurement model before building on this model to predict causal relationships among the study variables. Cronbach's α will be used for the items of each construct. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggested that 0.7 should be used as the cutoff point for reliability. Then, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based on the covariance matrix of the items will be used to assess the items of the research construct.

For the structural model, standardized path coefficient will be estimated using LISREL 8.80. The hypothesized relationships will be tested in Switzerland and England, respectively. This study is expecting to add novel perspective in the consumer-brand-relationship through testing the conceptual framework that incorporate a number of new constructs in the marketing literature (i.e. brand experience and brand love). The study will also present some

managerial implications to brand managers to enable them to develop an experiential plan in order to create a positive and sophisticated brand relationship.