The Role of Consumer Personality and Social Influence as Antecedents of Brand Love

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Abstract

This study extends prior research on brand love by investigating other potential antecedents such as consumer personality and social influence. This study seeks to extend earlier findings with respect to the consequences of brand love by including three outcome variables: brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement. An extensive review of literature was carried out to propose the conceptual model and series of propositions that are open to empirical verification. The finding of this study is a conceptual model that highlights the factors that can play important roles in developing brand love. It is argued that consumer personality and social influences can significantly develop brand love. It has also been proposed that brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement are the consequences of brand love. Limitations of this research are the propositions stemming from the model have to be tested empirically. This study is first of its kind to investigate the antecedents of brand love from two perspectives namely consumer personality and social influence simultaneously. The idea will significantly contribute to brand love literature.

1. Introduction

Brand love has been the object of limited attention but seems to attract a steadily growing interest among academics as well as practitioners [1]. The use of brand love as a marketing construct is relatively recent in explaining consumer behaviour [2]. As any other form of love, the term brand love is use in a very general way, to refer to the love of brands, products, and services, product categories, as well as specific products [3].

In the early stage, studies of brand love tend to focus on its conceptualisation and measurement. Even though brand love has emerged as an important consumer-brand relationship construct, we still know little about what the antecedents of brand love and what its behavioural consequences may be [4]. Only a few studies have investigated those factors that drive consumers' brand love.

Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen [1] research finding indicate that both brand identification and sense of community are antecedents of brand love. This result also shows that brand loyalty and active engagement are outcomes of brand love. The recent study by Rauschnabel and Ahuvia [5] explain that anthropomorphism can be a powerful antecedent to brand love. The findings also support the important role of the social aspect of consumer brand relationships in producing brand love.

The antecedents of brand love can come from consumer, brand or relationship attributes. This study extends prior research on brand love by investigating other potential antecedents such as consumer personality and social influence. This consumer characteristics such as personality also may contribute to brand love [4]. Rauschnabel, et al [3] also indicate that researchers should focus on the personality profiles of brand lovers. As suggested by Rauschnabel and Ahuvia [5], future studies should pay attention to the social aspects of brand love and investigate more precisely how, when and why these social motivations influence consumer behaviour.

In addition, this study seeks to extend earlier findings with respect to the consequences of brand love by including three outcome variables: brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement. Batra, et al [6] recommend that willingness to pay higher prices, as an outcome of brand love, need for better measures. In line with that, the measurement of active engagement, as an outcome of brand love, used by Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen [1] had limitations. This measurement does not include all possible manifestations of active engagement among suggested items.

This study will give a contribution to consumer brand relationship field of research since it's seldom to find the study in this area to examine the consumer personality and social influence as antecedents of brand love. In term of managerial contribution, this research will give knowledge to practitioners how to relate the personality of consumer and social influence will interact with brand love.

This paper is organized as follows. A literature review will discuss definition of concepts, underlying theories, empirical studies and theoretical framework. The following section presents conceptual framework consist of the research model, defining variables, and explanation of propositions. A discussion of the implications of the proposed framework for future academic research, as well as for managerial practice concludes the article.

2. Literature Review

There are four sections in the literature review. First, it's describing the brand love. Second, its explore consumer personality. Third, this part deals with social influence. The last part will discuss the consequences of brand love.

2.1 Brand Love

Shimp and Madden [7] introducing research on brand love. They adapted the interpersonal love theory from Sternberg to consumer behaviour contexts. As well as interpersonal love, brand love appeared composed of three dimensions: passion, intimacy, and commitment.

Furthermore, Fournier [8] study suggest that brand relationship quality model consist of six dimensions including attachment (love/passion and self-connection), behavioural ties (interdependence and commitment) and supportive cognitive beliefs (intimacy and brand partner quality). Additionally, the construction of brand relationships is what consumers do with brands to add meaning in their lives. It is not about what managers intend for them, or what images bring out by the brand.

The self-inclusion theory of love adapted by Ahuvia [9] to marketing field. The principal of this theory is that people need to become part of another to feel loved. Accordingly, the consumer will love the brand when a brand reaches both a high real and desired level of integration with the consumer's sense of self.

In addition, Agarwal [10] proposed the social relationship theory to investigated relationship between people and brand. In this theory, relationships carry the norms of behaviour that guide people's evaluations of their relationship partner. Using this framework, he argued that when consumer form interaction with brands that mirror their social relationships, the norms of social relationships are used as a guideline in their interactions with brands.

In order to explore the concept of brand love, a research conducted by Albert et al. [11] used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. They identify six first-order dimensions of brand love (i.e. idealization, intimacy, pleasure, dream, memories, and unicity) that constitute two second-order dimensions (passion and affection).

Batra et al [6] establish that consumers' love for a brand consists of seven dimensions:
i. perceived functional quality;
ii. self-related cognitions;
iii. positive affect;
iv. negative affect;
v. satisfaction;
vi. attitude strength; and
vii. loyalty

According to Loureiro, et al [12], there are three models that integrate the brand love concept: the holistic approach proposed by Fournier [8], the causal approach of Carroll and Ahuvia [13], and the systemic approach of Batra et al in 2008. As mentioned above, Fournier [8] suggests six strong relationships and is interested in the different relationships a consumer may have with a brand. Reversely, Carrol and Ahuvia [13] model the relationships between brand love and both its antecedents and consequences. They propose that brand love is influenced by a hedonic product and self-expressive brand and has a positive effect on brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

Albert and Merunka [4] believe that the brand love relationship is profound and long lasting. It means that the loved brand is considered irreplaceable. The consumer will be miserable when not consuming the brand for any extended period of time. Brand love also leads to biased, the consumer will only see the positive side of the brand.

The main focus to investigate the brand love is to elaborate the predictor and the effect of this construct. However, there is only few research that explore the antecedents of brand love and what its behavioural consequences may be [4].

2.2 Consumer Personality

Consumer, brand or relationship attributes can be the predictor of brand love. Albert and Merunka [4] proposed that consumer characteristics such as personality also may contribute to brand love. Similarly, Rauschnabel, et al [3] also indicate that researchers should focus on the personality profiles of brand lovers.

Lin [14] describes that consumers might use the brand and products in line with their own personality traits. Similarly, Sarkar, et al [15] shows that consumers associate personality traits with a brand which serves as a basis for relationship building. Therefore, an individual can build a brand love relationship, as well as the relationship with another individual. Roy, et al [16] claim that individual personality traits can play an important role in the development of brand love. As a construct, personality traits have been adopted in marketing research for a variety of studies such as emotions, customer satisfaction and ad-evoked feelings [17].

According to Maehle and Shneor [18], the theories of personality originate in the classic psychology literature and have since seen a proliferation of typologies specifically used for various managerial applications. McCrae and John [19] classified personality traits into five factors: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. These factors are generally referred to as the Big Five Model, which is extensively used nowadays. Roy, et al [20] explain that agreeableness is representing good nature, conscientiousness reflects

reliability, extraversion showing sociability, neuroticism is about emotional instability, and openness to experience is regarding curious nature.

Orth, et al [21] highlights that investigations of the five fundamental dimensions of human personality have been resurgence marketing research. The argument from the advocates of this school is many differences in consumer behaviour trace back to variations across five dimensions. Therefore, this conceptual paper will use the five-factor model of personality.

Prentice and King [22] explains that personality traits establish at certain levels and distinguish between psychological and surface traits. In addition, Mooradian and Swan [23] describe the high-level traits in the five-factor model shows the variance in the numerous traits and trait taxonomies that had been suggested earlier. They also reported that a growing body of evidence demonstrates that these five high-level traits are endogenous basic tendencies tied to genetically shaped, biologically based response systems, largely unaffected by environmental factors, and remarkably stable throughout adulthood.

2.3 Social Influence

Brand love future studies should pay attention to the social aspects and investigate more precisely how, when and why these social motivations influence consumer behaviour [5]. Accordingly, Yim, et al [24] believe that individuals tend to imitate consumption patterns, particularly to their social reference groups.

In contrary, Sarkar [25] argue that social group can play a role as a pressure group. Therefore, this social group is one of the external constraints that may influence customer repurchase intention. Other external constraints might be low disposable income, family pressure, etc. Therefore, it is possible that customers who love the brand, but is not making repeat purchase because of social group pressure.

In general, Fournier [8] claim that family/social network as sociocultural context systematically influence the strength of relationship drives. The importance of sociocultural context is mirrored in consumer research concerning the socially embedded character of consumption meanings and preferences.

Brand love can be seen in a social context. The basic motivation behind the object-focused love is having social relationships with other people. Therefore, brand love creates social relationships, as consumption objectifies sociability. Emotional feelings for brands are closely related to the sense of social belongingness [26].

Social influence as a construct has been used by Shamim and Ghazali [27]. They believe that social influence is a significant driver of attitude change. Dholakia, et al [28] reported that there are three different kinds of social influence such as compliance, identification, and internalization. Shamim and Ghazali [27] explain that compliance happens when an individual accepts influence from others because he wants to obtain a reward or punishment. On the other hand, internalization occurs when an individual accept influence because it is congruent with

his value systems. Dholakia, et al [28] claim that identification is a conception of one's self in terms of the group's defining features.

Bagozzi & Dholakia [29] has been studied the social influence factors in customers' participation in virtual communities and the findings indicated that identification and internalization are significant predictors of customer participation in virtual communities whereas compliance is an insignificant predictor. Similarly, Dholakia, et al (2004) found that social identity and group norms as mediators between value perceptions and participation behaviour in virtual communities.

Shamim and Ghazali [27] proposed social influence as a moderating factor in causal relationship of experiential value and customer value co-creation behaviour. They argued that compliance, internalization, and identification would be strong moderators in the relationships of experiential value and customer value co-creation behaviour.

2.4 The Consequences of Brand Love

The consequences of brand love have been examining by researchers. Albert and Merunka [4] found that brand loves positively related to brand commitment, WOM and willingness to pay a price premium. Another study by Bergkvist and Larsen [1] includes brand loyalty and active engagement as an outcome of brand love.

They defined active engagement as customer's willingness to invest time, energy, money, or other resources in the brand beyond those expended during purchase or consumption of the brand. WOM, visiting brand websites, and buying brand merchandise are the examples of active engagement. They prefer to use the broader construct of active engagement compare to WOM is due to its may vary in relevance for different types of products.

Batra, et al [6] explains that consequences of brand love are brand loyalty, positive WOM, resistance to negative information, and willingness to pay a price premium. Similarly, Loureiro, et al [12] reported that brand love is an antecedent of loyalty and word of mouth.

As mentioned earlier, willingness to pay higher prices has been studied by Batra, et al [6]. The active engagement used by Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen [1]. However, those constructs have limitations. The measurement should be more developed. The active engagement measurement does not include all possible manifestations among suggested items. Therefore, this study proposed to develop a better measurement for above constructs.

3. Conceptual Framework

It would be of worth to note at this point that there are many opportunities to explore the antecedents and consequences of brand love. The brand love as a relatively new construct can be approach from many directions. Therefore, this study is trying to answer the question such

as is there any positive relation between consumer personality and brand love? Is there any connection between social influences to brand love? How those interactions influence brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement?

As consequent, we develop conceptual model as below figure:
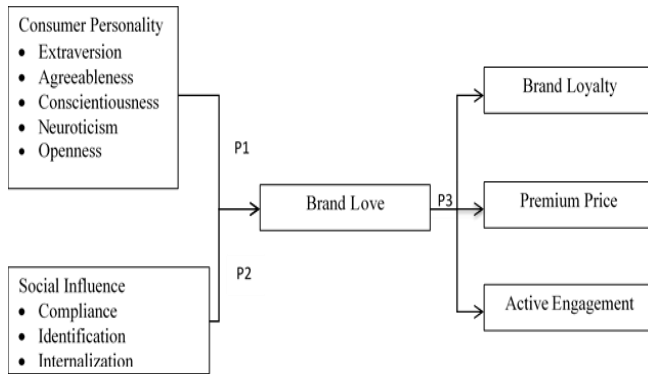
The framework and methodology used in our study are focusing on the relationships between consumer personality and social influence as a predictor of brand love. This study will try to further develop Rauschnabel, et al [3] previous research by integrating the effect of consumer personality to brand love with the interaction between social influence and brand love. We also study the consequences of brand love such as brand loyalty, premium price, and active engagement.

We believe that this study is important as it discuss the antecedents and consequences of brand love. Based on the findings identified in the literature review, five sets of research propositions were developed to guiding the direction of the analysis.

The first set is concerned with examining the nature of the relationship between the consumer personality and brand love. Rauschnabel, et al [3] investigated personality and brand in term of the compensatory effect, which means that consumer brand relationships are used to compensate for a deficit in consumers' interpersonal relationships. They also use the big five model namely Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness to measure consumer personality. In this study, the relationship is focusing on what kind of personality that will influence brand love. As above discussion, the literature appears to support the relationship between consumer personality and brand love, the following propositions are proposed:

P1a. Extraversion positively influences brand love
P1b. Neuroticism positively influences brand love
P1c. Openness to experience positively influences brand love
P1d. Agreeableness positively influences brand love
P1e. Conscientiousness positively influences brand love

The second set of the propositions is focused on investigating the relationship between social influence and brand love. Dholakia, et al [29] reported that there are three different kinds of social influence such as compliance, identification , and internalization. As indicated by the literature, social influence will enhance the brand love. As such, we postulate the following proposition:

P2a. Compliance positively influences brand love
P2b. Identification positively influences brand love
P2c. Internalization positively influences brand love

The aim of the third set of the hypotheses is to integrate the previous two sets of propositions by examining the consequences of brand love. As indicated by the literature, brand love generates brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement. This provides a basis for developing the following three propositions:

P3a. Brand love positively influence brand loyalty.
P3b. Brand love positively influence willingness to pay a premium price.
P3c. Brand love positively influence active engagement.

4. Control Variables

This study also controlled for certain variables that might affect the relationship. The control variables include respondent age, gender, the level of education, and level of income. These control variables have been used in previous studies related to branding research.

5. Implications of the study

5.1 Theoretical implications

The objective of this paper is to examine whether consumer personality and social influence have a positive relationship with brand love which will lead to brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement. These propositions can then be subjected to empirical study to determine the extent to which consumer personality and social influence do influence brand love. In addition, the proposed model also incorporated brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price and active engagement as consequences of brand love that will likely interact and influence to a conceptual framework. A review of current research reveals no publishes study that has been applied consumer personality and social influence as a predictor of brand love.

It is possible that there are a number of additional factors that will have direct and indirect effects on brand love such as product scarcity, brand personality, social identity, brand equity, etc. This proposed model examines consumer personality and social influence that are expected to have a direct impact on brand love. Accordingly, there is the prospect for additional theorizing and research

regarding direct and indirect effects of other variables on brand love.

This model also does not provide information on mediating or moderator variable related to the relationship with brand love. If the proposed model is verified, then there is an opportunity to explore these mediating and moderator variable, which will help companies in identifying what factors are likely to influence brand love. It should also be anticipated that in research on branding, the impact of the demographic variables such as gender, age, education, and level of income will be investigated. It is possible that some of these variables will have direct and indirect effects on brand love. The consumer lifestyle and culture are additional variables that can be explored in the future.

5.2 Managerial implications

Brand love will lead to brand loyalty that has a significant impact on sales. It will lead to the firm's financial performance. Therefore, companies worldwide have an emphasis to develop brand love as one of the solutions to enhance brand loyalty. Intensive efforts should be made to attempt to understand the antecedents of brand love. A marketer needs to have an understanding of the certain factors that will enhance their brand love. The understanding of predictors of brand love has the potential to provide marketer and company with additional insights on the nature of brand love. Marketer and company can take necessary action to apply this in the real life.

The model in this paper proposes that variables such as consumer personality and social influence through brand love likely to have an impact on brand loyalty. If the relationship is verified, then a marketer should pay attention to improving their the customer brand relationship that is possible will enhance brand loyalty. They can improve their brand love by creating and maintaining the brand which in line with consumer personality and their social influence.

6. Conclusion

Previous studies of brand love show that this brand relationship is a significant factor for increasing brand trust and loyalty. Hence, this subject has attracted both academic and practitioner interest. There should be intensive efforts made to understand this phenomenon so that brand management success can be predicted. A theoretical framework can contribute to this process, and the proposed linkages in this study can form the basis for empirical verification or refutation.

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