ANTECEDENTS OF BRAND IMAGE: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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Abstract
The antecedents of brand image are defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand. It is now widely acknowledged by organizations that strong brand image will create a competitive advantage in the marketplace that will enhance their overall reputation and credibility. Indeed, recent trends in modern marketing have changed enormously, and study of antecedents of brand image is increasingly becoming significant to keep pace with this change. In this conceptual paper, we have summarized the literatures on currently prevailing concepts and approaches on brands that will allow us to identify the antecedents of brand image, and therefore will help organizations to enhance their marketing efficiency. Based on a comprehensive review of several earlier works, here we propose a plausible model for the antecedents of brand image in sequential order, namely, awareness of the brand, association of the brand, superiority of the brand, affection of the brand, resonance of the brand and corporate social responsibility. In this review, we put forward the notion that the antecedents of brand image attempt need to be associated with organizational processes which will conceptualize according to an associative network of memory model through organizational activities.

Keywords: Brand image, awareness of the brand, Association of the brand, Superiority of the brand, Affection of the brand, Resonance of the brand, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

1. Introduction
Organizations are recurrently interested in building strong brands with positive image. So much attention has been devoted recently to the concept of brand image (Park, 2009). The antecedents of brand image creates significant results that assist organizations to build strong brands which include greater consumer satisfaction, reduced price sensitivity and fewer consumer defections (Knapp, 2000). Consumers value their relationships with their branded ownerships and with marketing agents that own and control the brand (McAlexander et al., 2002). In this perspective, the brand image focuses on points of differentiation and points of identification that propose sustainable competitive advantage to the organization through the antecedents into modern marketing environment. Brand image, an imperative building block in consumer-based brand equity, is destined as perceptions about a brand which reflected by the brand associations apprehended in consumer’s memory (Keller, 1998). Even though the term or notion brand image has been largely defined and used in diverse ways, one common agreement of the definition is that brand image is a consumer’s aggregate impression of a particular brand care of the influence of a consumer’s reasoned or emotional perceptions (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Aaker, 1996). Strong antecedents of brand image take pleasure in consumer loyalty, the possibility to charge premium prices, and extensive brand power to hold up new product and service launches.

In this context, this paper presents a conceptual model for the antecedents of brand image that is based on a comprehensive review of the existing literatures. An attempt has been made in
the discussion section to discuss the managerial implications of the concepts presented in this paper.

2. What is Brand Image
Brand image is formed through the amalgamated effect of brand associations; (Biel, 1991; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Yoo et al., 2000; Keller, 1998 & 2003) As a result, brand association is considered an essential factor in abundant brand image studies. Brand association is frequently based on the associative network model (Farquhar and Herr, 1993), in which a person's memory is made up of relations and nodes: relations personify relationships (positive or negative, weak or strong), and nodes signify concepts or notions (e.g. brand associations) and objects (e.g. brands). Aaker (1991) underlies to brand associations like the category of brand’s assets and liabilities that embrace anything connected with memory to a brand. Correspondingly, Keller (2003) defines brand association like informational nodes allied toward the brand node in memory that cleaves to the meaning of the brand for consumers. In this regards, brand image makes imperative action to investigate the effect of antecedents including brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility.

3. A Conceptual Model for the Antecedents of Brand Image
Based on the literature review, the conceptual model for the antecedents of brand image in a competitive market has been proposed. The six elements of this model, namely, awareness of the brand, association of the brand, superiority of the brand, affection of the brand, resonance of the brand and corporate social responsibility of the brand are discussed below.

Awareness of the Brand
Brand awareness, according to Keller (2008), that holds brand recognition and brand recall performance. In cooperation, both are important components in sustaining brand equity whose main aim to achieve a strong brand image with long term relationship that indicate brand loyalty. Brand recognition is defined as the consumers’ ability to authenticate earlier revelation to the brand when given the brand as an indication while brand recall is consumers’ ability to recoup the brand from memory when given the product category, the needs satisfied by the category, or a purchase or habit situation as a reminder (Keller, 2008). Aaker (1991) advocates that brand awareness engage a continuum ranging from an undecided feeling that the brand is recognized, to a faith that it is the barely one in the product class. Even though the last decades’ particular literature exposed and crystallized the thought of brand equity (in relative to which brand awareness is one of the primary dimensions) the term has been and at a standstill is approached in numerous manners in the specialized literature.

Association of the Brand
Brand associations are tremendously helpful to marketers. Marketers make use of brand associations to differentiate, position, and extend brands, to build and create positive attitudes and feelings towards brands, and to recommend attributes or benefits of purchasing or using a particular brand (Aaker, 1991). Brand associations, on the other hand, are of more use to the customer than the marketer. The approach as well as the way a brand association creates value to the customer will depend on the customer’s perception of value. In support of each individual, reality is a completely personal observable fact, based on that person’s needs, wants, and personal experiences. Keller (1993) marked brand as a set of associations associated with the brand that consumers embrace in memory. A brand image is cool, calm and collected of a set of associations regarding the brand in the mind of the consumer. Brand
associations are considered to be the informational nodes connected to a brand node that includes the meaning of the brand in the mind of the consumer (Keller, 1998).

**Superiority of the Brand**

Brand superiority and brand attitudes are extremely correlated each other and generate in that while they both communicate and interact with the consumer’s aggregate cognitive evaluation of a target brand. The major difference lies in the conflicting operationalization of each construct or builds from a measurement point of view. Brand attitudes are first and foremost measured using a semantic differential scale attached through contrasting adjectives. Brand superiority measures the consumer’s aggregate and collective cognitive evaluation of the brand in next of kin to competing brands. The brand superiority arrests the uniqueness and differentiation that consumers perceive when they judge a brand in relation to its competitors. In this regard, this measure is challenging to confine one of the definitive goals or aims of successful branding: the construction as well as the formation of a brand that is unique or distinctive from its rivals (Keller, 2003).

![Figure 1. Conceptual Model for the Antecedents of Brand Image](image-url)
**Affection of the Brand**

In the context of affection, emotions play an important role in consumer reaction and engage a vital position in consumer behavior (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Richins, 1997). In a modern consumer attitude model, emotional responses arbitrated the relationship between cognitive appraisals and behavioral intentions to a prearranged stimulus that proposed by Bagozzi (1992). The degree to which a brand is competent to emotionally relate to consumers will increase the likeliness that they will keep consumers and positively impact the perceptions of the brand in the mind of the consumer. Therefore, considering brand affect the consumer-based brand equity that is confirmed by Keller (2001 and 2003) should focus attributes, identity and orientation.

**Resonance of the Brand**

Brand resonance indicates to the final relationship that consumers apprehend told a brand as well as the spread to which the consumer feels “in sync” with a certain or specific brand (Keller, 2003). With appropriate brand resonance, consumers coherent a high degree of loyalty to the brand like that they enthusiastically quest means to intermingle with the brand and allocate their experiences with others. Organizations that are able to ascertain brand resonance should produce a host of benefits or values, for instance, greater price premiums and more efficient and effective marketing programs (Keller, 2003). Fundamentally brand resonance is the eventual as well as final relationship between a brand and a consumer where loyalty can play active role (Keller, 2002). The level of relationship that a consumer has together with a brand can be acknowledged through the amount of action the consumer engages and practices in unto the brand as well as the strength of the relationship the consumer has together with various users of the brand.

**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

More organizations today are beginning to understand the significance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and its impact on societal well being, aside from the aggregate supremacy of the supply chain processes of every organization (Murali Raman et al., 2012). In the past, financial performance was the main principle to evaluate a firm’s value. Higher ranks were given to firms that offer greater margins economically. Maximization of shareholders’ wealth was, until, the central point of profit-driven organizations. In this consideration, the stress on CSR in the past was not apparent. In this decade, on the other hand, the perception about CSR has changed considerably (Asaad, 2010). At the present the success of an organization is also being measured by its contribution to society (Pokorny, 1995; Saunders, 2006). Individualistic and unprincipled behavior in business can be prevented by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Pakseresht, 2010).

**4. Discussion**

The suggested conceptual model can serve as a guideline to managers and executives in building image of their brands in their target markets through constructing the anticipated antecedents of brand image. As competition gets more concentrated, managers face challenges to curvature their brands and accelerate their brand image with changed expectations of their consumers. Among different alternatives that are available to the managers, conscious their brands and brand image based on the antecedents’ performance that happen to be the consumer wealth can assist in building image of their brands in the minds of their consumers. Basically the antecedents of brand image can enable organizations to leverage current resources to the extent possible and change in total impression of the brand and its organization. With the help of suggested conceptual model managers can easily
build strong brand image of their organizations into the modern marketing environment and able to face strong competition by taking such kind of competitive advantage into the target market. This proposed conceptual model may assists managers and brand executives in understanding as well as evaluation of brand image. The proposed model will be useful to better assess brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility to achieve and accomplish favorable brand image into the today’s modern marketing environment. On the basis of proposed model, the brand managers and executive managers need to eternally track their brands in opposition to the effect of competition and to track the improvement as well as development as to how their brands are doing in the marketplace. To build a strong brand, the right brand knowledge structures must exist in the minds of actual or prospective customers so that they respond and take action positively to marketing activities and programs. In this standpoint, this conceptual model can play a crucial role in shaping and assisting brand knowledge. This proposed model can contribute to brand equity by establishing the brand in memory and creating a brand image. For this reason, considering this suggested model managers can get competitive advantage from a competitive market. Due to this proposed model, managers easily take decision and set strategies for their organizational programs. Furthermore, this proposed model provides a great understanding of the importance of brand image in retaining brand loyalty. Loyal customers are less likely to change to a rival’s brand and are more likely to make more frequent and regular purchases than comparable non-loyal customers. Thus, it is significant for organizations as well as brand managers to realize the importance of brand image in the customer-based brand equity and realize the need to expose their organizational performance to as many customers as possible due to build and enhance the customer’s brand loyalty.

Finally, this proposed model will not only provide theoretical confirmation that supports the significance of brand image but also present an implementation process which shows how the image of brands can impact of organization’s market performance into the marketplace. Thus, this proposed model provides the much needed evidence that high level of brand awareness, brand association, brand superiority, brand affection, brand resonance and corporate social responsibility increase the probability of brand image.

5. Conclusion
This paper discusses the conceptual model for the antecedents of brand image that is based on the review of pertinent literatures. For the purpose of this paper, the antecedents of brand image were considered a multidimensional construct that create a competitive advantage in the marketplace and enhance organizational overall reputation, status and credibility. Hence, the antecedents of brand image dimensions in the context of suggested conceptual model would be a potential for building a strong brand into marketplace in the modern marketing environment because the antecedents of brand image with dimensionality can offer a variety of valuable managerial implications that brand managers can benefit from. Although many of the ideas articulated in this proposed conceptual model may be recognizable to managers, its value is in integrating these different notions to provide a more inclusive picture of how organizations can create value and sustain value for a brand.

References


