TOWARDS A LINK FOR BRANDING OUTCOMES AND BRAND CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP

Esther W. Waruiru Kago
Ph.D. Student in Marketing, Kenyatta University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This article uses theoretical models in earlier researches on Brand consumer relationships. Brand Relationship theory has created interest in the past, leading to development of a body or research and theory in support of the concepts. Most of the research has concentrated on the brand personality and little has been done on the other variables This paper looks at branding perspectives and emerging trends in branding. It identifies three key constructs as Brand outcomes; Brand Identity, Brand Personality and Brand commitment and recommends further research on their causal relationship and Brand consumer Relationship.

Key Words: *branding outcomes, brand consumer relationship*

Introduction

Branding gained a centre stage in Marketing activities from early 1990's. Initially a brand served as a mere marker that identified the producer or origin of a product. Today a "brand" has become the sign that is consumed or even better described as the product that is consumed. Brands have been identified as being central to the core activities of marketing in an organization, in which brand theorists have taken interest in learning how they are managed. Brand building is an activity that differentiates a particular brand through building a relationship between brands and buyers or consumers. One of the discoveries of consumer research in the twenty first century is that consumers increasingly organize communities based on their consumption and attachment to particular brands, so-called brand communities. A brand community is a broad concept that may vary from clubs, organizations to online virtual communities. Successful connections with a brand and ability of a consumer to identify with the brand leads to a committed consumer. Such a consumer becomes an advocate of the brand, forgives mistakes, promotes the brand to others, pays price premium and makes sacrifices. This paper looks at the relationships consumer form with brands and identify how the key constructs of brand identity and brand personality enhance brand consumer relationship and how they are mediated by commitment.

Perspectives in Branding

Branding has been studied by different scholars who have provided different perspectives to what it represents; Fournier, (1998) looked at brand loyalty in terms of informing theory on consumer brand relationship. She studied brands as a relationship partner where consumers assign personality qualities to animate brand objects such as assuming human character or consumers assuming perspective of brands to articulate their own relationships (Aaker, 1997; Blackston, 1993). Brand acts as an enlivened partner in the relationship and contributes to initiation, maintenance and destruction of consumer brand relationship bonds into a willingness by customers to pay premium prices.

Brand Loyalty has been defined as a deeply held commitment to repurchase specific products, service or brand and is an outcome of brand satisfaction. This intention captures different motivational factors that influence human behaviour, (Eagyadchacken, 1991). Moore et al(2012 defines it as a "deeply held commitment to re-buy or to re patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Oliver 1999 p. 34). This definition suggests that loyalty contains both an attitudinal component and a behavioural component (Hennig-Thurau et. al, 2001), converging with Eagyadchacken, 1991) definition. livers(1999) model on the other hand, assumes that product loyalty is an outcome of active planning which starts with the episodes of positive cognition and affect towards a product or brand(Olsen,2011).

However, this view has been refuted by other researchers who argue that this assumption may not be applicable to continued behaviours characterized frequent purchases. Limayan et al., (2007), argues that frequently performed behaviours in stable contexts become habitual and automatic over time. Webb and Sharon, (2006), argue that when behaviour is performed in stable contexts, it becomes habitual and hence automatic over time. Specific actions to foster such habit formation include cumulative satisfaction and repeat purchase in stable contexts.

Brand equity is a multidimensional construct which consists of brand loyalty; customer based brand awareness, and perceived brand quality and brand associations. Various researchers have assigned multiple meanings to brand equity but they seem to agree that brand associations could be malled in a customer's mind as emotional expressions. Chris (2003) notes that there has also been extensive agreement as to what is meant by brand and brand equity.

Accountants and marketers view of what brand equity is tends to differ with the concept being defined both in terms of the relationship between customer and brand(Consumer -oriented definitions) or as something that accrues to the brand owner(company-oriented definitions).However, Feldwick, (1996) as quoted in Lisa(2000), classify meanings of brand equity into; brand value, a meaning that is generally adopted by financial accountants; brand

strength or loyalty and finally brand image or description. Brand loyalty and brand value are considered quantifiable while brand image is not. Brand Equity was also defined by Farquhar (1989) as added value endowed by the brand to a product. Brand equity is an antecedent of brand loyalty and is the most influential factor of both behavioural and attitudinal brand equity, (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003 ; Taylor et al 2004).

Branding has been found to be one of the most important ways to create meaning to consumer society (Terechshenko et al, 2011). The ability of a strong brand to simplify consumer decision making, reduce risk and set expectations has been cited as invaluable. This in turn has made creation of strong brands as a management imperative that can't be avoided (Keller et al, 2008).

It can be described as consumer's fulfilment response and the degree to which the level of fulfilment is pleasurable (Oliver, 1999; Olsen et al, 2011). According to Moore et at, (2012), satisfaction is defined as the extent to which a customer experiences a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfilment, Oliver 1997; Verhoef, Franses& Hoekstra, 2002 quoted in Moore et al, (2012). Satisfaction is typically based on an evaluation of whether customers' expectations have been met (Caruana 2002) as well as the magnitude of the confirmation or disconfirmation of their expectations (Storbacka, Strandvik&Gronroos 1994).

Satisfaction is key to building and retaining loyal base of long term-consumers (Limayan et al, 2007). For satisfaction to affect loyalty behaviour consumers must experience frequentor cumulative satisfaction episodes (Oliver, 1999). Johnson et al, (1999) notes that repeated satisfaction with a product service or brand becomes aggregated over time to form consumer cumulative global satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction has been strongly linked to the development of commitment (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Johnson, Gustaf'sson, Andreassen, Lervik & Cha, 2001; Wetzels, de Ruyter& Birgelen 1998). Repeated positive reinforcement of satisfying experiences leads to the formation of emotional bonds which constitute a form of affective commitment (Johnson et al., 2001).

Branding in this paper has been studied from the dimension of its evolving nature and the relationships and interactions that develop over time. We therefore address important outcomes in the branding concept such as brand personality, brand commitment, and brand identity that are deemed to contribute to emerging consumer-brand relationships and in turn improved brand loyalty and equity.

Brand Outcomes

Brand personality

Brand personality construct enjoys a certain consensus as an explanatory element to symbolic consumption and the affective bonds consumers establish with the brands (Keller, 1993, Fournier, 1995). Literature offers different perspectives and tools that different authors have used to represent the construct. However, all of them are based on the premise that consumers ascribe to personality characteristics of brands.

Brand personality refers to the way a brand speaks and behaves and involves assigning human personality traits/characteristics to a brand so as to achieve differentiation. These characteristics signify brand behaviour through both individuals representing the brand (i.e. it's employees) as well as through advertising, packaging, etc. When brand image or identity is expressed in terms of human traits, it is called brand personality, (Ambler, 1999;Fournier, 1998)

Aaker, (1996) defines brand personality as the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand. It is conceptualized as having five dimensions; sincererity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. According to Hayes (1999), brand personality can be viewed as a repository for certain types of Brand related information including consumer perceptions of users of brands.

Brand personality has been identified as a central new concept in marketing literature. Past researchers have focused on how personality of a brand enables a consumer express his or her own self (Belk 1988; Malhotra1981, Moore et al, 2008). Brand personality has also been viewed as a central driver of consumer preference and usage and as a common denominator that can be used to market brands across cultures. It also serves as a key way of differentiating a brand across product categories (Biel, 1993). Aaker (1996) argues that Brand personality contributes to Brand Equity by helping to foster a relationship between a consumer and a brand. This relationship may be based upon the "Brand as a person" or " type of person the "brand represents".

Brand commitment

Commitment is defined as the intention of a customer to continue their relationship with an exchange partner (Anderson & weitz 1989; Moore et al 2012). It is a customer's long-term orientation towards a business relationship that is based on the customer's assessment that the relationship will yield continuing benefits (hennig-thurau et. al, 2002).

Morgan and hunt (1994), who first presented the models framework with a double mediator i.e relationship investment and trust, identified three major antecedents of customer commitment;

relationship termination costs, relationship benefits and shared values. In particular, affectively committed customers desire to continue a relationship because they have a positive disposition towards the organisation and perceive social benefits from the exchange partnership. Affective commitment is rooted in a sense of shared values, belongingness, dedication and similarity (Fullerton, 2003). Fullerton (2005) found that customers who were affectively committed had a greater propensity to be advocates of an organisation.

Brand Identity

Literature offers various models of brand building in which both the definition of essence and identity emerge as a foundation stone to development of brands. (Aaker, 1996, defines "brand identity as the unique set of brand associations that one expects to create and maintain and is the core mission of the brand.

The system of brand identity on the other hand includes brand identity and the brand proposition of value (based on functional, emotional and self expression) that benefit consumer –brand relationship and credibility. Brand identity consists of the core and extended identity while at the same time comprising of 12 dimensions placed around four perspectives. They include; Brand as a product, brand as a person, and brand as a symbol. Aaker's (1996) model advocates brand strategists consider brand from four perspectives. These are brand as a *product*, an *organisation*, a *person* and a *symbol*. By considering each of these four perspectives, Aaker (1996) argues this approach helps brand strategists consider different brand elements which clarify, distinguish and add depth to a brand identity.

A distinctive brand identity enables the consumers to fulfill their self-definition needs for being unique (Ruvio, 2008; Tian et al., 2001). Various individuals have different levels of motivation and needs to distinguish their identity (Tian et al., 2001). Therefore, a brand with a more distinguishable identity can be assumed as an advantage to attract customers. The development and support of self-esteem is one of the identity-related motives for choosing a brand (Kressmann et al., 2006). Self-enhancement is made when consumers believe that focal brand is reputable and has a good prestige. A prestigious brand is a type of brand that will be used not only due to its quality, but also because of its status, especially for conspicuous consumption (Kirmani et al., 1999). Researches show that the corporate reputation affects the brand-customer relationship (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001) and it is assumed that external prestige affects the individuals being identified by an organization (Fuller et al., 2006).

Emerging trends in Branding

There is an emergence in brand building of some new trends that are anchored on the new meaning that "brand" has acquired over time due to the changing scope in which consumers and organizations interact.

Brand- consumer relationship

Relationship perspective in branding has become an important theoretical lens for understanding consumer –brand interactions. Researchers have previously utilized the metaphor of human relationships and more recently its use in understanding consumer-brand relationships (Blackston, 1992). The transfer of human relationship metaphor to a consumer brand setting has been identified to represent a one sided metaphor transfer and is an extension of its source category which is marriage (Einer and thorbjornsen (2008).

Researchers have mapped two domains in the process in order to link prototype elements such as partners, commitment, interdependence love and common dwelling. The two domains are (Marriage) which is linked to a new domain (Consumer-brand relationships). Monga, (2002) argues that the relationship metaphor is proposed to enhance the understanding of brand loyalty and facilitate in-depth knowledge about consumer needs. This in turn assists firms to develop better products and improve their marketing activities.

There is increasing attention to the notion of community as applied to branding situations and where this has occurred, researchers have looked at situations in which members of social brand communities socially interact for various reasons such as online networking sites like twitter, Bebo and Facebook(Serena and Michael,2012).In addition, there is exploration and investigation of psychological brand communities which focus on how customers identify with both the brand and other users(Carlson et al, 2008)

Relationship marketing approach in building consumer –brand relationships cannot be wished away. It can be defined as attracting, maintaining and in multiservice organizations- enhancing customer relations (Berryl, 1983). Morgan and Hunt, (1994) define Relationship Marketing as "all activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges". Relationship marketing approach has evolved to customer experience management in the post modern times.

Marketing practitioners are aggressively supporting for consumer-brand relationships. A recent paper in the strategy journal published by the consulting firm Booz-Allen and Hamilton argues that some consumers, termed "brand zealots," experience a relationship that goes well beyond the fulfilment of a functional need (Rozanski, Baum, and Wolfsen, 1999; Aggarwal, 2004). These

brand zealots animate the brand giving it quasi-human qualities and relate to it in a way similar to how they relate to human beings.

It has become evident that consumers are displaying characteristics of being crazy about some brands. For example, consumers have been known to give names to their VW Beetle and have been observed talking to them and stroking them with affection.' The love affair that some consumers have with their favorite bug can be seen on the innumerable Web sites where consumers have shared their intimate experiences with the brand, Mac users, reputed to be very passionate about their brand, have Web pages known to feature an altered picture of Bill Gates that includes devil-style horns, entitled "Save Us from the Gates of Hell" (Muniz et al 2001; Aggarwal, 2004). Consumer-brand interactions, thus, extend beyond mere utilitarian benefits to what is perceived as the right thing to do in that relationship. Brands have been found to play a key role in people's lives by acting as an important vehicle to communicate and share with others through self presentation (Aaker, 1999: Swaminathan et al, 2007) and participation in brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

A deeper understanding of the consumer-brand relationships would thus help us make specific predictions about consumer behaviour that would not be possible using existing theories of brand personality, brand loyalty or brand imagery (Aggarwal, 2004). Adopting the brand relationship model (BRQ) and the relationship investment model(RI) will probably provide a better understanding of the relationships.

Brand communities

The notion of a community has been a topic of debate due to numerous definitions offered, (Milan T. and Vera A, 2011) quoting (Kozinets, 2002). According to Alexandra et al, (2002), a community is made up of member's entities and the relationships among them. They tend to be identified on the basis of commonality or identification among their members, whether a neighbourhood, occupation, leisure pursuit or devotion to a brand. Within such communities, members share essential resources such that they may be cognitive emotional or even material in nature. Key to this sharing is creation and negotiation of meaning through symbolism in the market place (Alexander at al, 2002).

The composition of modern day communities and tribes in Marketing should not be confused with the traditional composition that we know about. A community has been defined in the traditional form as "a social interaction based on geographical area, self sufficiency, common life and possession of common ends, norms and means"(Bell and Newby, 1974). The traditional form of describing a community domineered until 20th century and was replaced by emergence of new community forms (Milan and Vera, 2011).

Different scholars have offered similar and converging descriptions of what brand communities are; A brand community is described as a "specialized non geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. They are based on a shared interest in the brand specifically the three characteristics of consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility (Mun~iz and O`Guinn, 2001; Reto Felix 2012). Brand communities are composed of people who possess a social identification with others and who share of interest in a particular brand (Alexander et al, 2002; Algesheimer et al, 2005; Thompson et al 2008).

A brand community has been defined by Robin (2011), as a fabric of social relationships in which admirers of a brand experience, shared rituals, traditions and a sense of responsibility towards other members. Together, these create a profound and enduring interpersonal connection amongst members. It also clearly distinguishes non- users of the focal brand (Muniz and O Guinn, 2001: Schau et al, 2009).

Algesheimers (2004) definition is considered more specific for contemporary situation. However, It was translated and exploited by Philip wiegandt whose definition states that people in the community interact on a subject to a well understood focus such as common goal, shared identity, common possession or common interest. He defines brand community as " a social network of continuously interacting individuals who influence each other within a specific time frame and develop sense of belonging (Wiegandt, 2009).

Over the past decade, a post-modern outlook paved the way for so-called communal approaches to consumption (Cova, 1997). This is a period that has encouraged a move from individualism witnessed during modernity period to a search for more social bonds. One paradigmatic example involved groups of Harley Davidson devotees, which were detailed in a pioneering article by Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Messiofeli (1993) noted that post modern communities are inherently unstable small scale, effectual and not fixed by any established parameters of modern society. They are however, brought together through shared emotions, styles of life, new moral beliefs, senses of injustice and consumption practices.

Past modern societies have been conceived as an ensemble of social groups(social-professional categories, classes) but post modern society is a network of societal micro-groups in which individuals share strong emotional links, a common sub-culture, and a vision of life. Examples in our times include dancers, style conscious youths like Rasta or skin heads, ethnic Diasporas and finally occupational communities like computer engineers who form their own complexities of meanings and symbols (Cova, 1997).

Various dimensions on what shapes brand communities have been advanced by various scholars. Alexander et al, (2002) study takes the perspective that brand community is customer -centric and that existence of meaningfulness of the community in here in customer experience rather

than in the brand around which that experience revolves. He suggests an extension of the traditional model of a customer based relationship and the Muniz et al (2001) brand community triad.

Figure 1: Traditional model of customer - brand relationship

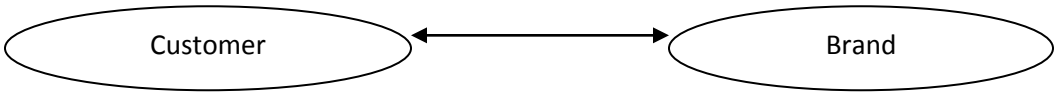


Figure 2: Muniz and O'guinn (2001) brand community

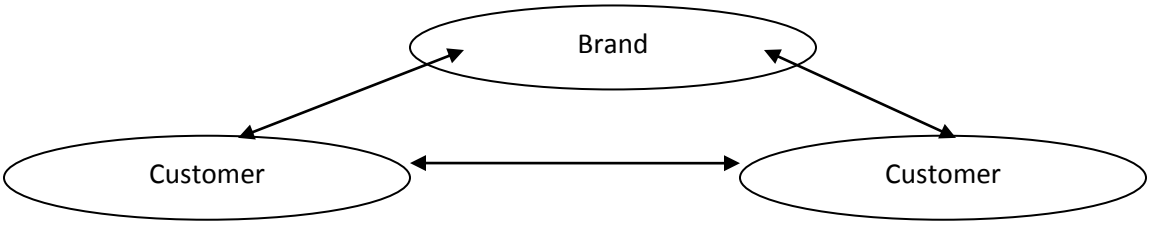
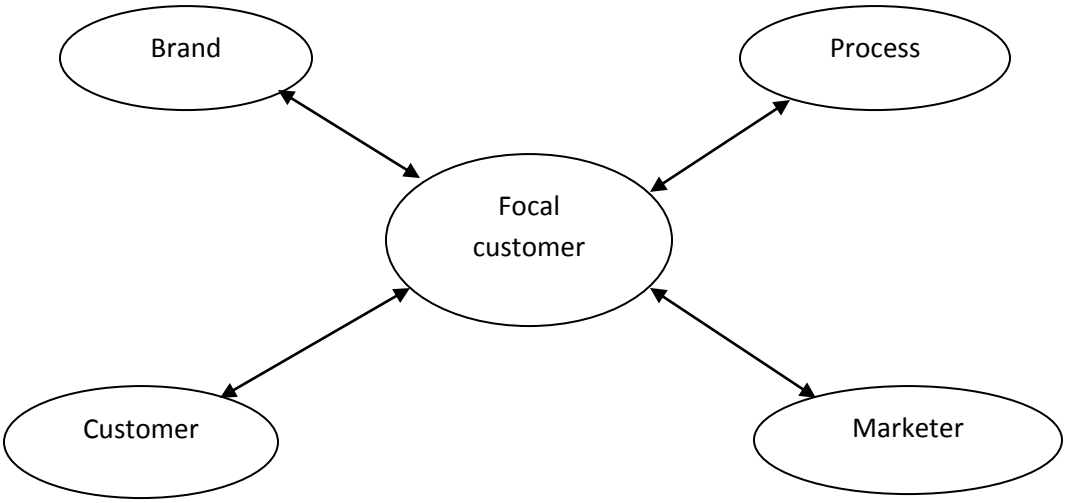


Figure 3 : Customer centric model of brand community



Source: Mc Alexander (2002)

Research on consumption and brand communities identifies several dimensions in which they differ including geographical concentration, social context and temporality, (Alexander 2002). He posits that though such communities could be non geographically bound(Muniz 2011) and

geographically concentrated(Host 1995) or scattered(Boorstin1974), they may exist in the entirely non geographical space of internet(Granite et al,1996;Kozinets 1997; Tambyah, 1996).

In terms of the social context, Alexander, (2002) notes that communication may be face to face, mediated by electronic devices or a function of corporate mass media, (Borstin,1974). As a result of this, community members have a lot of information on one another in terms of age, sex, attractiveness and personal history or nothing at all but still handle and openly demonstrate topic knowledge, (Granitz et al, 1996).

In relation to temporality of such communities, Mc Alexander et al, (2002) notes that some communities are either stable or enduring. This temporal stability can be exploited by marketers as an asset in as much as longevity equals to a long term stable market. On the other hand, Situational communities have been identified to share meaningful consumption experiences (Arnould et al, 1993; Sherry et al 1993; MC Alexander et al, 2002).

Thompson et al (2008) studied brand adoption in respect to new product adoption and found that companies that succeed in having loyal customers who are members and participants of such communities enjoy immense advantages over their rivals. An increase in purchases of new products leads to faster sales of adoption among existing customers as it is cheaper to close a sale of an existing customer than attracting new ones. Oppositional loyalty created by such membership slow rate of adoption of competitors hence protecting a company's market share. It also acts as a barrier to entry due to existence of a large number of ready to adopt competing brands.

Companies have dedicated resources to encourage customers to join and participate in brand communities in the hope of influencing adoption behaviour and fostering greater loyalty on customers and improving their bottom line (Thompson et al, 2008). According to (Muniz et al, 2001; Thompson et al , 2001) investments are being made because of the belief that brand communities engenders sense of loyalty and such membership creates a great sense of "oppositional loyalty'' which leads members to adopting an adversarial view of competing brands.

"Tribes" refer to the re-emergence of quasi-archaic values, a local scene of identification, religiosity syncretism and group narcism offering a community dimension. These tribes are not communities defined in spartial terms but sometimes use resources in terms of technology to form virtual tribes in which face to face encounter or co-physical presence is not compulsory(Cova,1997). Cova and Cova (2002) described tribe in consumption as an aspect of people gathering together in tribes that form social, proximate communities. Such groupings are more affective and influential on people's behaviour than either marketing institutions or other formal cultural authorities. There are two additional consumption communities to brand communities that have been identified in the literature of branding. They include subcultures of

consumption and Consumer tribes (Robinson, 2011). However, they are not given as much prominence as they tend to have weaker links to a singular brand compared to the brand communities.

Subcultures of consumption can be described as communities that subvert dominant institutions such as family, schooling and market relations, members of subcultures develop marginal forms of value and status around alternative social ties (Goulding, Schanker and Elliot, 2002). Subcultures of consumption abound with tropes of barbarity, rugged self reliance outlaw status, liberation from authority relationships and schedules and license to behave in manners barred in a more civil society (Canniford and Shanker, 2007). Consumer tribes on the other hand differ from subcultures of consumption in that their connections are much narrower, with similar beliefs, values or customs setting them apart from the dominant societal culture (Schiffman, Bednal, O'cass, Paladino ward and kanull, 2008). BenardCova(2007), notes that Consumer tribes are presented as harbingers of an age that updates the marketing challenge of knowing –your – customer to one where consumer tribes know the corporation.

It is notable that the scape in which customers interacted with the organization are drastically going through a transformation. According to contemporary social theory, consumerism is playing a key role in the way social world is created and changing consumption patterns, (Vaan, Raalji, 1993).

Tribal Marketing

Tribal marketing is a new approach that marketers are using to encourage formation of brand communities and consumer tribes. This approach is grounded on a concept where individuals and other groups interact with one another to bring forth a positive relationship with common shared interests among communities and other tribes (Bucham, 2000)

This type of marketing is mainly constructed upon the various ways in which individuals and other groups interact with one another to create a positive relationship which have shared interests among the communities and other tribes (Buchanan, 2000). To be able to penetrate the market well any business across the globe should consider the themes, theories and concepts of contextual marketing. Moreover all future businesses should also lay more emphasis on networking and other ways of managing businesses and enterprises.

Economic development globally cannot be done considering the impacts of contextual marketing, therefore tribal marketing renders economic development possible. Consequently, in approaches of marketing, social issues should not be neglected, neither should they be underestimated (Chapman, 2004). This is because consumption of products is self defining and people take what they want regardless of its value. It is important to note that, the value of use and the link of products to consumers determine how they are consumed.

Tribal marketing has virtually rejected concepts such as consumer segments, market niches and lifestyles (Susana and Mariana, 2012). It employs instead, a language of a unit of reference that is more micro-social cohort of individuals that share similar experiences and bond together, (Cova, 2012). Each individual can belong to more than one tribe and have different roles and tasks in all the tribes. According to Susana and Mariana(2012), the credo of tribal marketing is that post modern persons are not only looking for products and services which enable them to be free but a comprehensive package comprising of products, services, employees and physical surrounding which can link them to a community or tribe. Tribal marketing emanates from societal marketing and researchers have acknowledged the phenomenon of community in post modernity not only influences consumption but marketing activities in general.

Co-creation and value

Co-creation refers to a process in which a consumer is involved in creation of services, goods, experiences and they participate in design of many of them, updating and reconfiguring such products. Co-creation of value, customer competence, Co-optation, value co-production are different labels that have been used to address the same issue of consumer involvement in the making of goods and services. Consumers today are not just mere receivers of company offerings but are active participants in the co-creation if not hijackers of company strategies.

Moore et al (2012) in their study found that a distinctive aspect of a services orientation is that consumers are inherently involved in the co-production of the service itself. In the context of higher education, students are for example, inherently and dynamically involved in the creation of the educational experience (Hill, 1995). They found that the learning process is an inseparable two way communication and the consumer in this case student and the producer (institution) are involved in an interaction.

This evolution in strategic orientation has seen the need to adopt a highly customer-oriented strategy, with relationship marketing emerging as a widely accepted approach within the industry (Helgesen, 2008; Ng &Forbes 2009). Organizations now seek to develop educational relationships with students, rather than simple transactional deals between the exchange partners (Gibbs 2001).

Brand hijack

Consumer empowerment has been defined (Wathieu et al., 2002) as letting consumers take control of variables that are conventionally pre-determined by marketers; one of these variables is brand meaning. O'Guinn and Muniz, (2005), in his study identified that one key element in today's brand management is that companies can lose part of their control over a brand, replaced by a consumer tribe trying to re-appropriate it. For Wipperfu¨rth (2005), a "brand hijack" occurs when a consumer takes a brand away from its marketing professionals to enhance its evolution.

He distinguishes two ways in which tribes usurp control over a brand; Serendipitous hijack is the act of consumers seizing control of a brand's ideology, use and persona. It is most often practiced by brand fanatics within subcultures, and is largely unanticipated by (and independent of) the brand's marketing department. Co-created hijack, which is the act of inviting subcultures to co-create a brand's ideology, use and persona, and pave the road for adoption by the mainstream.

Online consumers would appear to be more active, participative, resistant, militant, playful, social and communitarian than ever before (Kozinets, 1999). They want to become influential participants in the construction of experiences (Firat and Shultz, 1997). As a consequence, companies no longer drive communication with these empowered customers; instead, they just provide a forum for exchanging shared interests (McWilliam, 2000). They are the customers who wield the power (Newell, 2003).

The shared passion of certain consumers for a cult brand translates, via various collective learning systems, into expertise and competencies, thereby imbuing online tribes with increasing amounts of production and marketing legitimacy (O'Guinn and Muniz, 2005). The presence of tribes of impassioned, united and expert fans has led to a re-balancing of power in company-consumer relations. Examples abound in modern marketing literature include; Ducati, Harley-Davidson, Mercedes, Mini, Saab, Star Trek, StarWars, etc. Passionate and geeky Star Wars enthusiasts are so loyal to the brand that they literally make and exchange their own Star Wars movies, using digital camcorders and laptop computers. Rather than try to fight these brand devotees, Lucasfilm, the official owner of Star Wars, acts as an enabler on their behalf by distributing online "reference", StarWars sounds and visual effects that devotees can insert into their DIY fan films.

Brand communities, like organizations, must navigate problematic market changes utilizing a myriad of tactics and resources in order to survive and thrive in the marketplace. Organizing and enacting a consumer campaign represents a site of destabilized market conditions in which consumers' communal actions address a breakdown between consumers and producers. The act of campaigning may transform consumer communities in systematic ways, and incorporate the strategic use of consumer-generated alliances in order to actualize campaign and community goals, (Schneider et al, 2012).

This paper looks at various dimensions of branding and recommends for an empirical investigation of how brand identity and brand personality affect the brand relationship either positively or negatively. It is expected that positive effects will give rise to brand communities/tribal brands and stronger brand loyalty and satisfaction. Several studies have recommended use of commitment as a mediating factor.

Conclusions

In a consumer society, brands become part of the non-verbal language of social communication to the extent that consumption is implicated and connected with identity and self (Maurice and Lisa, 2006; Elliot and Wattanaswan, 1998). There is also general consensus that consumers are the ultimate arbiters of brand meaning. This paper acknowledges the fact that brands possess meanings above and beyond those of functional nature. Brand meanings can therefore, derive from the very nature of communal interaction and tools such as communities used to construct personalised brand meanings. It's vital that managers pay attention to how consumers define their various connections with the brands (Maurice and Lisa, 2006)

Development of branding in the past was credited with introduction of an important concept of brand image that helped reveal the communication dimension of a brand. It has now been christened as a traditional approach that looked at brand building as a company driven process that drove short term results unlike the contemporary approach that additionally considers consumers position in the process. Authors such as Aaker, (1996), introduced a model for brand construction that presents an important and innovative element of brand-customer relationship that has eventually brought emerging concepts such as brand communities, tribal marketing approaches , co-creation of value and brand hijack among others.

Adoption of relationship marketing has led to emergence of Relational branding enabling researchers to pay more attention to the role of brands in relationships. There has been consensus by various authors on use of the "interpersonal relationship" metaphor in branding.
Researchers have been highly selective in applying interpersonal relationship theories to the study of consumer-object relationships. Theories of love (Shimp and Madden 1988) commitment (Dick 1988) and trust (Hess 1995) received bulk of their attention to the exclusion of other important relational constructs. Oliver (1999) investigated the casual relationship between loyalty satisfaction and trust and concluded that it is a necessary step in loyalty formation. Therefore all this sub- constructs can be treated as indicators of the relationship strength. Identity has not been given attention in earlier researches and this study proposes use of brand identity as one of the key constructs.

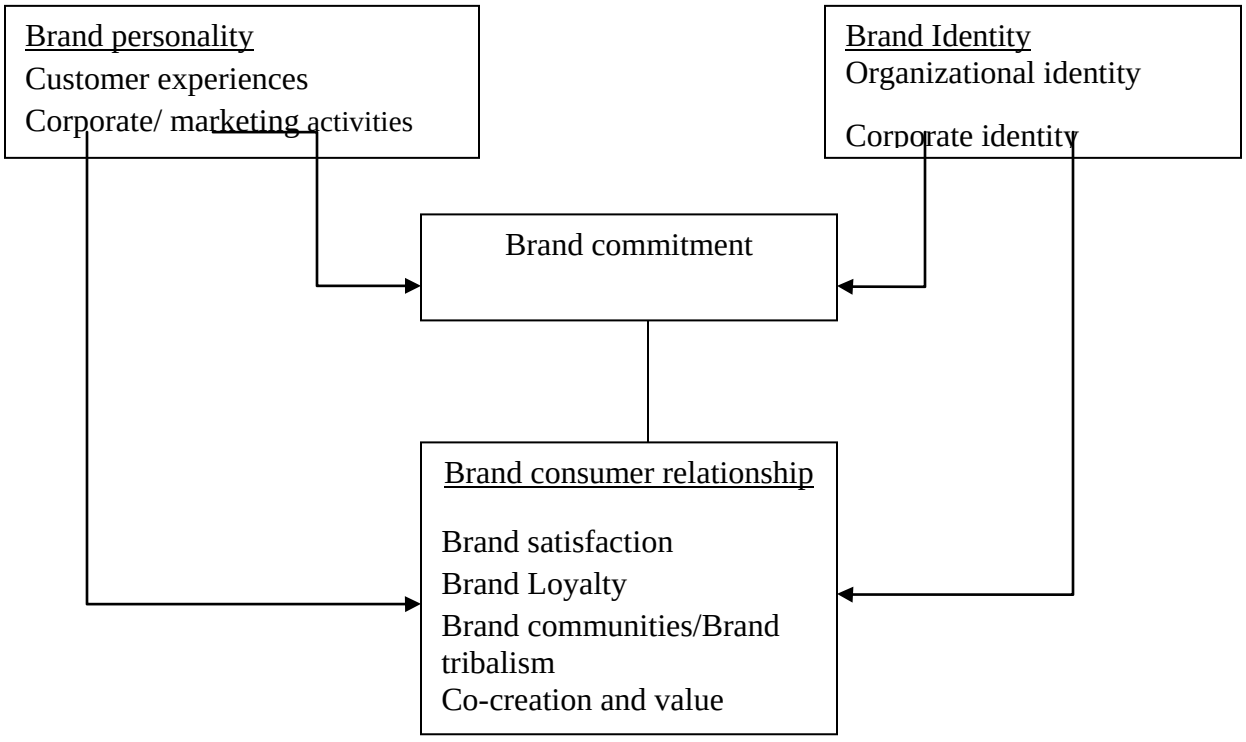
None of the theories has offered a comprehensive relationship oriented view to brand interactions by starting with the basic relationship principles and building on an integrative framework. Velaotsou (2007), also found out that brand relationship has not received the attention it deserves. A study by Shup-pei, (2009) notes that there are three paradigms; Brand relationship quality paradigm, relationship commitment paradigm and the brand love paradigm. A study by Svein and Win, (2013) on consumer loyalty modelling used loyalty intention or commitment as one of the mediating factors in formation of loyalty behaviour. Therefore there is a common pattern of treating commitment as an important mediating factor in studies investigating consumer behaviour. The study recommends use of commitment as a mediating

factor of satisfaction, investment and attractiveness of relationship alternatives. Deep knowledge of the phenomenon of the relationships and its causal relationship has not been addressed by earlier researchers.

This paper therefore explored theoretical and empirical literature on branding by considering branding perspectives and the emerging trends in brand consumer relationships such as brand communities, co-creation and value and brand hijack It therefore recommends for an empirical investigation to show the casual connections that exist between customers and their brands by measuring the two constructs .It also proposes use both qualitative and quantitative methods and a two stage study. The first stage would measure how brand personality and brand identity affect brand consumer relationship. The second stage would measure how the brand consumer relationship in turn affects brand commitment by considering important indicators such as brand communities and brand satisfaction.

Figure 4: A suggested conceptual model of the causal relationship between brand personality, brand identity and brand consumer relationship moderated by brand commitment.

The Suggested conceptual Model



Source: Author (2013)

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