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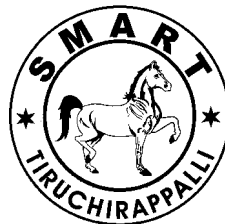
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND PERSONALITY AND BRAND LOYALTY: A STUDY OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Brand Personality plays a significant role in the way consumers identify with a brand and it is therefore probably a predictor of brand loyalty. The study seeks to understand the extent to which brand personality can be seen as a predictor of brand loyalty. The study of brand personality has been done, using the brand personality scale developed by J.L. Aaker (1996). A regression analysis was carried out to find out whether brand personality and its dimensions are predictors for the dependent variable, the brand loyalty. The results showed that the variation between observed and predicted values of loyalty did not explain all personality dimensions. This finding has important implications for the manner in which a brand must be portrayed. The study also showed that there was significant correlation between brand personality and each of its dimensions, with the brand loyalty.

Keywords : Brand Personality, Brand Loyalty, Brand Equity

JEL : M3, M31, M37

1. Introduction

A brand is an instrument of expressing the personality of the user. The “self” or personality could reflect the present state of the aspirational self of the individual (**Keller and Lehman, 2006**). Brand personality is a set of human characteristics, associated with the brand. **Aaker J. L., (1997a)** defines the personality of a brand as a function of human demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, life stage and lifestyle characteristics like interest, leisure activities and opinion and psychographic traits such as

extroversion, dependability, and sentimentality. The brand becomes identifiable with a living person. The abstract intangible assets of a brand can be visualized in a tangible way. Customer relationship with brands, can be likened to relationship with other humans. Like human personality, brand personality is enduring and unique. In contrast to “product – attributes,” which tend to serve a functional utility for consumers, brand personality serves a symbolic function to be used for self-expression (**Keller, 1993**). Customers associate personality traits with brands, which form a basis of forming an affinity towards brands (**Arora and Stoner,**

2009). People are likely to view brands as extensions of themselves because of the characteristics associated with the brands. The more a person can relate to these characteristics, the more is the “Brand Resonance” a user is likely to experience, with respect to the brand (J. L. Aaker, 1997b).

1.1 Brand Personality

The practice of endowing brands, with human personality traits, is referred to as animism. Brand personality can be the images, that come to a consumer’s mind, when the brand is mentioned. It could be the brand’s personification, as expressed in the form of a brand mascot or by a brand ambassador. Human and brand personality traits share a similar perceptual identity but differ in the manner in which the identity is formed. The identity for humans is formed, based on the individual’s physical characteristics, behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes. Demographic and psychographic characteristics also play a role. In contrast, the perception of personality of the brand may not be formed by direct contact with the brand. It gets formed largely through the brand elements and brand associations. The brand elements are the name, logo, tagline, symbol, design, colour, mascot and packaging of the brand.

The brand personality is also formed through primary and secondary associations with the brands. Primary associations include the core benefits, offered by the brand, the personality of the user, the use situation, the competitive frame of reference and the direct and indirect competitors. The secondary associations are formed by the personality of the endorsers, brand ambassadors, other brands and the personality of the leaders of the company that own the brand. The other secondary associations are the country of origin, the channels through which the brand is sold, the marketing communication channels and the use situations which characterize the use of the brand. Being able to accurately ascertain a

brand’s personality, helps firms to communicate effectively with their consumers and help in creating effective promotional activities. Marketing practitioners have become aware of the importance of building “a well-defined and distinctive brand personality” as an important driver of consumer preference (Keller and Lehman, 2006).

1.2 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a consumer’s overall attachment or commitment to a product, brand or organization (Oliver and Rust, 1994). The loyalty concept is similar to relationship commitment, described in relationship marketing literature as a desire to be in a long term valued relationship. Loyalty manifests itself in a variety of behaviors. The common ones are recommending a service provider to other customers and repeatedly patronizing the provider (Anderson, Fornell and Rust, 1997), willingness to pay a price premium and willingness to make the extra effort to buy the brand. Loyalty is a major contributor to the long-term financial performance of the brand (Reichheld and W. Earl Sasser, 1990). Marketers are highly concerned about brand loyalty, in the light of the consequence of loyalty reflected in the profitability of the brand. The proliferation of brands of similar type, makes it difficult for customers to maintain brand loyalty and this has led to an overall decline in brand loyalty. The concept of brand loyalty is useful because it represents the most important dimension of an enduring brand relationship. The importance of brand loyalty can be assessed by the findings that show that it costs five times or more to acquire a new customer than it costs to retain an existing customer (Giep and Moriarty, 2009). It is important to understand the antecedents or factors that contribute to brand loyalty. One such factor is brand personality. The target group’s conformity with the brand’s persona is likely to result in higher levels of brand loyalty. This study proposes to determine

whether a certain type of brand personality is likely to evoke brand loyalty, within a certain demographic segment.

2. Literature Review

Brand equity is defined as the “added value” with which a given brand endows a product (**D. A. Aaker, 1992**). Brand equity is the cognitive, affective and behavioural response to a brand. **Keller (1993)** conceptualised the customer - based brand equity or CBBE Model which defines brand equity as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand”. Increasing brand equity is currently a major challenge for branding professionals. According to the customer - based brand equity model (**Keller, 1993**), strong, unique and favorable brand images positively affect a brand’s overall equity (**Avis, 2012**). Marketers view brand personality as an effective way to distinguish the brand from its competitors, which enhances the effectiveness of marketing communications. Brand personality can be developed into a powerful driving force of consumer’s positive attitude, preference and loyalty for a brand (**Lee, 2009**). **Yoo and Donthu (2001)** argued that the dimensions of brand personality construct are probably related to brand equity. **Pappu et al., (2005)** have theorised that brand personality is one of the most important forms of brand association and brand personality helps build brand’s equity. Consumers tend to use brand and products, which are consistent with their own personality traits. In other words, marketing activities must aim to make consumers recognize a brand’s personality and craft the communication between the brand and the consumer (**Su and Tong, 2015**), in order to build the brand’s loyalty and equity. **Aaker (1997c)** was among the first to develop the concept of brand personality as “a set of human characteristics associated with a brand.” Brand personality can be created using three distinctive approaches: i) The association consumers have

with a brand, ii) The image a company tries to create, and iii) Communicating information about product attributes. The definition of brand loyalty was proposed by Jacoby and Chestnut (**Jacoby, and Chestnut, 1978**). Brand loyalty is the result of non-random, long term behavior response, formed by a mental purchase process of certain decision units who consider more than one brand in a product category. In early researches, researchers took the act of repurchase as the method of measuring brand loyalty (**Ahmed, Ahsan, and Majeed, 2014**). More recently, some researchers indicate that the best way to measure brand loyalty is by affective loyalty (**E.J.Hartel and Russell-Bennett, 2010**). There are also theories like polygamous loyalty, which argue that customers do not buy only one brand (**Roy, 2011**). **Mascarenhas et al. (2001)** classified loyalty into true loyalty, spurious loyalty, latent loyalty and no loyalty. **Watson, Beck, et al., (2015)** indicated that brand loyalty covers cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty and behavioral loyalty. Affective loyalty refers to the consumer’s preference, liking and affinity for a specific brand but where purchase behavior has not yet developed. But behavior, loyalty is shown by the actual purchase behavior conducted by consumers, for a specific brand. **Watson et al., (2015)** believed that affective loyalty represents consumer loyalty to a specific brand in totality. **Chahal and Bala (2010)** defined behavioural loyalty as consumers’ satisfaction, with regular purchases of a specific brand. **Hayes (2008)** defined brand loyalty as the repeated purchase behavior based on consumers’ satisfaction with their accumulated experiences in purchasing the same brand.

3. Need for the Study

Personality and self-concept are dynamic constructs which change with economic circumstances, exposure to other cultures, changing aspirations and new professional opportunities. Marketers must track the changing

personality profile of the target group. Aspects of a brand's personality which predict higher loyalty, must be emphasized in brand - building exercises while aspects of brand personality, which do not predict loyalty, must be de-emphasized. The study, therefore, examines different personality traits and analyses the relationship of each trait with brand loyalty, reported by respondents.

4. Statement of the Problem

Brand building is at the heart of marketing strategy. Strong brands lead to brand loyalty, which discourages switching to competing brands. A small increase in customer loyalty can lead to a significant increase in profitability (Dawkins and Reichheld, 1990). It is, therefore, imperative to study the antecedents of brand loyalty. Brand personality has been considered an important contributor to building brand equity. The brand personality scale demonstrates that there are multiple ways by which the brand personality construct can influence consumer preferences and behavioural loyalty. The problem is to understand the influence of brand personality as a one-dimensional construct and to understand the influence of individual dimensions of brand personality on behavioural loyalty.

5. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was, to understand the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty, for consumer products, purchased by retail customers. The specific objectives of the study are stated below:

1. To study the relationship between Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty
2. To study the relationship between individual dimensions of Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty

6. Hypotheses of the Study

The line, representing a simple linear regression, between dependent variable, Loyalty

denoted by 'Y' and the independent variable, 'Brand Personality and its dimensions of Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness, denoted by X, is expressed through a basic equation: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X$. The hypotheses can be formed as follows:

NH1: There is no significant relationship between Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty, hence $\beta_{11} = 0$

NH2: There is no significant relationship between Sincerity Dimension of Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty, hence $\beta_{21} = 0$

NH3: There is no significant relationship between Excitement Dimension of Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty, hence $\beta_{31} = 0$

NH4: There is no significant relationship between Competence Dimension of Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty, hence $\beta_{41} = 0$

NH5: There is no significant relationship between Sophistication Dimension of Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty, hence $\beta_{51} = 0$

NH6: There is no significant relationship between Ruggedness Dimension of Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty, hence $\beta_{61} = 0$

7. Methodology

The objective of the study was to study the relationship between the independent variable of brand personality and dimensions of the independent variable brand personality which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, and the dependent variable, brand loyalty. The Researcher also wanted to understand how the dependent variable would change when only one independent variable was changed while others were held constant. Regression analysis was used to understand which among the independent variables were related to the dependent variable in a significant way.

(a) Sample Selection

The study was conducted, among working professionals, in the age group 30-40 years. The

research used a non-probability convenience sample. Respondents were sampled from the School of Business Management, NMIMS University. Participants were selected from the classes of the executive education courses. An estimated one hundred graduate students took part, from the classes that were selected for the study. Eighty six sets of duly completed questionnaires were received from the sample respondents.

(b) Sources of Data

Respondents were administered two sets of questionnaires. The first questionnaire was for brand personality and the second questionnaire was on brand loyalty. All data, used in the study, were primary data, collected for the purpose of the study.

(c) Period of the Study

The study was conducted during the period January and March 2016.

(d) Tools used for the Study

Questionnaire 1 was for testing Brand Personality. The Questionnaire comprised of forty two questions, which measured consumer perceptions of the brand, with respect to the five brand personality dimensions proposed by **Aaker (1997d)**. The dimensions were Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. The Scale was tested for Reliability and Validity. The Cronbach Alpha of the scale, for 42 items, was 84.7 percent. A potential weakness of the brand personality scale was that it was developed with relatively simple commercial brands in mind. One of the limitations of the present study, therefore, was that the findings were restricted to simple commercial brands. For measuring Brand Loyalty, the scale validated by Keller (**Keller and Lehman, 2006**), was used. The reliability statistics i.e. Cronbach's alpha (0.829) item to total correlations, confirmed the high reliability of the brand loyalty scale.

8. Analysis of Data

The first part of the analysis was with respect to the results of the regression, done with brand personality as the predictor variable and brand loyalty as the dependent variable. The analysis yielded four values, which established the relationship between the predictor and dependent variable.

The values, derived from the regression analysis of primary data, were the Multiple R Value, the R Square Value, the F Value and the significance F Value. The Multiple R Value was the correlation between the observed value of the dependent variable – loyalty (Y) and the value predicted from the regression line (Y-hat). The Multiple R Value, for the overall Personality construct was 0.614 (**Table-1**). The Multiple R Values, for the dimensions of Brand Personality were as follows: Sincerity: 0.326 (**Table-3**), Excitement: 0.508, Competence: 0.430, Sophistication: 0.346 and Ruggedness: 0.510 respectively (**Table-2**). The R square value was the percentage variation of the observed value of loyalty (Y), around the mean value of loyalty (Y bar), explained by the model. The R Square value of 0.377 (**Table-1**), for the overall construct of Brand Personality, indicated that 37.7 % of the variation could be explained by the model.

The R Square values of the dimensions of brand personality were as follows:

Sincerity: 0.106 (**Table-3**), Excitement: 0.258, competence: 0.185, Sophistication: 0.119 and Ruggedness: 0.260 (**Table-2**). This indicated that the model explained the variations of Y over Y bar, to the extent of 10.6%, 25.8%, 18.5%, 11.9% and 26.0% respectively, over the five dimensions of brand personality. The F Statistic is the test statistic for the regression model, which tests the significant linear regression relationship between the dependent or response variable and the predictor variables. The F Significance is the p-value or level of

significance of the F statistic. In most analysis, a p-value of 0.05 or less is considered sufficient to reject the hypothesis that the co-efficient is zero. In the study, the Null Hypothesis H_0 was $\beta_1 = 0$ versus alternate hypothesis H_1 being $\beta_1 \neq 0$. If the significance F was greater than the significance level of 0.05, then the null hypothesis that $\beta_1 = 0$ could not be rejected. If the significance F is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis that $\beta_1 = 0$ could be rejected and the alternate hypothesis that $\beta_1 \neq 0$ to be accepted. The significance F value for the overall construct brand personality was 0.000143594, which was less than 0.05 (**Table-1**). Therefore, the null hypothesis $\beta_{11} = 0$ was rejected and the alternate hypothesis that $\beta_{11} \neq 0$ was accepted.

The significance F Value, for the dimension sincerity, was 0.063683262 (**Table-3**). The value exceeded 0.05. Hence for the dimension Sincerity, the null hypothesis that $\beta_{21} = 0$ was accepted. The significance F Value, for the dimension Excitement was 0.002517496 (**Table-2**). This Value was less than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis $\beta_{31} = 0$ was rejected and alternate hypothesis that $\beta_{31} \neq 0$ was accepted. The significance F Value, for dimension Competence was 0.012378426 (**Table-2**). This value was less than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis $\beta_{41} = 0$ was rejected and alternative hypothesis $\beta_{41} \neq 0$ was accepted. The significance F Value, for dimension sophistication was 0.048342883 (**Table-2**). This value was less than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis $\beta_{51} = 0$ was rejected and alternative hypothesis $\beta_{51} \neq 0$ was accepted. The significance F Value for dimension Ruggedness was 0.002406896 (**Table-2**). This value was less than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis that $\beta_{61} = 0$ was rejected and alternate hypothesis $\beta_{61} \neq 0$ was accepted. The second part of the analysis was concerned with the correlation between the observed values of brand personality and the observed values of brand loyalty.

The Pearson co-efficient of correlation, between the overall construct, Brand Personality and Customer Loyalty, was found to be 0.614 and significant at the 95% level of confidence (**Table-4**). The Pearson Co-efficient of correlation between the various dimensions of brand personality and brand loyalty, were as follows: i) Sincerity: 0.326 (**Table-5**), ii) Excitement: 0.508 (**Table-6**), iii) Competence: 0.430 (**Table-7**), iv) Sophistication: 0.346 (**Table-8**), and v) Ruggedness: 0.510 (**Table-9**). All values were significant at the 95% level of confidence. If the Pearson coefficient of correlation is +1 is there is a perfect direct (increasing) linear relationship or correlation. If it is -1, there is a perfect decreasing (inverse) linear relationship, also called anti-correlation. Values between -1 and 1 indicate a degree of linear dependence between the two variables. As the co-efficient of correlation approaches zero, there is less evidence of a relationship between the variables. Closer the value of the coefficient to +1 or -1, stronger the possibility of correlation between the variables.

9. Findings and Suggestions

The regression analysis, done between brand personality and brand loyalty, indicated, shows a positive relationship between the two constructs. The predictor variable of brand personality could explain 37.7 % of the variation of observed values of the dependent variable, loyalty, over the mean value of the dependent variable. The R Square values of the individual dimensions of brand personality, namely, sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, based on the responses, were substantially lower. This was in tune with other studies relating to predictions of human behavior. It also indicates that other factors influencing behavior were present. The value of the co-efficient β_1 which established the relationship between the predictor variable X_i and the dependent variable Y_i , was significantly different from zero for the overall brand personality to

brand loyalty. For the dimension, Sincerity, the β_1 value was not significantly different from zero.

For the dimensions, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness, the β_1 value was significantly different from zero. It is suggested that the Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness dimensions of brand personality, that seemed to impact brand loyalty, may be considered to a greater degree than the Sincerity dimension whose relationship with brand loyalty was not statistically significant. Therefore, marketing activities must be conducted, to project brand personality, formed from the dimensions of excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Since brand personality alone did not fully explain the variance between observed and mean values of the dependent variable, it was necessary to conduct additional studies, to examine the relationship of constructs, derived from other models of building brand equity, such as the **David Aaker (1991) Model**, Brand Resonance Model and Brand Asset Valuator Model.

10. Conclusion

The study established that brand personality was a predictor of brand loyalty. Every marketing communication must be seen as a contribution to the complex symbol which is the brand image and personality. Hence focused efforts must be made to ensure that a distinct brand persona is developed, which would strengthen the perception of brand personality dimensions, mentioned above. An important conclusion that may be drawn is that brands which are high on sincerity, connoting merely value for money and shorn of other personality traits, are being excluded from the consideration set of the new section of affluent and personality conscious consumer. The brand personality model does not fully explain consumer behavior, with respect to consumer loyalty towards the brand. Brand loyalty is likely to be the result of several other functions, which need to be

examined independently. However, this study has clearly identified dimensions of personality, which correlate in a significant manner, with brand loyalty and hence it must be given special attention. These findings have a bearing on the choice of marketing communication programs, aimed at building brand persona, the emphasis on certain aspects like the choice of brand ambassadors and endorsers, the choice of communication and distribution channels and finally, the specification of the offering itself, its features, attributes and pricing. Brand elements and other brand building activities have to be appropriately aligned as well.

11. Limitations

The findings are specific to the demographic segment within which the study was conducted. The segment comprised of Socio Economic Classification SEC A1, age group 30 to 35 years and income group Rs 8,00,000 to Rs. 12,00,000/- per annum. The findings of the study may not be considered valid for demographic segments which could be different in respect of income, education or social status.

12. Scope for Further Research

Brand loyalty is a complex construct which could be dependent on a variety of factors of which Brand Personality is one. The other factors, which have been discussed in various other models of brand equity, must be examined in order to gain a thorough understanding of brand loyalty. Hence research can be extended to other predictors of brand loyalty. Also the study could be based on a consumer group, with specific demographic characteristics. It needs to be extended to another market segment where consumer products are marketed.

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Table-1: Regression Analysis for Brand Personality

<i>Multiple R</i>	0.614174188
<i>R Square</i>	0.377209933
F Value	18.7760026
Significance F	0.000143594

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-2: Regression analysis for Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness

Statistic	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
<i>Multiple R</i>	0.50845152	0.430549467	0.346322904	0.510408844
<i>R Square</i>	0.258522948	0.185372844	0.119939554	0.260517188
F Value	10.80844157	7.05421875	4.224853167	10.92119074
Significance F	0.002517496	0.012378426	0.048342883	0.002406896

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-3: Regression Analysis for Sincerity

<i>Multiple R</i>	0.326487056
<i>R Square</i>	0.106593797
F Value	3.698662169
Significance F	0.063683262

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-4: Correlation between Brand Personality and Customer Loyalty

		Brand Personality Average 42 Statements	CL Average 5 statements
Brand Personality Average 42 Statements	Pearson Correlation	1	0.614
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
CL Average 5 statements	Pearson Correlation	0.614	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-5: Correlation between Brand Personality Sincerity Dimension and Customer Loyalty

		BP Sincerity Dimension Average 11 Statements	CL Average 5 statements
BP Sincerity Dimension Average 11 Statements	Pearson Correlation	1	.326
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
CL Average 5 statements	Pearson Correlation	.326	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-6: Correlation between BP Excitement Dimension and Customer Loyalty

		BP Excitement Dimension Average 10 Statements	CL Average 5 statements
BP Excitement Dimension Average 10 Statements	Pearson Correlation	1	.508
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
CL Average 5 statements	Pearson Correlation	.508	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-7: Correlation between BP Competence Dimension and Customer Loyalty

		BP Competence Dimension Average 9 Statements	CL Average 5 statements
BP Competence Dimension Average 9 Statements	Pearson Correlation	1	.430
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
CL Average 5 statements	Pearson Correlation	.430	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-8: Correlation between BP Sophistication Dimension and Customer Loyalty

		BP Sophistication Dimension Average 6 Statements	CL Average 5 statements
BP Sophistication Average 6 Statements	Pearson Correlation	1	.430
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
CL Average 5 statements	Pearson Correlation	.430	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Analysis of primary data

Table-9: Correlation between BP Sophistication Dimension and Customer Loyalty

		BP Ruggedness Dimension Average 6 Statements	CL Average 5 statements
BP Ruggedness Dimension Average 6 Statements	Pearson Correlation	1	.510
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
CL Average 5 statements	Pearson Correlation	.510	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	

Source: Analysis of primary data