RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND LOYALTY, MEDIATORS – SATISFACTION AND BRAND TRUST: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The term "experiential view" encompassing fantasies, feelings and fun associated with the consumption of goods and services was visibly introduced in marketing literature by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). Since then, the concept has evolved from "consumption experience" to "customer experience" and recently to "brand experience". This study has made an attempt to understand its relationship with brand loyalty. The importance of brand loyalty in ensuring a brand's survival and growth is universally accepted. The other two variables- satisfaction and brand trust- have been included as the mediating variables in this study. A mediating variable is a variable that plays a causal intermediary role between an independent variable and a dependent variable. This paper covers the literature review and operationalisation of these four variables.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Brand Loyalty, Mediators, Brand Trust and Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Literature asserts that understanding of consumer-brand relationships is of utmost importance in the development of marketing and consumer behaviour theories in the areas of brand loyalty, satisfaction and brand trust among others. Thus, in this context, it has been rightly expressed by practitioners that to gain meaningful insights into the consumers' relationships with the brands, research should focus on relevant conceptualization and ways of measurement of "brand experience" and its relationship

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with various consumer behaviour responses like brand loyalty, satisfaction and brand trust. This study aimed to explore the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. A review of literature (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009; Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet, 2011) suggests that in addition to a direct relationship between these two variables, there might be an indirect relationship where some variables have a mediating effect on this relationship. As reported by Jones and Suh (2000), "A mediator is a variable that plays a causal intermediary role between an independent variable and a dependent variable". Thus, after an extant review of all the possible mediators which can affect the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, we decided to study the mediating effects of satisfaction and brand trust on this relationship as meta-analysis studies on satisfaction and trust show that while satisfaction and trust are closely related, they are conceptually different and influence retention (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE VARIABLES

BRAND EXPERIENCE

Brakus *et al.* (2009) conceptualised brand experience as, "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli (such as brand-identifying colours, shapes, typefaces, background design elements, slogans, mascots, and brand characters) that are part of a brand's design and identity (e.g., name, logo, signage), packaging, communications (e.g., advertisements, brochures, Web sites), and environments in which the brand is marketed or sold (e.g., stores, events)". Based on a multi- stage study and repeated reliability and validity checks, they developed a multidimensional brand experience scale which appears to be statistically quite robust, finally consisting of 12 items pertaining to four dimensions of brand experience-"sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioural". "Sensory dimension, refers to the visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory stimulations provided by a brand; Affective dimension, includes feelings generated by the brand and its emotional bond with the consumer; Intellectual dimension, refers to the ability of the brand to engage consumers' convergent and divergent thinking; and Behavioural dimension, includes bodily experiences,

lifestyles, and interactions with the brand" (Andreini, Pedeliento, Zarantonello and Solerio, 2018).

BRAND LOYALTY

Brand loyalty is one of the most-cited concepts in marketing literature since the idea was first identified (Knox and Walker, 2001; Lau and Lee, 1999) in the seminal work of Copeland (1923) around 90 years ago as brand insistence. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) reviewed over 200 studies and provided a classification of the various approaches to measuring brand loyalty. They also explored the psychological meaning of loyalty in an effort to distinguish it from behavioural (i.e., repeat purchase) definitions. They provided one of the earliest conceptual definitions of brand loyalty and defined brand loyalty as: "The (a) biased, (b) behavioural response, (c) expressed over time,(d) by some decision-making unit, (e) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and (f) is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes". It has been observed in the literature (Mellens, Dekimpe and Steenkamp, 1996) that this definition covers the most important aspects of brand loyalty and thus enjoys widespread support in the marketing literature. It is believed that customer loyalty towards a brand is the key to the longevity of a brand and can be linked to company growth (Rundle-Thiele, 2005).

SATISFACTION

Oliver (1981) proposed satisfaction as, "an evaluation of the surprise inherent in a product acquisition and/or consumption experience". The domain of this definition was broadened by including the disposition activity in the definition by Westbrook and Oliver (1981). According to them, "Consumer satisfaction is an evaluative response concerning the perceived outcomes of experiences in the consumer domain, comprising acquisition, consumption, and disposition activity. These outcomes are often assumed to be evaluated according to the extent to which they fulfil consumers' expectations". Further, Oliver (1996) defined satisfaction as an emotional post-consumption response that may occur as the result of comparing expected and actual performance (disconfirmation), or it can be an outcome that occurs without comparing expectations. A rigorous empirical study by Jones and Suh (2000) has demonstrated

that overall satisfaction is a better predictor of repurchase intentions when compared to transaction-specific satisfaction.

BRAND TRUST

Lau and Lee (1999) defined trust in a brand as, "A consumer's willingness to rely on the brand in the face of risk because of expectations that the brand will cause positive outcomes". Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yagüe-Guillén (2003) defined brand trust as, "a feeling of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, that it is based on the perceptions that the brand, as a personified entity, is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer".

RELATIONSHIPS AMONGST THE VARIABLES

After reviewing literature about the main and mediating variables of the study, we tried to explore the nature of relationships amongst these variables to provide us direction for the conceptual framework of this study.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND LOYALTY

A positive relationship between experience and brand loyalty has been proposed in a number of studies though with a lack of empirical support in a majority of these studies. Ha and Perks (2005) stated, "greater brand experience is not only associated with familiarity, but also impacts crucially on understanding, enjoying, enhancing and fostering the brand. They further stated that consumers' satisfaction and loyalty develops as a result of the consumers' positive experience with the brand which will positively affect brand commitment and re-purchase intentions and improves brand reputation". This was reinforced by Mouawad, Rafiq and Zarantonello (2019), "the experiential route is a relatively more important driver of brand loyalty than the functional route". Ponsonby-Mccabe and Boyle (2006) stated, "For building brand loyalty, consumers' experiences are all important".

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION

There has been recognition of a relationship between experience and satisfaction since the 1960s in the marketing literature. As Babin and Griffin (1998) observed , based on the works of Locke (1969),Westbrook (1980) and Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins (1983) that satisfaction can be described as an emotion resulting from appraisals (including disconfirmation, perceived performance, etc.) of a set of experiences. Oliver (1997) was among the first ones to provide a direction to this relationship by proposing, "Satisfaction is not the result of an occasional transaction, but multiple consumer experiences over time".

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND TRUST

Lau and Lee (1999) were among the pioneers who initiated empirical research on consumers trust in a brand. They observed, "As a consumer gains more experience with a brand, the consumer understands the brand better and grows to trust it more". Also, they highlighted the fact that this experience is not restricted to positive experiences, because any experience improves the consumer's ability to predict the brand's performance. Further, Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001), who proposed the brand trust scale, observed, "The process by which an individual attributes a trust image to the brand is based on his/her experience with that brand".

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SATISFACTION AND BRAND TRUST

The two seminal works on the concept of trust –Ganesan (1994) and Selnes (1998) proposed that the overall satisfaction with a brand generates trust. The same thought was put forward by Michell, Reast and Lynch (1998) by arguing that before a consumer can trust a brand there must be an element of satisfaction with the brand. Similarly, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) observed that past research has suggested that satisfaction is an antecedent of trust. All these studies had no empirical support to substantiate their propositions. However, theoretically they provided a direction to this relationship. This gap was filled in by Delgado- Ballester and Munuera Aleman (2001) who empirically validated this relationship (in the context of a brand) and found a

positive and significant effect of overall satisfaction upon brand trust. Thus, they confirmed that overall satisfaction is an antecedent of brand trust.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SATISFACTION AND BRAND LOYALTY

Simon (1993) asserted, "The more experience customers have with being satisfied with the preferred brand, the more accessible the satisfaction-brand attitude link". Further, Bloemer and Kasper (1995) observed, "Loyalty is widely considered as one of the ways with which the consumer expresses his/her satisfaction with the performance of the product (brand) or service received". This observation was reworded by Amine (1998) to indicate a causal relationship between the two. It was reported in this study that previous research shows satisfaction appears to be an important antecedent of brand loyalty. Additionally, several researchers (Biong, 1993; Cronin, Brady and Hult, 2000; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001; Jones and Suh, 2000; Mooradian and Oliver, 1997; Oliver and Linder, 1981; Patterson and Johnson, 1997) have empirically concluded that satisfaction affects loyalty and it can be a strong predictor of attitudinal loyalty measured through repurchases intentions. Also, a few studies in the service sector have also empirically validated the link between satisfaction and behavioural intentions such as customer retention and word of mouth (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Bansal and Taylor, 1999; Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND TRUST AND BRAND LOYALTY

Researchers have proposed that trust is fundamental in developing brand loyalty and their discussion revolves around the importance of trust in developing positive and favourable attitudes which might result in a commitment to a certain brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol, 2002). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found empirically, "Trusted brands are purchased more often and evoke a high degree of attitudinal loyalty resulting in consumer commitment to the brand allowing a higher relative price for the brand". Similarly, in an empirical study undertaken by Delgado-Ballester *et al*. (2003) the results obtained suggest, "The key role of brand trust as a variable that generates customers' commitment, which in turn influences the customers' price tolerance towards the brand".

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on our review of literature, we propose the following conceptual framework for this study (Figure 1), incorporating the variables of brand experience, brand loyalty, satisfaction and brand trust based on their indicative theoretical relational paths in the literature.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework
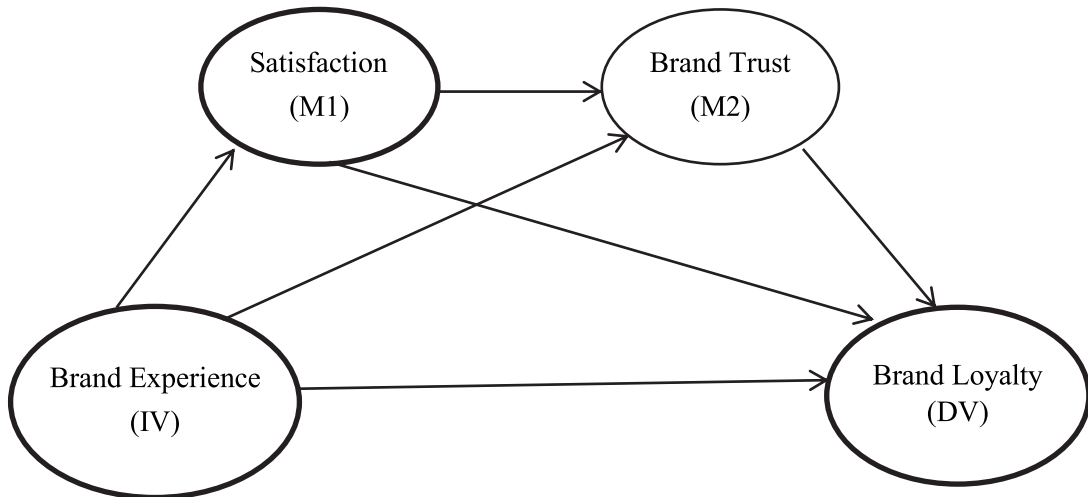
IV = Independent Variable

DV = Dependent Variable

M = Mediator

OPERATIONALISATION OF THE VARIABLES

With these conceptualisations of our variables, the operationalisation of these variables was done as described below. While there is lack of consensus in the parent literature about the scale items for measuring the proposed variables, this study has tried to integrate various available measures. The literature clearly suggests that measuring each variable using multiple indicators is preferable as it assists in capturing the full theoretical meaning underlying the variables and reduces measurement error (McMullan, 2005). The established scales were modified to suit the requirements of the study.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

The operationalisation of brand experience involved items measuring the consumer responses to brand-related stimuli. As stated in the literature (Iglesias *et al.*, 2011; Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard, 2013; Skard, Nysveen and Pedersen, 2011; Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010), the four-dimensional brand experience scale developed by Brakus *et al.* (2009) is the only theoretically derived and empirically tested brand experience scale within the marketing literature. Thus, this scale has been primarily used to measure brand experience with some additional items adapted from the studies of Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Skard *et al.*, 2011 and Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005. It is worth mentioning here that the scale proposed by Brakus *et al.* (2009) had to be modified to a large extent to make it suitable for use in the Indian context.

BRAND LOYALTY

As the focus of the study was to measure attitudinal brand loyalty, we measured it through:

- Attitude towards intention to repurchase
- Willingness to recommend the brand to others Brand commitment
- Willingness to pay a price premium for the brand

Bennett and Rundle- Thiele (2002) have reported that these have all appeared in prior research to measure attitudinal loyalty and have been used to predict behaviour. The measures were adapted from the studies of Aaker, 1996; Beatty, Kahle and Homer, 1988; Bennett and Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Mittal and Lee, 1989; Mellens *et al.*, 1996; and Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996.

SATISFACTION

The operationalisation of satisfaction involved measuring the respondents' outcome perceptions based on a brand's performance in comparison to overt and latent

expectations from it. The variable was considered an overall and cumulative measurement of the customers' perceptions regarding the brand's performance. Oliver's (1980) widely used satisfaction scale which consists of a set of six Likert-format items dealing with overall satisfaction was adapted for this research. Although there has been a lot of discussion in the literature about the various scales (verbal, graphic rating scales, Likert summated scale, semantic differential scale) which could be used for measuring satisfaction, Westbrook and Oliver (1981) reported, on the basis of an empirical study, "examination of the standard deviation of various measures reveals that the LIKERT Scale achieves the greatest dispersion of individual scores". Also, certain additional measurement items were adapted from the studies of Cissé-Depardon and N'Goala, 2009; Lau and Lee, 1999; Patterson and Johnson, 1997; Soderlund, 1998; and Taylor and Hunter, 2003.

BRAND TRUST

The operationalisation of trust in the brand involved asking the respondent if the brand can be counted on to do what it is supposed to do and if he or she is willing to rely on it. Further, we operationalised brand trust in accordance with Singh and Sirdeshmukh's (2000) suggestion that to obtain a fine-grained understanding of relational processes, a multidimensional conceptualization of brand trust should be used in addition to overall or global trust. Thus, we operationalised brand trust by employing the measures representing the three dimensions of brand trust -competence, benevolence and integrity in addition to some items measuring overall trust. The items were adapted from the studies of Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Cissé-Depardon and N'Goala 2009; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001; Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003, Li Fuan, Zhou, Kashyap and Yang, 2007 and Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, subsequent to an extensive review of literature on four variables- brand experience, brand loyalty, satisfaction and brand trust and their indicative relationships, we observed that there is a dearth of empirical studies establishing these conceptual relationships. We proposed a comprehensive conceptual framework based on this review and operationalized all the variables for measurement (select statements

of each variable given in Appendix) and draw conclusions to establish empirical validity.

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APPENDIX

S.No.	Item	Rating				
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1.1.1	This brand makes a strong impression on my senses.					
1.2.3	I am emotionally attached to this brand.					
1.3.1	I often engage in actions and behaviours when I use this brand's services.					
1.4.3	This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.					
2.1	I am satisfied with my decision to use this brand.					
2.9	The overall quality of this brand is excellent.					
3.6	This brand would do its best to help me if I had a problem.					
3.13	I have great confidence in this brand.					
4.11	I have a strong sense of loyalty to this brand.					