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Integrated Model of Brand Image, Brand Attachment and Behavioral Intentions: Review and Concept

Liew Kok Keong¹ and Rohaizat Baharun²

¹Corresponding author, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia. Email: klien001@yahoo.com

²Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide an integrated conceptual model describing the relationships between perceived product attributes, brand personality and brand attachment variables on behavioral intentions. Consumers may evaluate the product brand in terms of their image. Therefore, brand image is an important strategy to attach consumers with the brand so as to build a long lasting brand attachment relationships and favorable purchase behavioral intentions. This study reviewed various classical to contemporary published papers, and based on the theories, criticism and recommendation by these studies, an integrated conceptual model is proposed. The conceptual model provides new insights by incorporating extrinsic values of brand image as moderator influencing consumer behavioral intentions. In addition, brand attachment is affiliated to mediate the relationships between brand image and behavioral intentions. Antecedent of behavioral intentions for instant perceived product attributes (intrinsic and extrinsic values) of brand image, brand personality and brand attachment would be discovered further when future empirical study is conducted to validate the construct.

Keywords: Perceived product attributes (extrinsic and intrinsic values), brand personality, brand attachment and behavioral intentions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Branding is one of the most important strategies in today's competitive marketing environment. The concepts of brand image have gained considerable attention from researchers in Malaysia in recent years. Are consumers choosing or attaching to one brand over another due to brand image differences? This paper will present the integrated framework of brand image, brand attachment and influential behavioral intentions to explain the phenomenon.

Creating a successful marketing program to meet consumer needs and wants are the driving force to purchase intentions. It is a marketer jobs to formulate effective marketing strategies to capture larger target audience and to invoke consumer intentions into actions. Consumer may seeks a product attributes that can offer at least functional or symbolic values to satisfy their needs and wants. It is important to understand consumer judgment and decision making process through factors such as perceived product attributes (intrinsic and extrinsic values) of brand image, brand personality and brand attachment that influence consumer behavioral intentions.

Consumers may depend on products extrinsic information cues if having inadequate information on intrinsic cues (Zeithaml, 1988). In this expect, extrinsic cues would be additional information or advantage for consumer choice if intrinsic cues are also available. Thus, this study will examine the indirect influence of extrinsic attributes of brand image on brand attachment and behavioral intentions. So far there is limited research study on extrinsic value as a moderating effect between intrinsic product attributes, brand personality, brand attachment and behavioral intentions. This study will explore a distinct brand image (perceived product attributes and brand personality) that promotes visual and abstract recognition, and through the brand attachment to discover consumer behavioral intentions.

This integrated model will explore the relationships among variables that leads to consumer behavioral intentions. The objective of this study is to contribute to the academic literature by providing relevant information for the management of brand image and consumer behavioral intentions. In addition, this study aims to investigate the mediating effect of brand attachment and moderating effect of extrinsic attributes in the formation of relationships between brand image and behavioral intentions.

2. BRIEF REVIEW OF BRAND IMAGE

Brand image is created to identify or recognize a product, service or organization it represents. To put it in a more complex meaning it is to identify a product, service or organization with a set of ideas, and principles that it wants to be associated with. Many scholars have proposed numerous definition of brand image but there is little agreement on its appropriate definitions. The following paragraphs will show numerous researcher initiatives on various concepts on attributes, functional and psychological qualities of brand image in chronological order.

Definition of brand image is started to shed light when Gardner & Levy (1955) introduce the concept that products by itself have a social and psychological nature as well as a physical characteristics, and in consumer mind the feelings, ideas and attitudes about the brand image leading to purchase intentions. Levy (1958) argues that consumers buying or avoiding products not because of the functional qualities but due to products symbols that impacts user status and self-esteem.

Kennedy (1977) suggests that brand image has two main component; (1) Functional and (2) Affective dimensions. The functional dimension is related to tangible characteristic which can be easily measured. The emotional dimension is related to a psychological dimension revealed through feelings and attitudes toward the company. In contrast, Gensch (1978), he proposes that perception of products image consist of two components, the measures of the brand attributes and the measure of brand image. He defines image as a purely abstract concept, image which can be influenced by past promotion, reputation and peer evaluation of the product.

Bullmore (1984) emphasizes that brand image is created and existed in individual psyche when image is being mediated or stimulated by individual experience. He rejects the assumption that image belongs to the brand, and further argues that like a reputation, it is only exist in the minds of people. Conversely, Reynolds & Gutman (1984), they discuss the components of brand image in terms of a means-end chain. They describe a means-end chain as the connection between product attributes, consumer consequences, and personal values, and they made an assumption that image is created from the connection of these three components.

Friedmann (1986) suggests that the psychological meaning of products is made up of bundle of product attributes, the consumers dominant perceptual mode, and the context in which the perceptual process takes place. Similarly, Britt (1966) proposes that consumers receiving impression of brand image from many sources, i.e. from word of mouth and actual experience of the brand, its packaging, its name, producers, advertising message, tone, and format, as well as the type of delivery method used in promoting products.

Keller (1993) defines brand image as brand associations held in consumers memory. Brand association is divided into four types, (1) Types of brand association (i.e., attributes, benefits, and attitudes); (2) Favorability of brand associations; (3) Strength of brand associations; and (4) Uniqueness of brand associations. Compare to Plummer (2000) defines brand image in three key components, (1) The product attributes; (2) The benefits or consequences of using a brand and (3) The brand personality.

Lee & Tan (2003) repeat that brand image is a reflection about the perception of brand and the association kept in consumer memory. In addition (Bennetta et. al., 2005; Simonian et. al., 2012; Wibisono, et, al., 2016), confidence level of consumers towards the brand image increases, favorable attitude on product attributes increase reciprocally. Hence, brand image is an important source for product attribute information. Similarly (Ryu et. al., 2008; Nugraha & Indrawati, 2017), brand image is a determinant influencing customer subjective perceptions and behavioral intentions.

Brand image has been conceptualized and operationalized in several ways, for instant based on product attributes (Koo, 2003; Bian & Moutinho, 2009); experiential, symbolic and functional values (Berton et. al., 2009) or sensory, utilitarian, economic values measurement (Hsieh et. al., 2004); brand attributes and brand personality (Daiz-Bustamante et. al., 2016). This study takes the concept of product attributes together with the psychological qualities of both user and product into consideration.

3. PERCEIVED PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

Perceived product attributes are classified into two distinctions, broad view and narrow view. In Keller (1993) broad view of product attribute concept, attributes are those descriptive features that portray product characteristics and brand associations. On the other hand, Stockmans (1991) narrow view of product attributes consists of intrinsic and extrinsic values, or it can be viewed as a bundle of perceived attributes. The intrinsic attributes are referring to information cues directly linked to the product, and the extrinsic attributes are information cues indirectly linked to the product. As supported by Liefeld (1993), extrinsic attributes such as brand name, country of design, country of manufacture, price and warranties.

Products are being sold at two levels of values, intrinsic values focus on perceived product quality and extrinsic values center on the symbolic content of the brand. Intrinsic value is derived from

consumer beliefs about the product functional capacity whereas extrinsic value largely is derived from the brand imagery created by advertising (Meenaghan, 1995). This research takes the narrow view of product attributes suggested by Stokmans (1991) which consists of intrinsic, extrinsic attributes as components of brand image. Both dimensions have direct influence on brand choice and behavioral intentions.

Consumers may depend on products extrinsic information cues if having inadequate information on intrinsic cues (Zeithaml, 1988). Hence, this study suggests that extrinsic perception is moderating the relationship between intrinsic perceptions, brand personality and behavioral intentions. Many studies proven that extrinsic value can be a moderator that invoke behavioral intentions. For example, extrinsic attributes consist of price, brand of origin and warranty (Martins & Monroe, 1994). Country of origin image is found to be a positive moderator in the relationship between brand personality and purchase intention (Wang & Yang, 2008). Price is found to enhance the quality of products and services and increase satisfaction level when it is being used as a moderator (Ryu & Han, 2010). Brand name interaction effect on purchase intentions is found in a study where Austrian prefers buying German brand when the product is indicated made in Germany (Chao et. al., 2005). Consequently, this investigation examines the moderating impacts of extrinsic perception of brand image.

4. BRAND PERSONALITY

A brand personality is a set of human characteristics associated with a given brand. It includes human personality traits such as warmth, concern, sentimentality, and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, socioeconomic class. Consumers perceive that brands have five distinct personality dimensions such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Brand personality is an important element for brand differentiation which significantly influences consumers purchase decision-making process (Aaker, 1997).

Brand personality poses symbolic values that offer consumers the ways of constructing and maintaining social identity that expressing themselves (Keller 1993). This study will utilize measurement scales that widely adapted by past and current researchers in various studies on brand personality (i.e. Eren-Erdogmus et. al., 2015; Chu & Sung, 2011; Maria, 2015).

5. BRAND ATTACHMENT

In Park et. al. research (2010), brand attachment is the bonding of brand connecting with oneself. It consists of two critical factors; (1) Brand-self connection and (2) brand prominence. Brand-self connection is the bond connecting a person with the brand in which the attachment involves cognitive and emotional bonding strength. Brand prominence referring to the positive feelings and memories about the attachment object. Prominence may exert strong influence on decision making that lead to purchase behaviors. When both brand-self connection and prominence are high, sustainable relationship behaviors would be attained.

Dennis et. al. (2016) study on higher education institutions, identify variables (perceived quality, reputation, brand image, identity and meaning) and their impact on brand attachment strength, found that if a brand is established effectively, relationship and attachment is formed between the institution and

students. Strong brand relationship equates with high brand attachment. Kaufmann et. al. (2016) found a link between brand attachment and purchase intention on original/counterfeits products. Park et. al. (2010) research on brand attachment and behavioral intentions found that customers are willing to maintain brand relationship by engaging in difficult behaviors (eg. always buying the new model, promoting and defending, switching and recommending). The existing literature reviews reveal that very limited studies work on perceived product attributes and brand personality on brand attachment that lead to behavioral intentions. This study will explore the relationships.

6. BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

A person behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform an action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Parasuraman and his co-workers Zeithaml et. al. (1996) created the behavioral intentions battery to measure behavioral intentions. It consists of five dimensions, namely loyalty to company, propensity to switch, willingness to pay more, external response to problem and internal response to problem. Since then these dimensions have been adapted and refined in various studies to measure the behavioral intentions of consumers (White & Yu, 2005; Park et. al., 2010; Som, M. et. al., 2012; Gera 2011; Udo et. al. 2010; Yaya et. al. 2011; Valvi & Fragkos, 2012). The strength of these elements such as repurchase, retention and continuous use could be ascertained if empirical study is conducted.

7. GAPS IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE

Many scholars prove that brand is the variable significantly influence purchase intentions (Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Yoo & Lee, 2009; Zeithaml, 1988). Attributes of brand has been determined by Kennedy, 1977; Gensch, 1978; Bullmore, 1984; Gutman, 1984; Friedmann, 1986; Britt, 1966; Stokmans, 1991; Liefeld, 1993; Keller, 1993; Howard, 1994; Martins & Monroe, 1994; Aaker, 1997 and so on, although the specific terms defined by them are different but in general all portrayed it as brand image.

Studies show that products attributes (extrinsic and intrinsic values) of brand image have direct influence on purchase intentions, conversely this study explore the indirect relationships of extrinsic values as a moderating variable in the proposed construct (Figure 1), so far limited research effort has been devoted to examine the moderating effect of extrinsic values on such relationship. In addition, pioneer study has been conducted on brand attachment effect on behavioral intentions (Park et. al., 2010). But, the mediating effect of brand attachment has not been explored on perceived products attributes (intrinsic and extrinsic values) of brand image, brand personality and behavioral intentions. This study fulfils the gap by developing an integrated conceptual model as depicted in Figure 1.

This study will uncover the mediating and moderating effects of brand attachment and extrinsic values respectively, and contributing to the academic literature by providing new information for the management of brand image and consumer behavioral intentions when statistical analysis is conducted.

8. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this research is shown in Figure 1.

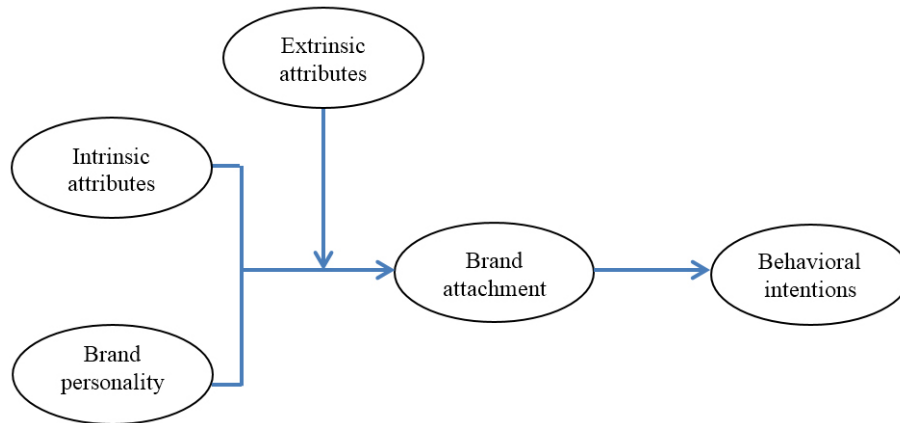


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework for the study

9. PROPOSED RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Based on the proposed conceptual research model, hypotheses are formulated.

- Intrinsic attributes perception is positively correlated with behavioral intentions.
- Brand personality perception is positively correlated with behavioral intentions.
- Extrinsic attributes perception has a moderating effect on intrinsic attributes perception and brand attachment.
- Extrinsic attributes perception has a moderating effect on brand personality and brand attachment.
- Brand attachment has a mediating effect on intrinsic attributes perception and behavioral intentions.
- Brand attachment has a mediating effect on brand personality and behavioral intentions.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The integrated model will bring new concepts and contributes to the academic literature by providing relevant information from the perspectives; (1) Brand attachment directly mediates the relationship between perceived products attributes (intrinsic and extrinsic values) of brand image, brand personality and behavioral intentions. (2) Many studies have proven the influence of perception of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of brand image on purchase decision, but the role of extrinsic value as indirect effect has given much less attention in the literature. Hence, this integrated model will generate new insight on why and how antecedent of behavioral intentions have implication and positive impact on an individual action. Antecedent of behavioral intentions for instant perceived product attributes of brand image (intrinsic and extrinsic values), brand personality, brand attachment will be discovered further when empirical study is conducted in future.

Lastly, marketing environment today is increasingly competitive, brand image is an important strategy to use when crafting marketing communication strategy. Companies need to invest in product innovation (attributes), brand personality and reputation so that to make consumers attach to the brand (Rohaizat et.

al., 2016). When consumers buy a product they may evaluate the product brand in terms of their image. Therefore, brand image is an important strategy to attach consumers with the brand, in turn create a long lasting brand attachment relationships and favorable purchase behavioral intentions.

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