International Academic Institute for Science and Technology

International Academic Journal of Business Management
Vol. 4, No. 1, 2017, pp. 110-117.

ISSN 2454-2768

International Academic Journal of Business Management

www.iaiest.com

The Effects of Variety Seeking, Brand Image and Social Self on Brand Love and Word of Mouth

Leila Ghodratabadi[a], Maryam Taghizadeh[b]

[a]*Master of Urban Management, Faculty of Management and Accounting, Allameh Tabatabai University, Iran.*

[b]*Master of Agricultural Engineering, Tehran Azad University of Science and Research, Iran.*

Abstract

Brand love is a recent marketing construct, which has been shown to influence important marketing variables such as word-of-mouth and purchase decision making. This study aims to explore the variables effects, for example, (Variety Seeking, brand image and Social Self) on brand love and word of mouth. Structural Equation Model was used to test the research model. Brand love was investigated in terms of some cars such as SANDERO, TONDAR 90, BRILLIANCE and ARIO in SAIPA Group (The Iranian car industry sector). 290 persons had participated and answered the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered to employees of SAIPA Group. The result shows that Brand Image and Social Self impact Brand Love that lead to word of mouth but variety seeking don't effect on brand love. People who are seeking variety are not considered as love brands because they are in search for another brand.

Key words: brand love, social self, brand Image, variety seeking, word of mouth

Introduction

SAIPA Group (The Iranian car industry sector) Vision is to become an international automaker. This vision can be realized through owning exclusive brand, management of product and platform, management of sales and after-sales service network, active presence in the domestic and international market, competitive ability in quality and price, and being major player in the Iranian market. SAIPA Group Philosophy has been established upon 5 principles: continuous and balanced growth, sustainable values for stakeholders, leadership in competitive cost, achieving a high-ranking Iranian brand and minimizing the risk for investors.

According to Martins (1999), the purchase motivations are related to the needs, to the brand and to the individual's desires, but the preference for a brand is aroused by images and feelings which are in the people collective unconscious.

Such a scenario leads to an increasing search for bonds between the consumer and the brands which go beyond the existing products and services to be deeply internalized in the consumers' minds and hearts. In this sense, an

instigating field of analysis emerges in the effort to understand how strong and lasting emotional bonds are structured in order to generate a superior brand value and brand preference. The literature has stated how the love to a brand can be a liable concept to be adapted to the marketing universe, and with an excellent possibility of obtaining success in the brand differentiation.

Although many studies have been conducted on this issue, but there are still gaps which are needed to be filled in the literature. Studies conducted by previous researchers only focused on certain aspects of brand love, and the variables used in those studies were segmented in nature. In other words, the model proposed in this study is an integrative one came from three separate models found in the related area of literature, For example, study of (Ismail et al., 2012) found positive and significant effect of brand image on brand love, and illustrated the effect of brand love on consumer's word of mouth. Study of (Aron and Paris, 1995), investigated the relationship between social self and brand love. Study of (Vazquez-Carrasco and Foxall, 2005) examined the relationship between variety-seeking and brand love; and this study tries to integrate them in one framework, and this is the contribution of this study.

Literature Review

For businesses that are offering products and services to the public, the customers are considered as one of the most important factors to be attended very carefully, since their wants and desires would have significant impacts on the way the businesses are run. Variety seeking, brand image, social self, brand love, as consequence of consumer's word of mouth are the main issues in this study which have a strong relation with the retention of customer as a key success factor in today's business world. These issues are discussed in details to allay concepts of these concerns here.

Mowen and Minor (1998) said that variety seeking is the act of customers to purchase a new product even though they are satisfied with the old one. When the customers feel bored or even dissatisfied with the product they are using now, then they will try to seek for other varieties (Sulistyaningrum, 2012). Another thing that can derive variety seeking is the desire that comes from the customer inner-self for the unfamiliar and their hunger for information (McAlister & Pessemier, 1982).

Brand image has been recognized as an important concept in marketing and consumer behavior research (Hee, 2009). The customer deals every day with different types of products and services, so, brand image that is primarily responsible for brand differentiation (Morgan, 2004). The companies compete to give good idea about their products and services to build a positive image about their brand in costumer's mind. So, good perception of product and service quality would drive the costumer to form a positive brand image, (Tan et al., 2012).

Brand love of the consumer is majorly divided into three segments affection, connection and passion (Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi, 2012). They collectively contribute to the emotional attachment of the consumer with the brand. Marketers constantly try to evoke the feeling of brand love in the customers to generate the feeling of word of mouth as it is the most important component of marketing and possess the high potential to penetrate the brand in the minds of the customer base. Lastovicka and Sirianni (2011), in their study stated that they do not deny that brand love exists; rather, they focus on consumers' love for specific, concrete, and tangible possessions, as opposed to brand love representing a love for more freely replaceable objects and abstractions within a brand designation.

Today companies have recognized that feeling of love toward a brand is a vital factor in establishing a good relationship with a customer, those brands which can make customers love their brands are more successful in gaining sustainable advantage and beating their competitors (Roberts, 2006). Marketing researchers have investigated the concept of brand love (Ahuvia, 2005; Fournier, 1998). Fournier (1998) answers the question of whether consumers can experience a feeling of love toward a brand, she established that such a feeling may exist and consumers may develop strong relationships with brands.

Lo (2012) mentioned that word of mouth has been an age old concept where a person shares his view with another person. The views of the person can be related to a product or the service he have received. The studies in consumer behavior suggest that words of mouth have a strong influence on the psychology of the person. The influence of word of mouth can have both positive and negative aspects. Relating word of mouth to the consumer behavior, it can be interpreted that the positive word of mouth increases the likelihood of the consumers in opting for the product, whereas the negative word of mouth does the reverse. The overall effect of the word of mouth is dependent on two factors. The total number of people being exposed to positive word of mouth or negative word of mouth helps in judging the final influence.

Research Hypotheses

It is the need of customers to make a change in their lives. Vazquez-Carrasco and Foxall, in their study they conducted in 2005, examined the relationship between variety-seeking and brand love. According to the research, consumers with a much more need for variety establish a bond with their brands at a very low level and they are inclined to shift to other brands. Thus, this variable is the one that controls and manages customer love (Vazquez, Carrasco & Foxall, 2005).

H1: variety seeking impacts brand love.

Previous studies considered brand image and brand identification as antecedents to brand love e.g. (Bergkvist et al., 2009; Ismail et al., 2012). In terms of brand image and brand love, there is strong relationship between brand image and brand love, for example, (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Ismail et al., 2012) found positive and significant effect of brand image on brand love.

H2: brand image impacts brand love.

It is proven that a successful brand must have a certain degree of resonance with not only the consumers' personal identity, but also with the social identity (Cătălin & Andreea, 2014). Consumers do not only analyze how a brand can relate to their life goals and values but also they also are aware that brands can be used to project values to the 'outside world'. Predilection for a certain brand can be the result of interaction with other member of the community. However, little research has been done on the social focus of the congruity facets. It might be the case that consumers think that their social surrounding wants them to be attracted to a certain brand, when they are more attracted to the brand, they feel more love towards the brand. Due to that brand love arises from self-brand integration, the expectation is that the self focus of self-congruity facets lead to higher brand love than the social focus of self-congruity facets.

Brands that reflect the self are those appealing to the inner self and social-self (Caroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Aron et al. (1985), Aron and Paris (1995), in their studies, investigated the relationship between social self and brand love. According to the results, they determined that the love for the brands reflecting identity was greater.
H3: social self impacts brand love

If consumers feel they love the brand that in turn may translate into a desire of the recommend it to friends and relatives. So, many people use their word of mouth to inform others about products or services positively or negatively. With respect to this topic, many previous studies found there is strong relationship between brand love and customer's word of mouth, e.g. (Ahuvia et al, 2006; Elaine et al, 2014; Ismail et al, 2012; Mark et al, 2014) found that brand love is positively related to consumer's word of mouth.

H4: brand love impacts word of mouth.

Results

Description of the sample:

290 persons had participated and answered the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered to employees of SAIPA Group. Brand love was investigated in terms of some cars such as SANDERO, TONDAR 90, BRILLIANCE and ARIO. The respondents are composed of 82% males and 18% females. 15% of the respondents were less than 30 years old, a majority of them, 54%, were aged between 31-40 years and only 5% were over 50 years old. 36.6 % believed that SANDERO was more popular than other cars (considering that every four is in a range of prices) over the past year; and only 20% of people believed that ARIO was popular over the past year.

Every item used to measure constructs is measured using the Likert-scale in following levels: [1] strongly disagree, [2] disagree, [3] neither agree nor disagree, [4] agree, [5] strongly agree. Structural equation model was used to test the model. SPSS and AMOS statistics program was employed for this purpose.

The scales used in the research are considered, as seen in Table 1, structure reliability and variance ratios are well above the required lower limit. The scales are seen to be valid and reliable.

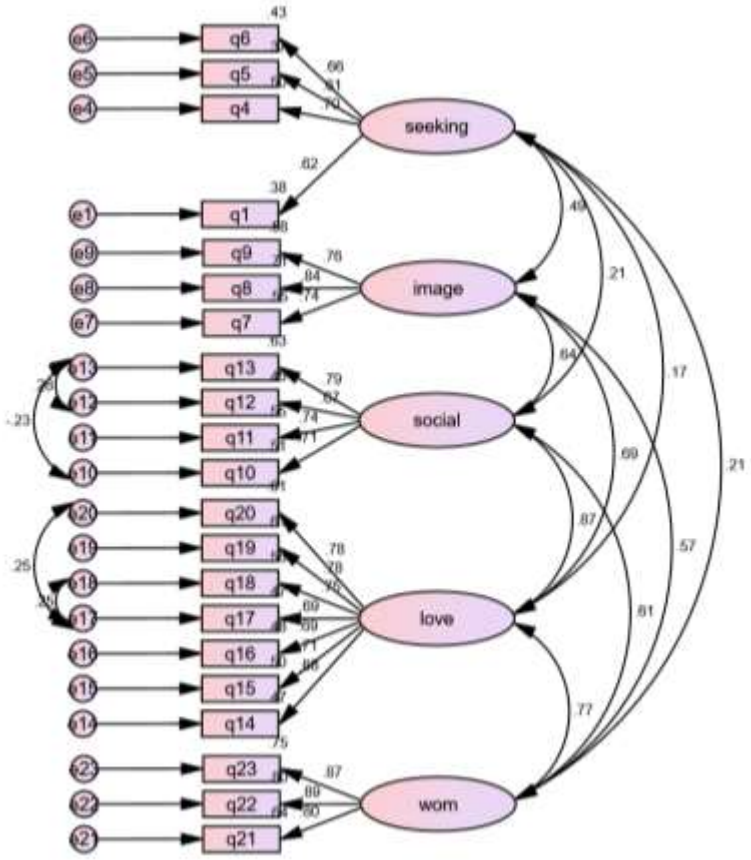
Table 1: Research Variable

Variable		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Variety seeking	I prefer doing new things instead of doing the same things.	1.000			
	I like showing variety and change my monotonous life.	.871	.094	9.230	***
	I like jobs that require continuous variety, travelling and even some danger.	.852	.096	8.892	***
	I search new ideas and experiences	.988	.099	9.987	***
	I continuously change my activities.	.752	.091	8.264	***
	When things go boring, I start to look for something different.	.862	.094	8.956	***
Brand image	This type of car is consistent and strong.	1.000			
	This type of car has a brand value.	1.155	.087	13.255	***
	This brand pioneers innovations and technology.	.970	.080	12.143	***
Social self	This brand supports my image.	1.000			
	This brand strengthens my social role.	1.077	.098	11.037	***
	This type of car positively affects what other people think about me	.978	.099	9.910	***
	This brand helps the people around see me positively.	1.189	.107	11.120	***
Brand love	This sport shoe is a perfect brand.	1.000			
	This brand makes me feel good.	1.032	.094	11.028	***
	This brand is completely a wonderful brand.	1.003	.093	10.735	***
	This sport shoe brand makes me happy.	1.014	.095	10.700	***
	I like this type of car from SAIPA Group	1.134	.098	11.583	***
	I am passionately attached to this car	1.210	.100	12.047	***

	I am like a whole with this car.	1.172	.098	12.003	***
Word of mouth	I recommend this brand to many people.	1.000			
	I praise this brand to the people around me.	1.197	.071	16.936	***
	I try to spread nice words about this brand	1.123	.068	16.396	***

Based on the CFA, it is possible to advance describes the sample data observed in this research. Because the initial CFA model that included all 23 indicators did not had the desirable statistical fit, two indicators (q2 & q3) had to be removed due to their low factor loadings and commonalities.

Figure 1: CFA modification



In order to assess the fit of the model it is necessary to analysis other indicators. The most appropriate one are the CMIN/df, the PNFI, GFI, AGFI, baseline comparison and the RMSEA values, presented in table 2.

Table 2: Model Fit Summary

Model	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PNFI	CMIN/ DF
Default model	.069	.887	.850	.880	.856	.927	.911	.926	.734	2.375
Saturated model		1.000		1.000		1.000		1.000	.000	

Model	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PNFI	CMIN/ DF
Independence model	.232	.244	.168	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	16.525

For each indicator, the table is split in three rows, the first presents the hypothesized model under test; the second, the saturated model and the third, the independence model (Byrne, 2010, p. 73).

The ratio that must be analyzed, is the CMIN/DF observed at 2.375 which is acceptable (should not be superior than 3) (Byrne, 2010, p. 75). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .069 and enters the mediocre fit category. A RMSEA of .06 tends to indicate a good fit and a small sample size may to over reject fit of the model (Byrne, 2010, p. 81).

The next indicator that was analyzed is the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), which measures the relative amount of variance and covariance in the model (Byrne, 2010, p. 77). Based on the GFI observed value of .887 it can be concluded that the value is acceptable (should be superior than 0.8).

The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) observed here is also high enough to be considered as a good fit (TLI = .911 that should be superior than 0.9).

The fitting indices of the modified measurement model in all three sectors of economy, absolute indicators and comparative indices have reached a good level. So we can move to the structural model.

Figure 2: structural model

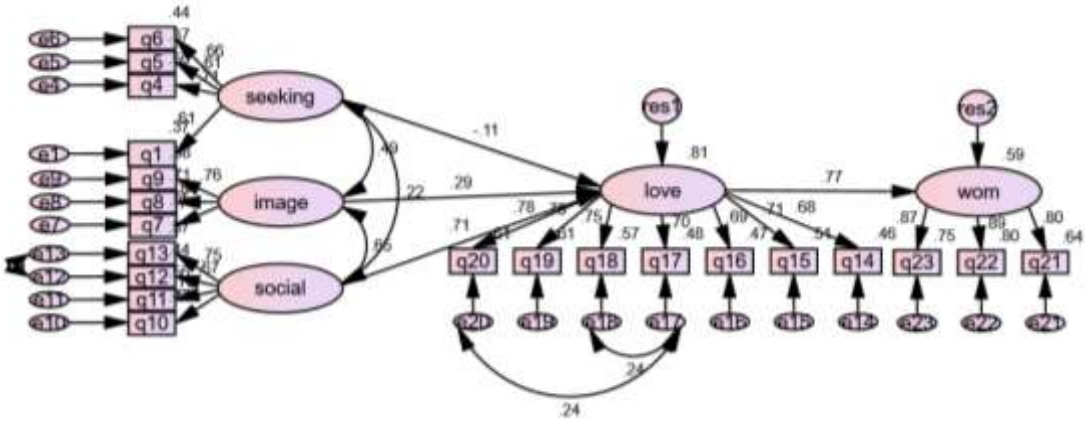


Table 3: Testing Hypotheses

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand love	<---	Variety seeking	-.104	.057	-1.827	.068
Brand love	<---	Brand image	.276	.080	3.437	***

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand love	<---	Social self	.739	.099	7.447	***
Wom	<---	Brand love	.896	.089	10.092	***

Conclusion

Various factors are needed to contribute to create brand love in customers. Some of these factors include variety seeking, social self and brand image. In the study, the effect of these variables on creating brand love was examined and the following results were obtained:

H1 examines the impact of variety seeking on brand love. The result shows that, variety seeking don't effect on brand love (C.R = - 1.827, p>0.05). As supported by the literature, people who are seeking variety are not considered as love brands because they are in search for another brand. In other words, as variety-seeking increases, brand love decreases.

As we supposed in hypothesis 2, impact of brand image on brand love (C.R = 3.437, p<0.05). It's natural that individuals love a brand which has three important aspects of image: favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand associations.

Moreover, the third finding that is important to report here is the fact that influence social self on brand love (H3) was supported by the CFA (C.R = 7.447, P<0.05)

The effect of brand love on word-of-mouth is significant and show that hypothesis 4 is accepted too (C.R = 10.092, P<0.05).

Table 4: Squared Multiple Correlation

Endogenous variables	Estimate
Brand Love	.806
Word of Mouth	.586

Fortunately, R^2 of first structural equation is strong (.806) in relation to the three Chen values 1998 (strong: 67%, medium: 23%, weak: 19%), and is evaluated for the second structural equation with respect to the three Chen values close to the strong(.506).

References

Albert, N., & Merunka, D. (2013). The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 30(3), 258–266. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363761311328928

Batra, R., Ahuvia, A. & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand Love. Journal of Marketing, Vol. 76, No. 2, Pages 1-16.

Bergkvist, L., & Larsen, T. B. (2010). Two studies of consequences and actionable antecedents of brand love. Journal of Brand Management, 17(7), 504–518. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/bm.2010.6

Byrne, B. (2010). Structural equation modeling with AMOS. Basic concepts, applications and programming. New York, NY: Routledge.

Carroll, Barbara A. & Aaron C. Ahuvia. (2006). Some Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Love. Marketing Letters 2006, 17 (2), 79-89.

Cătălin, M., C. & Andreea, P. (2014). Brands as a mean of consumer self-expression and desired personal lifestyle. Social and Behavioral Sciences, 109(1), 103-107.

Elaine, W.,Isable, B.,& Leslie D. (2014). Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: brand love and WOM outcomes. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management, 23*(1), 33–42.

Hee, P. S. (2009). The antecedents and consequences of brand image: Based on Keller's customer-based brand equity. The Ohio State University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing.

Ismail, A.R. & Spinelli, G.(2012). Effects of brand love, personality and image on word of mouth: The case of fashion brands among young consumers. *Management, 16*(4).

Lo, S. C. (2012). Consumer decision: The Effect of Word of Mouth. The International Journal of Organizational Innovation, 4(3).

Mark, F.,Michele, B.,Filho, C.,& Souki, G. C.(2014). The effect of product category on consumer brand relationships. *Journal of Product and Brand Management, 23*(2), 78–89.

McAlister, L., & Pessemier, E. (1982). Variety Seeking Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Review. The Marketing Center (1287-82), 8.

Morgan, F. N. (2004). Brand Image Formation and Updating Across Multiple-Episode Experiences With in Service Networks. A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, Arizona State University.

Mowen, J. C., & Minor, M. (1998). Consumer Behavior (Vol. 5). New Jersey: Prentince Hal.

Roberts, K. (2006). Love marks: The Future Beyond Brands. New York: Power House Books.

Sulistyaningrum, D. (2012). Pengaruh Brand Loyalty Terhadap Variety Seeking. Journal of Social and Industrial Psychology, 1, 42.

Tan, T. M., Liew, T. W., William, L. S., Michelle, O. B., & Tan, S. M. (2012). Consumer-based Brand Equity in the Service Shop. International Journal of Marketing Studies, 4(4).