

The Reinforcing Effect of Brand Extension on Parent Brand in Case of High Involvement Consumer Products

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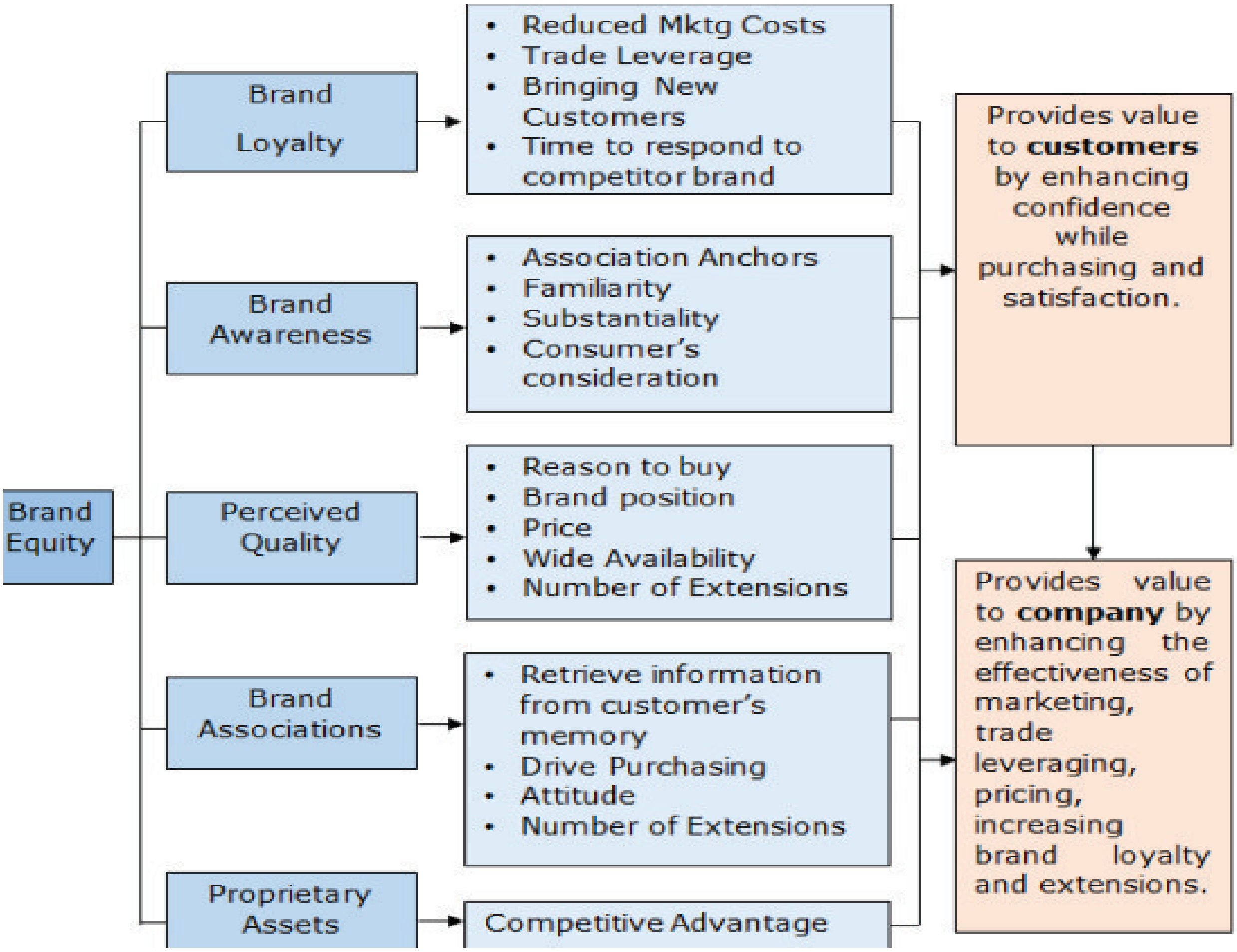
Abstract
This study was aimed at investigating the effects of brand extensions on parent brand. Data were collected from 370 University students and University lecturers at Dire Dawa University using self-administered questionnaires. Convenience sampling technique was found to be appropriate. Questions were prepared in a five point likert scale type. SPSS version 21 has been employed to perform various computations like reliability, correlation, and regression. The findings show that customers' attitude towards the parent brand is reinforced by brand extensions. When customers have positive brand associations and strong brand loyalty, successful brand extensions strengthen the favorable relationship between the customers and the parent brand. Again, when customers have unfavorable brand association and distrust a parent brand, its incompetent brand extensions reinforce customers' negative brand associations and disloyalty to the parent brand. The findings are supported by p value = 0.000 for 95% confidence level.
Keywords:brand, parent brand, brand equity, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, brand extension

Introduction

It has been more than two decades when branding became a prioritized decision by because of its lucrative value to companies (Keller & Lehmann, 2005). They view branding as an investment that will generate the company a return. Kotler & Armstrong (2012) regarded brands as valuable assets that reside on a firm's total offer. Companies want to capitalize on existing brands via brand extension when the brand has positive customers' experience (Hameed, saleem, Rashid, and Aslam, 2014; ENGSTRÖM & SVEDMAN, 2011)). Customers' knowledge of an existing brand enhances expected benefits from brand extensions (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Essentially brand extension implies that using an established brand of a given product category to other new lines or new product categories (Hameed*, et . al* (2014), Tanner and Raymond, 2012; Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Most often it is popular brands that initiate successful brand extension (Hameed*, et.al*, 2014). Compared to new products with new brands, new products with existing strong brands have good success rate; reduced marketing costs and low risks (Keller, 2013, Kotler and Armstrong, 2012; Kotler, *et . al*, 2005; Chen Si Jia, Gu Jing, 2012; Jaulent, *et . al*, 2007; Chen & Liu, 2004). In addition, brand extension strategy is duly important to ensure optimum use of investments made on and strong brand equities established by extending the same to new products (Dall'Olmo Riley, Pina, and Bravo, 2005). However, brand extension may also result in confusion over the parent brand and when the extensions fail, the negativities attributed to those extensions will spread to other products carrying the same brand name including the parent brand (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012, Kotler, *et al*, 2005). When positive attributes of an established brand are successfully transferred to extensions, it enhances the main brand and increases sales of both current & the extended products (Kotler, *et . al*, 2005; Aaker, 1991).

Conceptual framework

Recently, companies rely on their longstanding background (brand equity) to expand their business through brand extension. (NaminAidin and Moghaddar, 2013). Aaker (2015) defined brand equity as a set of assets or liabilities linked to a brand that add value to or subtract value from the product under that brand. He developed a brand equity model (also called Five Assets Model).



The diagram illustrates that a longstanding company's brand equity which is sourced from the five components affects customers' satisfaction, confidence, and retention and in turn reinforces their connection and loyalty to the parent brand. Among those dimensions of brand equity, the researcher is interested to investigate two dimensions i.e., brand association and brand loyalty.

This research has dealt with brand association and brand loyalty. Keller (2013) elaborated that brand associations may be linked to the brand itself and secondary entities. Brand association means what resides in customers' memory about a brand (Aaker, 1991). Accordingly when customers develop recurrent experiences with the brand, the association is strengthened. According to Anwar, Gulzar, Sohail, and Akram (2011), brand extensions and customers' brand loyalty have direct relationship. When the customers are loyal to a parent brand, they probably accept brand extension for lessening the risks attributed to a new product (Rundle-Thiele & Maio Mackay, 2001). Consumers show their brand loyalty through discriminated reaction to a brand by repeat purchase and other affiliations over a period of time (Ishak, and Abd Ghani, 2013). According to Whalley (2010) customers do their purchases from brand which they found satisfactory trusted. Brand associations and brand loyalty are constituents of brand equity. Accumulated brand equity opens an avenue for a firm to pursue brand extensions (Ishak and Abd Ghani, 2013). Firms recognize that a brand's life can be longer through brand extension by committing an established brand to bear new products of a company (Noursina, Madani, and Madani, 2015). A study conducted by (Shahrokh, Sedghiani, and Ghasemi, 2012, Rastogi, 2012) indicated that the consumers' attitude towards brand extension has an effect on the parent brand. Hameed, *et.al* (2014) concluded that brand extension, brand awareness, brand familiarity, and customer attitude have an impact on parent brand image. According to Soomro, Kaimkhani, Hameed, & Shakoor (2013) customers' evaluations of brand extensions rely on the parent brand's innovativeness, multiple extensions, concept and consistency and fitness between the parent brand and it extensions.

In general, in brand management literature you will find a lot about the reinforcing relationship between brand extension and parent brand. It is believed that when there is similarity in terms of benefit and attributes between a parent brand and an extension, the extension has corresponding effect on the parent brand.

The researcher's driving motive is to determine the effect of brand equity on brand extension. Thus, this research is devoted to prove the following hypothetical assumptions.

H_1a: Customers' brand associations for a parent brand are significantly reinforced through brand extension.

H2a: Customers' brand loyalty for a parent brand is significantly reinforced through brand extension.

Related literature review

Branding has received first ranked priority by managers for the last two decades considering brands as company's deposited treasure once established in the market (Keller & Lehmann, 2005). They view branding as an investment that will generate the company a return. As Kotler & Armstrong (2012) claimed, brands are valuable assets that reside on products and facilities in order to sustain the company's product/service. Accordingly, brands have to be cultivated and maintained in a well-thought-out approach. DelRõÂo, VaÂzquez, and Iglesias (2001) held that the purpose for which brands are developed is to help a company's target groups establish a favorable brand image through set of brand associations which is regarded as vital to the formation of brand equity and management. Customers rely on brands to simplify their buying decisions and assign responsibilities to companies for potential promise, risks and quality level (Keller & Lehmann, 2005). By using brands which have well rooted names and experienced customers' loyalty, companies want to extend their existing brands to capitalize on (Hameed, saleem, Rashid, and Aslam, 2014; ENGSTRÖM & SVEDMAN, 2011)). These companies expect benefits from brand extensions as a result of customers' knowledge of the existing brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990). It is coined by Jaulent, Luxin, and Sacko (2007) that the concept of brand extension is traced back to the 1960`s, but it really become popular since the 1980`s. Essentially brand extension implies that using an established brand of a given product category to other new lines or new product categories (Hameed*, et . al* (2014), Tanner and Raymond, 2012; Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Not differently from this, Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong (2005) have given a definition for brand extension or brand stretching as the application of a winning brand name to launch new or modified products in a new category. Boush and Loken (1991) generalize the appropriateness of utilizing an established brand name as a growth strategy because of the escalating cost of investments in new brand development.

Hameed*, et.al* (2014) described that companies' brand extensions rely on popular brands which bear positive image in the market. For the past few decades, companies preferred brand extensions instead of launching new product with new brands costing huge investment in order to attain national and international strategic growth (Hariri and Vazifehdust, 2011). Companies launching new products which carry the existing brand name have good success rate; reduced marketing costs and low risks than otherwise (Keller, 2013, Kotler and Armstrong, 2012; Kotler, *et al*, 2005; Chen Si Jia, Gu Jing, 2012;Jaulent, *et al*, 2007; Chen & Liu, 2004). On the same token, the process of brand extensions is considered secure and advantageous because it reduces costs accompanying marketing research and other promotional activities and at the same time increases success rate of the new product it capitalizes on already existing brand equity (Chen & Liu, 2004) as cited by Anwar, *et al* (2011). Thus, the main argument of brand extension strategy is to ensure optimum use of investments made on and strong brand equities established by extending the same to new products (Dall'Olmo Riley, Pina, and Bravo, 2005). However, Kotler and Armstrong, 2012, Kotler, *et al*, 2005) argue that brand extension may result in confusion over the main brand and when the extensions fail, the negativities attributed to those extensions will spread to other products carrying the same brand name. Powerful brands possess high brand equity which implies customers' discriminated responses to the products and their marketing programs as a result of knowing the brand names (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Brand equity is transferable to new products. Therefore, successful transfer of an established brand is reflected in an enhancement of the main brand and an increase in sales of both current and the extended products (Kotler, *et . al*, 2005; Aaker, 1991).

Brand loyalty

From the view point of Yoo (2009), brand loyalty comes true when consumers are intensely dedicated to continue their patronage to a given brand over time. Loyal customers of a brand probably buy the company's products repeatedly; spread word of mouth favorably; and willingly pay more in order to have their favorite brand (Kwon & lennon, 2009). Anwar A., *et al*, 2011, Rundle-Thiele & Maio Mackay, 2001), believed in the existence of direct relationship between brand extension and the consumers' brand loyalty. They fear accompanying risks while buying new brands like financial, functional, physical, social, and psychological risks (Keller, 2013, Whalley, 2010). Whalley argues that customers tend to make repeat purchases of brands that they found satisfactory and trusted. The findings of Reast (2005) suggested that customers' trust to a brand determines the success or failure of brand extension strategies.

Brand association

Companies in their brand positioning function commit efforts to implant favorable brand associations that reside in customers' memory about a brand (Aaker, 1991). And the associations are strengthened when customers develop recurrent experiences with the brand. Keller (2013) elaborated that brand associations may also be linked to secondary entities other than the brand itself like source factors, countries or geographical regions where the product is originated, channels of distribution, other brands, characters, spokespeople, sporting or cultural events, or some other third-party sources. On the other hand, customers may have brand associations in terms of product attributes, customer benefits, uses, users, life-styles, product classes, competitors and countries (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015).

Brand extension

Companies may assume brand extensions when they need to adapt market environment changes or in order to exploit optimum benefits of strong brands (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009). Accumulated brand equity opens an avenue for a company to engage in competent line or brand extensions (Ishak and Abd Ghani, 2013). Brand equity is used to determine the brand's ability to capture consumer preference and loyalty (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). As pointed out by Luxin, *et al* (2007) brand extensions save companies marketing costs that would be spent if they launch new products with new brand name. For such reasons organizations prefer brand extension strategies (Binh 2010). Firms recognize that a brand's life can be longer through brand extension which means committing an established brand to bear new products of a company (Noursina, Madani, and Madani, 2015). As part of their marketing strategy, firms use brand extensions to influence consumers' brand preferences (Kushwaha, 2012). A study conducted by Vukasovič (2012proved the relationship between parent brand and brand extensions by taking 800 chicken products consumers of "poli" brand in Slovenia in a chicken pariser sausage product category. The results show the positive influence of the parent brand "poli" when it entered into another product category i.e. the group pate. Companies doing brand extensions assume many benefits, as there are already brand associations established with the parent brand, therefore consumers may consider the extension credible and trustworthy which go along with the parent brand (Laforet, 2010). In addition to this, Davis (2010) stated that the introduction of the new brand extension evokes curiosity among customers of the parent brand, which can renovate interest in the brand as a whole. In their study examining the relationship between brand associations and consumers' behavioral and perceptual responses, DelRõÂo, *et al* (2001) found out that consumers' positive brand image is reflected in terms of paying premium price, recommending others and accepting extension.

The findings of (Shahrokh, Sedghiani, and Ghasemi, 2012; Rastogi, 2012) proved that the consumers' attitude towards brand extension has a bearing effect on the parent brand. The brand extension either positively or negatively reinforces the customers' parent brand image. Hameed, *et al* (2014) concluded that brand extension, brand awareness, brand familiarity, and customer attitude have an impact on parent brand image. It is discussed that customers tend to use perceived fit between brand extensions and the parent brand (Kim & John, 2008). This leads us to say that effective brand extension is the one that goes in line with the brand essence of the parent brand (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2009). When we think of brand extension, it indicates a connection with the parent brand in customers' mindset (Binh, 2010). Thus, brand extensions which do not maintain essential relationship with the current market or the current core value of the parent brand will be at risk of failure. According to Soomro, Kaimkhani, Hameed, & Shakoor (2013) customers evaluate brand extensions based on the parent brand's innovativeness, multiple extensions, concept and consistency and fitness between the parent brand and it extensions. SI JIA, & Jing (2012) claim that brand extensions are worthless for brands whose competitors occupied a solid customer loyalty and still the extension is worthless for brands for which customers have no clear brand association. In addition, customers who have experienced a given brand irritatingly, tend to refuse the upcoming new products carrying the same brand (Whalley, 2010).

Methodology

The explanatory research approach was in use to investigate the reinforcing effect of brand extension on the parent brand. Brand association and brand loyalty as constituents of brand equity are dealt. It is theorized that, brand association and brand loyalty to a parent brand and to the extension is reflected in strengthening the customer's experience with the parent brand. This research is aimed at proving disproving this theory.

Self-administered questionnaires containing five point likert scale type items were distributed to students and lecturers. The selection of the respondents was through convenience sampling. The sample size was determined using C**ochran's correction formula for a finite population.** $n=\frac{n0}{1+\frac{(n0-1)}{N}}$ which is derived from $n_0 = \frac{Z^2Pq}{e^2}$, accordingly from a total of 10,000 Dire Dawa University students and lecturers in 2017, 370 respondents chosen and participated. The questionnaire was structured and close-ended. Fundamentally the data are qualitative in nature in that respondents' level of agreement for items is not numerically measurable. However, for ease of analysis, the respondents' level of agreement for each item is assigned numbers and the method becomes quasi-quantitative. Accordingly, strongly agree through strongly disagree receives 5 up to 1 for favorable statements and 1 up to 5 for unfavorable statements. Questionnaires were distributed at times soon after final examination administration.

Instrument pre-test process
Before final distribution, 35 questionnaires were distributed in order to pre-test the instrument's completeness, ambiguity, relevance, clarity, and consistency by taking a small number of respondents which resemble the final respondents. In addition, the reliability of the data collection instrument has been tested using test-retest reliability. The instrument was accepted for a consistency coefficient value of r = 0.78.

Channels to disseminate the findings to the beneficiaries: Best results which are poorly communicated remain unconvinced of the appropriate target group. The researcher tries to publicize the finding through presenting in national and international conferences, presenting in events organized by professional associations like marketing professionals association, getting it published on organizational proceedings, getting it published on internationally reputable journals, pursuing press releases in media, etc.

Analysis
Through multiple regression analysis, this research has testified the hypothesis stating the significant relationship between brand equity and customers' attitude towards brand extension.

Table 1: reliability of the variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Association on brand extension	0.839	10
Loyalty to brand extension	0.870	8
Reinforcement of parent brand association	0.875	10
Reinforcement of parent brand loyalty	0.867	8

The reliability measure of the variables indicates **Cronbach's Alpha** value for all the variables and all the values fallen above the limit of reliability acceptance i.e. 0.7. Relatively, reinforcement of associations for a parent because of extensions received the highest value alpha value.

Table 2. Correlation between predictor variables and the independent variable on the one hand and the correlation among the predictor variables:

Correlations

		Association to a brand extension	Loyalty to brand extensio	Reinforcement of parent brand association	Reinforcement of parent brand loyalty
Association to a brand extension	Pearson Correlation	1	.885**	.995**	.851**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	370	370	370	370
Loyalty to a brand extension	Pearson Correlation	.885**	1	.893**	.977**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	370	370	370	370
Reinforcement of parent brand association	Pearson Correlation	.995**	.893**	1	.864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	370	370	370	370
Reinforcement of parent brand loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.851**	.977**	.864**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	370	370	370	370

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is illustrated in the above table that an association to a parent brand is reinforced via its successful brand extension. In addition a brands' loyalty is strengthened through a successful brand extension. The dependent variable (brand reinforcement) is highly correlated with the independent variable (customers' associations and loyalty to brand extensions).

Among the correlations, loyalty to brand extension and parent brand reinforcement is relatively stronger with a value of 0.977. On the other hand, brand association to brand extensions and parent brand reinforcement is relatively weakly correlated.

As indicated in the above table, independent variables have correlations each other. The table signifies strong correlation between brand association and brand loyalty which numbers 0.885. Similarly, reinforcement of parent brand associations and parent brand loyalty have strong correlation i.e. 0.864. In general, a parent brand impacts consumers to behave favorably or unfavorably for an extension. Consequently, consumers' positive or negative experiences to a brand extensions create reinforcing effect on the parent brand.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					DurbinWatson
					R-Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.997[a]	.994	.994	1.187	.994	28402.441	2	367	.000	.356

a. Predictors: (Constant), customers associations and loyalty to brand extension
b. Dependent Variable: Brand reinforcement

As can be shown in table 3, the explanatory power of the variables is high. An increase in level of brand association and loyalty to a brand extension contributes extra ordinarily to a parent brand.

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	80073.479	2	40036.740	28402.441	.000[b]
	Residual	517.332	367	1.410		
	Total	80590.811	369			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand reinforcement
b. Predictors: (Constant), customers associations and loyalty to brand extension

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations	Collinearity Statistics			
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-2.430	.316		-7.679	.000	-3.053	-1.808					
	Associations brand extension	.941	.015	.555	61.789	.000	.911	.970	.972	.955	.258	.217	4.611
	Loyalty to brand extension	1.144	.022	.472	52.521	.000	1.101	1.186	.963	.939	.220	.217	4.611

a. Dependent Variable: Parent brand reinforcement

Conclusion

It can be concluded that brand associations and brand loyalty are reinforced either negatively or positively because of brand extensions. If a brand having positive association with customers launches a brand extension and if that extension is favorably associated to customers behavior, the customers tend to strengthen their connection with the parent brand. Thus, when firms propose and accomplish a successful brand extension, a favorable condition happens from the extension and from the parent brand as a result of reinforcement.

All favorable situations that bond customers with a brand are primarily transferable to new products bearing the parent brand name. In turn, if the customers found the extensions as favorably associated, their bonding with the parent brand becomes stronger. According to the finding, the respondents believed that negatively associated brands are negatively reinforced and favorably associated brands are favorably reinforced.

In addition to brand association, brand loyalty also can be reinforced because of brand extensions. That means when customers have trust and are loyal to a given brand, they are likely to accept brand extensions of the trusted brands. Because of parent brand loyalty, if they trust and become for brand extensions, they extraordinarily trust and be sticky loyal to the parent brand.

Recommendation

Relying on the findings, the researcher has found appropriate to suggest brand managers the following: 1) the unique, strong and favorable associations between customers and a parent brand is strengthened when a brand extension is found competent. If customers favor a parent brand and its extensions, their favoritism for the parent brand becomes more and more strong. 2) Brand managers need to anticipate that customers' brand loyalty is for a parent brand is reinforced when customers trust a brand extension. 3) It should be understood that when customers have an unfavorable associations with the parent brand and its extensions, their attachment with the parent brand is negatively strengthened. the will spread to the loyalty can be reflected in repetitive purchase, spreading positive word of mouth, willingly paying price premium, favoring brand extensions. 4) Lastly, brand managers should understand that the two brand equity components reinforce each other.

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