Impact of Brand Association on Consumer Buying Behavior in Foot Ware Industry: The Case of Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose – The main aim of this study is to find the impact of the brand association dimensions on the consumer responses.

Data collection - In order to achieve the goal of this study, primary data is used which is collected through 300 questionnaires in market of the Punjab.

Method of analysis - In this study descriptive analysis, co-relation and regression method has been used to analysis the results.

Findings - The results of the study reveals the existence of positive relationship between the brand association dimensions on the consumer buying behavior. The brand association functions are the guarantee, social identification, personal identification and status has the positive impact on the recommendation, extension of purchase from same brand and price premium.

Contribution - This study may help the researcher who is trying to find the relation between the brand association dimensions and the consumer behavior towards the brand.

Keywords: Brand Image, Brand Equity, Brand, Brand Association, Consumer Response

Introduction

In past decade, organizations are increasing their investment in building and retaining the brands. The brands become more valuable now a day, the brand building creates a unique brand image in such a way that all the products are sold under the same name with the strong affiliation from the customer about the brand. The brand equity view proposes that: 1) the brands creates unique value for the customer and for the firm also. 2) The brands generates the value for the

organization by providing value to the customers. 3) Consumer associations to brand are the major elements in building brand and managing the equity.

The brand give the value to your product that can't be imitate and these value comes from the association that your brand has some dimensions and functions. These function creates a unique image and perception in the customer mind that entirely change the way of customer purchasing and hence the whole buying behavior of the consumer. As the dimension discussed in this paper are guarantee in footwear industry change consumer preferences and decision as it increases the recommendation of the brand purchase of brand other things from this brands and premium price for the shoes. Also the personal identification and the status are the dimensions of the brand association that also effects the consumer responses in case of recommendation, brand purchase extension and premium price.

In marketing management, the most crucial area is the brand equity issue. Despite the importance very low research has been done in a way to explore the brand association, among these associations which brand association has the most of the effects on consumer behavior. Some of empirical studied and explored relation between brand image and the consumer behavior without seeing the brand association dimensions. The research paper attempts to find impact of the brand association on consumer buying behavior in footwear industry. The brand association that are taken into the consideration are the guarantee, social identification, personal identification, and their impact on the purchasing behavior in three dimensions that are the purchase extension, recommendation to other brand, and pay a premium price. The research includes the primary data that was collected through questionnaire method and analyzed by statistical tools to find out result.

The paper is divided into different sections. The section 1. Is about the introduction of the paper. Section 2. is about literature review. Section 3. shows theoretical framework of our study. Section 4. represents the objective of our study. Section 5. Testing the hypothesis of our research. Section 6. the data and methodology has sub-section that are 6.1 selection of product class and brand, 6.2 selection of brands, 6.3 data collection, 6.4 measures, 6.5 dimension of brand function and 6.6 consumer response. Following section 7. Is the analysis of results has three table, table 1. Indicate descriptive analysis, table 2. Confirms the relationship between variables, and table 3. confirms relation between dependent and independent variable. Next section 8. Demonstrate the conclusion.

Literature Review
In past decades' firms are investing more in creating and developing Brands. The creation of brands depends on brand image with brand associations. According to Keller (1993), (Keller 1998)the brand create and provides value to both consumer and producer also the brand association are the key to brand equity management. Aaker (1991) defines brand as logo, name, mark, symbol that identify the product of one producer and differentiate it from others. Brand can be represented by logo (Walsh, Page Winterich et al. 2010).

The study about brand was also done earlier by many authors in different countries. Many regions and countries done study as New York (Aaker, 1996; Aaker, and Equity, 1991), India (Agarwal and Rao, 1996; Ailawadi et al. 2003), Europe (Hogg, et al. 2000), New Jersey (Keller, 1998; Philip, 2003), Turkey (Atilgan, et al. 2005), and London (Ambler, 1997).

Brand Image is what is brought in consumer mind about brand by the brand association (Keller 1993). The consumer thoughts and feelings about specific brand is brand image. Brand image is described as consumers understanding and thoughts about particular brand (Philip, 2003). It is directly related to quality as quality is the function if brand association. Product with strong brand image is generally recognized as high quality by consumer (Grewal, Monroe et al. 1998). Brand image will affect and determine customer behavior (Burmann, Jost-Benz et al. 2009).

Brand Equity was discussed by Farquhar (1989) that it brought value addition to product. It often created by services or goods that brings value (Keller 2003, Kapferer 2012). According to Wang, Wei et al. (2008) brand equity is incremental utility brand gives a good, in comparison to its non-branded competitors. Aaker (1996) states that brand equity as the collective of assets and liabilities. Five dimensions brand quality, brand awareness, brand association, brand assets and brand loyalty creates value for brand equity. According to Rego, Billett et al. (2009) three research streams (discrete) define the brand equity construct. First is the brand equity is differential brand performance over unbranded product performance. Second defines brand equity by way of the shareholder value of the brand (Ailawadi, Lehmann et al. 2003). The most creative third research stream defines brand equity as cognitive psychology perspective.

Brand Association

Brand Associations is everything associated in memory with a brand (Aaker and Equity 1991). Brand associations become a key to competitive advantage by differentiating their product form other counter products in market. Brand association involves product features and customer benefits to become a consumer wants and reasons for buying and consume the branding. Brand association was discussed by (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). According to Keller brand association is categorized in three main categories attitudes, benefits, attributes. Brand equity and the brand association are intensely connected with each other. Brand association can be used as information collecting tool (Van Osselaer and Janiszewski 2001). Highly effective brand associations act as leverage to boost the brand equity (James, 2005). Yoo, Donthu et al. (2000), (Atilgan, Aksoy et al., 2005) discussed brand loyalty is raised by effective and strong brand association.

Brand associations contains all brand-connected considerations, feelings, images, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, experiences Keller and Lehmann (2006) and is any single thing present in memory to brand. Brand association is of two types product association and organization association (Cheng-Hsui Chen, 2001). Functional and non-functional attributes are the product attributes.

The difficulty in delimiting brand functions lies in minor quantity and deviating nature of the study observing their dimensions. Also work do not clearly define the brand functions and product function. Tangible or physical attributes are almost present in all of the products also in those goods that are sold without a brand or with brand unknown. These attributes are related association of product functions. On other side, brand function are association linked to intangible attributes and images added to product thanks to brand name, i.e. they show profits and benefits that can be obtained from goods with brand.

We discuss four dimension of brand functions through guarantee, social identification, status and personal identification. Guarantee is the promise of quality and brand relies on it (Ambler, 1997). The personal identification function is defined as the consumer can define themselves with brand

and can use as self-esteem. In the literature, idea that individual can develop their self-respect through images of the brands they purchase and use. The better customer
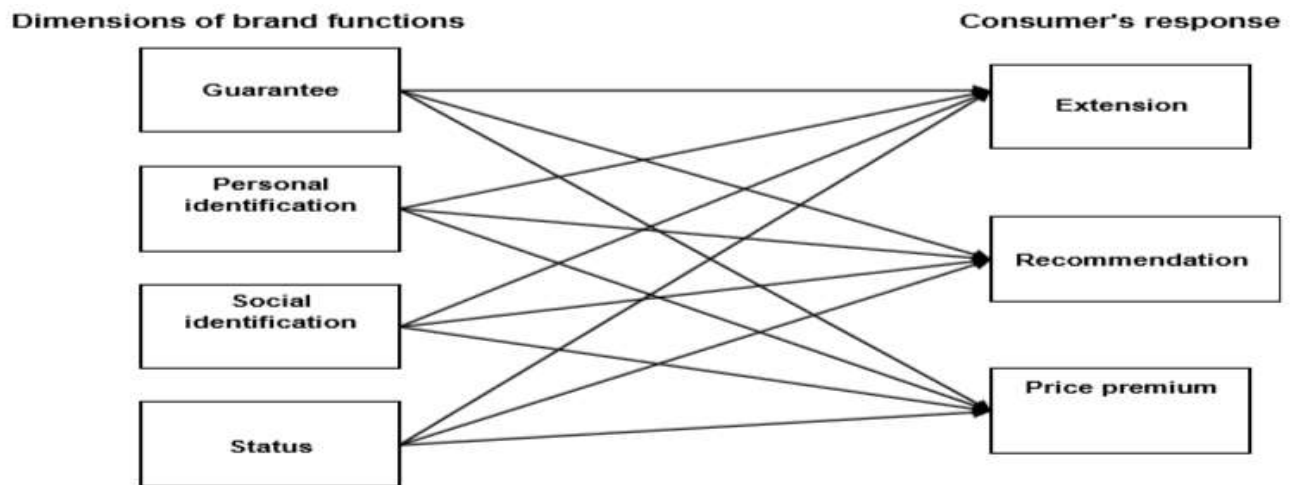

Figure1. Conceptual research model 1.

evaluation of brand, the better his intentions of buying it (Graeff, 1996, Hogg, Cox et al. 2000). Social identification function is ability of brand, acts as communicator allowing customer expressing wish to be combined to dissociate himself from groups of people that structure his closet social environment. Consumer interested in this function value positively the brand that enjoys good image and reputation among his community he belongs (Long and Schiffman, 2000). Status function discusses feelings of respect and status that the customer may knowledge upon using brand (Long and Schiffman, 2000). According to Vigneron and Johnson (1999), five characteristics of brands are the base of this function, are mark of social status and individual's power, Social approval reflection, limitation of the offer to a small population, emotional experiences, and superior technology. Aaker (1991) characterize the 11 dimension of the product attribute, benefit which customer get, price and origin of product (Alexandris, Zahariadis et al. 2004). Keller's discusses that brand knowledge has two parts/features, brand image and brand knowledge. And also classifies the brand association into three sects. Attributes which distinguishes between goods related and non-goods related qualities. Benefits are functional, experimental or symbolic. Brand attitude defines the evaluation of the brand.

Consumer Response
Consumer responses are the extension in buying behavior, recommendation of brands to other, and pay premium prices for the brand. Researcher have discussed that brand association have a positive impact on consumer preferences, choice in buying and paying premium price willingness for brand and also the recommendation of brands to other (Park and Srinivasan 1994, Cobb-Walgren, Ruble et al. 1995, Agarwal and Rao 1996, Hutton 1997, Yoo, Donthu et al. 2000).

Theoretical Framework
Objectives
The objectives of this paper is to find the

- ➢ Relation between dimension of brand association and consumer response.
- ➢ Impact of Guarantee on purchase extension, recommendation and price premium.
- ➢ Impact of Personal Identification on extension, recommendation and premium price.
- ➢ Impact of Social Identification on extension, recommendation and price premium.
- ➢ Impact of Status on extension, recommendation and premium price.

Testing Hypothesis

The formulation and development of hypothesis. In literature, it has been checked that the supposed quality of brand conditions the success of extensions. The study proposed the next the closer association of guarantee function the greater the consumer accept the brand extensions. Guarantee is the function that minimize the uncertainty of the customer so they recommend more about the brand which has guarantee function. Also the guarantee function of brand association will make the buyer to pay premium price. Therefore, we proposed following hypothesis

H1a: The brand association with guarantee function impacts positively the customer's willingness to purchase other product category from the same brand.
H1b: The brand association with guarantee function impacts positively the customer's willingness to recommend the brand
H1c: The brand association with function of guarantee impacts positively the customer's willingness for premium price for brand.

Our second variable is the personal identification; it is proposed that the customer recommends that brand is closest to your emotional experiences. Personal identification has a positive influence on purchase extension and also the brand to which you are emotionally attach you will pay premium price. From this we proposed following hypothesis
H2a: The brand association with personal identification function impacts positively the customer's readiness to buy the other products from the same brand.
H2b: The brand association with personal identification function impacts positively the customer's readiness to recommend brand.
H2c: The brand association with personal identification function impacts positively the customer's readiness to pay premium price for brand.
Third variable is Social Identification function, there is a positive relationship between brand reputation and customer's willingness to pay premium price, and also it has the same impact on purchase extension. The brand with good reputation enjoys good reputation and are purchased by many people.
H3a: The brand association with social identification function impacts positively the customer's readiness to buy the other products from same brand.
 H3b: The brand association with social identification function impacts positively the customers to recommendation of brand.
H3c: The brand association with social identification function impacts positively the customer's readiness to pay premium price for brand.

Status Function acts as the determinant of brand extension acceptance. The status function has a positive effect on the brand recommendation and premium price. On these grounds we suggest that:

H4a: The brand association with status function impacts customer's readiness to buy extensions of brand in other products.

H4b: The brand association with status function impacts customer's readiness for recommending brand.

H4c: The brand association with status function impacts customer's readiness to pay premium price for brand.

Methodology

Selected product class and brands: in testing hypotheses proposed, Formal shoes (appropriate for normal and casual wear) were taken into the consideration. The market selected that allows us to research the brand functions without over-complicating the data collection. The first characteristics of formal shoes are experienced-based (hard to evaluate before purchase) i.e. lesion prevention, foot protection, and performance improvement. Guarantee function related to brand is specifically important. Secondly, brand associations play a significant role due to fact that formal shoes are products that are typically used in public and together fashion and other aspects are in considered in purchasing decision. Third, the customer has the sufficient data about the brands in related industry as he had used more than one brand. Fourth, focus on the sale of the formal shoes brand in following brands (Bata, Service, Starlet, Hush Puppies, and Logo)

Selection of Brands: We analyze the brand that are appropriately well-known to customer. For this, a preliminary work, 400 people were individually interviewed to help us to made list of the brands of formal shoes that they used and have knowledge about their different features. In our research we focus on following brands like Bata, Service, Starlet, Borjaan, Logo and Hush puppies.

Data collection: The data was collected, in Punjab market through face to face interviewed through questionnaire administration. So as to avoid difference regarding the population, we carried out a balanced satisfaction in term of gender and age. A total 450 personal interviews were conducted, from which 300 were valid and analyzed.

Measures: Sample Size measure were created based upon
  ➢ Established definition in research
  ➢ Two focus group with formal shoes user
  ➢ In-depth interviews with distributors in same industry
  ➢ Studied already available studies and journals

The variables considered was measured by 5-point (1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) neutral, 4) disagree, 5) strongly disagree) Likert scale ranging from strongly agree – strongly disagree. The 15 questions were obtained and then analyzed.

Dimensions of brand functions: Guarantee was measured by asking respondents to calculate four features of brand (inspired confidence, consumer interest concern, superior performance, and high value). For personal identification two aspects were measured self-concept of individual and emotional link. Social identification is measured by four items that effort to reveal brand

reputation and its approval in the environment nearest to the individual. Status function is measured by two questions that prompt the association of brand with social distinction and prestige.

Consumer Response: Consumer responses that we are going to study are the willingness to premium price, recommendation and buy brand extensions. All of these three responses create the competitive advantage for the organization. We studied the behavioral objective against actual behavior. As the it is not easy to control the actual behavior, the behavioral intention reflects the independent preference of person to show a definite type of behavior in future and the actual behavior can be response to motivate but brand strength. The consumer extension in buying brand other product was measured by single question in which they are requested to evaluate the extent to which they extend the buying in other products by same brand. The consumer willing to recommend is measured by question in which respondents were asked the extent that he would recommend the brand. The premium price has been evaluated by comparison of the brand to an unknown brand of similar characteristics.

Analysis of Result

Table .1 descriptive statistics				
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Guarantee	2.1217	1.25	3.25	.48932
Personal Identification	2.2174	1.00	4.50	.67581
Social identification	2.0870	1.25	4.75	.58023
Status	2.1391	1.00	4.00	.67065
Customer response	2.1261	1.00	4.00	.70351
Premium price	1.8913	1.00	4.50	.73384
Valid N (listwise)				

The table one of analysis shows the result of descriptive statistics of the topic of effect of brand association on consumer buying behavior in footwear industry in Punjab. The result confirms that the mean of guarantee is 2.1217 with maximum and minimum value respectively 3.35 and 1.25, the standard deviation is .48932 which is less than mean. The mean of personal identification is 2.2174, maximum value is 4.50, minimum value is 1.00 and standard deviation is .67581 which is less than mean. Social identification confirms the mean of 2.0870 with maximum and minimum values respectively 4.75 and minimum 1.25 and the standard deviation of .58023 which is less than mean value. Status function confirms the mean value of 2.1391 with maximum and minimum value respectively 4 and 1 and standard deviation is .67065 which is less than mean value. Customer response has the mean value of 2.1261, maximum and minimum value is 4 and 1 and standard deviation is .70351 which is less than mean value. Price premium has the mean value of 1.8913 and maximum and minimum value respectively 4.50 and 1 and standard deviation is .73384 which is less than mean value. The premium price shows the less of all mean value that is 1.8913 and the greater mean value is shown by guarantee amount of 2.1217.

Table .2 Relationship between variables

	Guarantee	P.I	S.I	Status	C.R	P.P
Guarantee	1	*				
Personal Identification	.228*	1				
Social Identification	.279**	.136**	1			
Status	.118**	.460**	.270**	1		
Consumer Response	.153**	.422**	.266**	.646**	1	
Premium Price	.138**	.116**	.102**	.031**	.260**	1

The table two shows the result of the relationship between all variables. The result of these variables in the table indicate the positive relationship and also the significance of variables. Guarantee positively and significantly correlate with personal identification at 22.8 percent, social identification at 27.9 percent, status at 11.8 percent, consumer response at 15.3 percent, premium price at 13.8 percent. Similarly, premium price positively and significantly correlate wir guarantee at 13.8 percent, personal identification at 11.6 percent, social identification at 10.2 percent, status at 3.1 percent, consumer response at 26 percent. As other consumer response positively and significantly correlates with guarantee at 15.3 percent, personal identification at 42.2 percent, social identification at 26.6 percent, status at 64.6 percent. Similarly, all other variables correlate positively and significantly with other variables.

Table.3 : Dependent Variable Consumer Response

	B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.235	.284	.826	.011**
Guarantee	.041	.109	.377	.007*
Personal Identification	.156	.085	1.842	.068**
Social Identification	.108	.093	1.165	.047*
Status	.576	.086	6.669	.000*

Note: *Significant level: *5, **10 and ***15percent*

We use two stage least square method to analysis the relation of Consumer response (premium price, recommendation and brand extension) is positive with others variables status, social identification, guarantee, personal identification at significant level. The t value of Guarantee confirms positive and significant with .377 t-value and 5 percent significance value. Personal identification confirms positive and significant with 1.842 t-value and at 10 percent significance level. Social identification confirms positive and significant result with 1.165 t- value and at 5 percent significant value. Status confirms positive and significant result with 6.669 t-value at 5 percent significance level.

Conclusion

This study investigates the relationship between the brand association and the consumer buying behavior. Using a sample, theoretical model, we explain the positive impact of brand associations (guarantee, Personal identification, social identification and status) on consumer buying behavior like recommendation, pay premium and extend the purchase from the same brand. Based on the model, our result suggests that the brand associations create the brand image and brand equity in brand management and increase the recommendation, purchase extension and premium prices towards purchase during purchase decision.

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