An Analysis of Brand Relationship with the Perceptive of Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid

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Abstract: 
The construct of a brand relationship is quite complex. Numerous types of brand relationships can be identify and each of them is associated with different emotions and norms. Works on relationship marketing implies that developing relationship between consumers and their preferred brand is important. The presence of strong brand in the market is the source of various financial rewards to organization and due to this, creation strong brand is top priority for many organizations. Brand resonance is the term which focuses on the various stages of consumer brand relationship through which consumer connected with brand. Our move toward a science of consumer-brand relationships presents many challenges, many doubts that something so idiosyncratic can be brought to the level of generalizability that science requires. Literature of branding verify that the brand resonance is not depends on one thing only; it shows the impact of many brand related factors. Marketers must know the nature and mode of the consumer’s relationship with their brand. This study presents the brief discussion on brand resonance with help of literature of branding.

Key Word: Brand, brand resonance, brand relationship, brand attachment, brand loyalty.

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1. Introduction:

From last thousands of years no one can ignore existence of brand (Moore & Reid, 2008) but the present idea of brand is developed in nineteen century with the devolvement of trademark and attractive packaging (Fullerton, 1998), which we can look as a guarantee of authenticity (Feldwick, 1991).

There is only basic definition of brand which exists in the branding literature as a brand is the name, logo or trademark of product or organization. This contracted view is imitate in one of the most ordinary definition used, that of the American Marketing Association (AMA). The origins of branding were reflected in the (AMA) 1960 definition of the brand, which focused on tangible brand, attributes as points of differentiation:

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA): “A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of seller and differentiate them from those of competition”. One of the older and simpler definitions of brand was the one coined by David Ogilvy, when he said many years ago: “A Brand is the consumer's idea of a product”.

If we consider the following work done by many branding researcher the idea about brand relationship will gets clear.

There has been a significant amount of work done in the field of consumer brand relationships in the past decade and it is still an emerging area of study for researchers (Fournier, 1998) (Sahay & Sharma, 2010). More than course of decade, we have not only learned about the nature and function of relationship that consumers have with brands but also the process of development of consumers brand relationship. In broader sense research of brand relationship, grounded as it is in the thought of consumers as active meaning maker, which influence brand marketing decision in various context (Allen et al., 2008).

A number of authors believe brand as a partner in a dyadic relationship with the buyer (Aaker, 1995) (Aaker et al., 2004). According to Chestnut if we study brand with rational approach it will provide better and border understanding about the phenomenon arises between the consumer and brand. If we investigate branding as variable of consumer loyalty and customer retention that leads the result to consider loyalty as definite kind of relationship (Chestnut, 1978).
According to Ramesh Kumar (2006) brand relationship is nothing but to know how people make long-term commitments to inanimate objects that they buy and use, as well as help make, sell, and distribute. However, in keeping with relationship metaphor, we will refer to the brand, that marketer or the company as a practical partner in a Para-social relationship, and we will talk about the brand as if it were a partner playing a role in this relationship. In this association brand resonance is the source of identification and understanding the brand relationship between consumers and their brand. A number of factors associated with consumer behavior are covered under brand resonance—the relationship and identification consumers have with a brand. It is the depth of psychological bonding a consumer has with the brand. Brand resonance therefore is important for marketers to enable them to develop a long-term relationship with consumers through their brands. Brand loyalty, brand attachment, brand community and brand engagement are the four factors which strongly build brand resonance. Harley-Davidson, the well-known brand of motorcycle, scores on all these factors (it has about five hundred thousand members and 1200 chapters as a brand community called Harley Owners Group) (Kumar, 2006).

2. Literature Review:

Yet branding literature not provides a single definition which will explain the exact meaning and elucidation of brand relationship, branding literature present some construct of brand relationship which was presented by management fellows.

“Brand relationship defined as the relationship between the customer and brand, and it is relate to personal identification of the customer with the brand” (Jokanovic, 2005).

“Brand relationship brands may become an active relationship partner for the consumer and provide meanings in a psycho-socio-cultural context” (Fournier, 1998).

The domain of brand relationships is extremely complex. There are numerous types of brand relationships and multiple dimensions that characterize them. They involve varying types and intensities of emotions and normative processes. They vary in the motivations that drive them, the strength of the connection bonding the consumer with the brand, and the role of various meaning makers in creating, establishing, and expanding the brand’s relationship to the self. Moreover, the psychological and behavioral outcomes of brand relationships are also numerous and complex (MacInnis et al., 2009).
The work on brand resonance initiated after introducing this concept by Kevin lane Keller in 2001, the paper was published in Journal of marketing management (Keller, 2001). Brand resonance has important implications for marketers. A community association, in which users of a brand form a community, establishes emotional links and a sense of belonging with other consumers in the group. As the group grows, there is a possibility of intense brand loyalty, as consumers attempt to identify themselves with the group and brand usage is the ‘bridge’ which links consumers. Active engagement of consumers happens when they spend time, money and effort in the purchase and consumption of the brand. There may be a number of steps to be initiated over a period of time. It should be noted that a brand builds up brand resonance over time and that this cannot be built overnight (Kumar, 2006). As we understand the meaning of brand relationship in simple way we can say that it’s a relationship between consumer(s) and brand(s), but marketers’ point of view understanding of concept and its management is more important on this way they think about of brand relationship management.

As we know the development of brand is the process which includes identity, meaning, response and relationship but if helps to attachment of consumers towards brand (Keller, 2001). The studies on brand relationship reveal that strong brand relationship is important factor for promoting tolerance in the face of negative brand information. Past research shows that if marketers wants to convert negative brand information to positive then consumer brand relationship is the best competent to transform this information (Swaminathan, Page, & Gurhan-Canli, 2007). A strong consumer brand relationship is supposed to support relationship permanence and better tolerance when brand going from the negative circumstances (Ahluwalia et al., 2000).

According to Fournier (1998) consumer viewed brand as a relationship partner. There is different way to achieve this understanding of consumers about brand, one way is to brand are animated, humanized or personalized. She also explained the brand animated process through which the spirit of past or present other, by using brand-person associations, and through a complete anthropomorphization of the brand. Brand relationship also depends on the consumers lived experience, this define level of brand relationship. These relationships offer meanings to the consumer, some being functional and utilitarian, while others are psychological or emotional (Fournier, 1998).
2.1. Brand Relationship Management:

Relationship marketing defines the brand relationship management with the extent the scope of relationship marketing, according to Gronroos (1990), Shani, and Chalasani (1992) Brand Relationship Management (BRM) is:

“The integrated effort to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships between a brand and its consumers, and to continuously strengthen these relationships through interactive, individualized and value-added contacts, and a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises over a long period of time” (Gronroos & Christian, 1992) (Shani & Sujana, 1992).

Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) argue that similarities between consumer and organization laid the foundation of consumer brand relationship (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

The above construct of brand relationship management implies that brand relationship management is the activity associate with both rational exchange and transactional exchange. The efficiency of brand relationship management is based on the customer data and the process through which it is collected, managed and transform for managerial decision making.

2.2. Brand Resonance: Relationship Approach

Relationship marketing has become popular in recent years. It emphasizes maintaining ongoing relationship with existing customers, rather than the focusing only one attracting new customers. The intention to gain a greater proportion of an existing customers purchases over the prolonged period (Dibb & Simkin, 2008, p. 9). Relationship marketing has recently attracted considerable attention in the marketing literature. It focuses on the interaction between buyers and sellers and is concerned with winning and keeping customers by maintaining link between marketing products and services quality and customers services. The term relationship marketing was first proposed by Berry in the early 1980s, who defined it as attracting, maintaining and – in multi service organization – enhancing customer relationships. The basics proposition of relationship marketing is that selling organization should take a longer-term view of customers’ relationship to ensure that those customers converted are also retained (Dibb & Simkin, 2008, p. 10).

Building a strong brand has been shown to provide numerous financial rewards to firms, and has become a top priority for many organizations. The final step of the Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, brand resonance, focuses upon the ultimate relationship and level of
identification that the customer has with the brand. This model treats brand equity as a development process. Strong brands have to achieve the final level of development called resonance that is approached as loyalty. The advantage of “Brand resonance” lies on the duality of brand equity concept – consumer perceive brand equity on a basis of emotional and rational factors. It is important to mention that this model includes brand equity attributes as well as their links (Keller, 1993).

Brand resonance is characterized in terms of intensity or the depth of the psychological bond that customers have with the brand as well as the level of activity engendered by this loyalty (Keller, 2001). The theoretical framework of this study is based on the consumer based brand equity model called the Brand Resonance model developed by Keller (2001).

2.3. Construct of Brand Resonance:

Following are the same definitions of brand resonance; some are operational definition written by authors for particular research in the area branding.

- “Brand resonance refers to the nature of the relationship that customers have with the brand and the extent to which they feel that they are “in synch” with the brands” (Keller, 2001) (Keller, 2008).

- “Brand resonance can be defined as how well you connect with your customer both formally and casually. Creating resonance with your brand means your message has to permeate consumers’ minds and lives” (Stratfold, 2012).

- Brand resonance is the extent to which a consumer develops strong behavioral, psychological, and social bonds with the brands s/he consumes (Rindfleisch et al., 2005).

- Brand Resonance refers to the nature of the relationship that the consumer has with the brand (Bourbab & Boukill, 2008).

On the basis of above definitions of brand resonance we can say that brand resonance is nothing but the relationship and level of attachment that customer has with its preferred brand.
2.4. Nature of Brand Resonance:

A number of concepts have also been put forth as key indicators or consequences of the relationship a consumer forms with a brand. Brand engagement (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2001), brand attachment (Park et al., 2010), brand love (Batra et al., 2011); and soon have all been put forth as outcomes of a brand relationship with conceptual and empirical implications. Brand resonance is a concept which has been proposed to characterize brand relationships. Brand resonance refers to the nature of the consumer–brand relationship and, more specifically, the extent to which a person feels that he or she resonates or connects with a brand and feels “in sync” with it (Keller, 2001). With true brand resonance, customers have a high degree of loyalty marked by a close relationship with the brand such that they actively seek different means to interact with the brand and share their experiences with others. Examples of brands which historically have had high resonance include Apple, Harley-Davidson, Nike, and MTV (Keller, 2001).

Brand resonance can be usefully characterized in terms of two dimensions: intensity and activity. Intensity refers to the strength of the attitudinal attachment to the brand and sense of community with others. In other words, how deeply felt is brand loyalty? What is the depth of the psychological bond that customers have with the company behind the brand and/or other brand users? Activity refers to the behavioral changes engendered by this loyalty. How frequently do customers buy and use the brand? How often do customers engage in other activities not related to purchase or consumption? In other words, in how many different ways does brand loyalty manifest itself in day-to-day consumer behavior? For example, to what extent does the customer seek out brand information, events, and other loyal customers? Brand resonance is posited to result from a sequence of steps, a process in which each step is contingent on successfully achieving the previous step. All the steps involve accomplishing certain objectives with customers — both existing and potential. In short, brand resonance stresses the importance of understanding the cognitive and affective consequences of brand relationships — how consumers think, feel, and act — to guide research and planning for marketers. It also emphasizes a hierarchy in brand development and the importance of sequential steps in brand-building (Keller, 2012).
3. Brand Resonance Model:

At first brand resonance concept originated by Keller in 1993, according to Keller Brand resonance refers to the nature of the relationship that customers have with the brand and the extent to which they feel that they are “in synch” with the brands” (Keller, 1993). With the consideration of the definition of brand resonance which was coined by Keller brand resonance is the nature of relationship and level of identification the customer has with the brand. The meaning of brand resonance reveals that the brand resonance is nothing but the relationship between consumer and their preferred brand (Keller, 2001). Brand resonance plays a crucial role in customer relationship management and the development of sustainable brand equity between customers and the brand (Moore & Wurster, 2007). In true brand resonance customer possesses a high degree of loyalty build due to close relationship with brand in which customer actively seek to interact with the brand and ready to share their experience to other. While we are talking about true brand resonance that achieved by some brand such as Harley-Davidson, Google, and IBM etc. the important of brand resonance model is to provide guideline and road map for brand building. Brand resonance provides the standard through which we can assess progress of brand building efforts and it also guide for marketing research initiatives. (Keller, 2009).

The basic level of brand resonance is described as behavioral loyalty and stronger level of brand resonance is described as active engagement.

With the interpretation of above model the final step of brand resonance shows the attachment and personal identification of the customer has with the brand. Brand resonance refers to the nature of the relationship customers have with the brand and whether they feel in synch with the brand. Brand resonance stage signalize the strength of psychological bond customers have with the brand and the degree of customer brand loyalty Brand resonance can be divided into four categories; these categories based on the strength of customer relationship that they has with brand.

3.1. Loyalty:

Loyalty is the initial stage of brand resonance formation, it characterized by repeat purchase and amount of category volume attributed to the brand. Here we can analyze how frequently
consumers buy a brand and what quantity they purchased. We can measure brand loyalty in terms of re-buy (Keller, 2008).

3.2. Attachment:
In the stage of attachment customer buy out of necessity but it is depends if brand is the only product easily available and this only product one they can afford. For the creation of resonance the customer preferred brand must have something unique in border context. For example, customers with a great deal of attitudinal attachment to a brand may state they "love" it and describe it as one of their favorite possessions or view it as a "little pleasure" they look forward to (Keller, 1993).

3.3. Community:
Keller define this stage as ‘sense of community’ this stage characterized by attachment of consumer with brand through brand community. Consumers identify himself with brand

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**Figure: 1- Brand Resonance Model.**
community is a reflected as an important social phenomenon, through which consumers feels a affiliation with other people that are associated with brand (Keller, 2008).

3.4. Engagement:
Engagement is the tip of brand resonance pyramid here we can see the strongest affiliation of brand loyalty, this stage occur when consumers ready to invest time, energy, money or other resource into the brand, beyond those expended during purchase and consumption. For example consumers visit to brand related website. In this stage, customers themselves become brand evangelists and help to communicate about the brand and strengthen the brand ties of others. Strong attachment and/or sense of community are typically necessary for active engagement with the brand to occur (Keller, 1993) (Keller, 2001).

4. Work on Brand Resonance:
Keller proposed four main constructs, namely, brand identity, brand meaning, brand responses and brand relationships. These four constructs consist of six “brand building blocks”, which he assembled as a brand pyramid. The basic premise of the model is that the power of a brand lies in what customers learnt, felt, saw and heard about the brand over time. The creation of brand equity involves reaching the top of the brand pyramid. According to Keller (2001), the six building blocks are: (1) Brand salience, which relates to how often the brand is evoked in purchasing and consumption situations, (2) Brand performance, the extent to which the product meets customers’ functional needs, (3) Brand imagery, which relates to the extrinsic properties of the product, (4) Brand judgments, which focus on customers’ personal opinions and evaluations, (5) Brand feelings that are customers’ emotional responses and reactions towards the brand, and (6) Brand resonance, which refers to the nature of the customer-brand relationship and the extent to which customers feel that they are “in sync” with the brand (Keller, 2001) (Keller, 2008).

Brand resonance refers to the relationship between brand and its users including consumers’ willingness to purchase and to recommend to others. The power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers, in the effect of what they have experienced and learned about the brand on their responses to the brand over time (Keller, 2000). Brand resonance could help predict repurchase intention, future earnings and firm value in various markets (Aaker & R.Jacobson, 2001).
Moreover, brand resonance, i.e. the interactive relationship between customers and brand, can lead to repeat purchase, which can help produce more profits by reducing the cost. A strong customer-brand relationship can also make customers more receptive to new products or extensions under the same brand. A pyramid is identified in which corporation ability association and brand awareness are in the first level, quality perception is in the second level and brand resonance sits at the top of the pyramid in level three. It is a simple way to view the relationships and ascertain cause and effect for a given brand (Wang et al., 2008). In the brand resonance model, customers with true brand resonance, have a high degree of loyalty and actively seek means to interact with the brand and share their experiences with others (Atilgan et al., 2005). A strong brand should satisfy customer. The most powerful block is brand resonance. Therefore, the strongest brands will be those to which customers become so attached that they, in effect, become evangelistic and actively seek means to interact with the brand and eagerly share their experiences with others (Keller, 1993).

On the basis of above literature we can say that the brand resonance is nothing but the brand relationship that consumers have with the brand (Keller, 2008) (Bourbab & Boukill, 2008) (Stratfold, 2012) (Rindfleisch et al., 2005) (Esade, p. 16). Brand relationship is one of the component or element of brand equity as the model presented by different management researchers or experts. As brand resonance model, suggest that the brand resonance is nothing but the brand relationship between consumers and their preferred brand. The above literature of brand resonance indicates that there is a four kind of relationship that consumers has with brand such as brand loyalty(Behavioral Loyalty), brand community(sense of Community), brand attachment(Attitudinal Attachment), and brand engagement(Active Engagement). As many management researchers define brand resonance as nature of the relationship that customers have with the brand (Keller, 2001) (Keller, 2008), association between consumers and their brand (Stratfold, 2012), strong behavioral, psychological, and social bonds between consumers and their brands (Rindfleisch et al., 2005), the relationship and level of identification of the customer with a brand (Esade, p. 16), nature of the relationship that the consumer has with the brand (Bourbab & Boukill, 2008).
5. **Discussion:**

Considering increases in competition among organizations and slow of growth new consumers, companies seek new ways to raise their selling abilities. The most popular trend is concentration on increasing purchases of existing customers through brand relationship. In this way, companies must learn about customer performance, as this is important for in persuading customers to purchase companies brands, which leads to purchase repetition. (Agarwal & Rao, 1996).

The relationship that consumers develop with brands has become a topic of increasing interest and attention in the marketing literature. This interest stems from general acceptance of relationship principles in product and service marketing, as well as practitioner acceptance of the evidence of relationship benefits (Aaker et al., 1995) (Fournier, 1998). Several brand researchers have advanced ideas about how and why consumer-brand relationships develop (Aaker, 1997). Current literature review does not reveal exploration of the area of consumer – brand relationships of young adults with specific product categories. No specific research in customer – brand relationships of young adults was track, despite the fact that in the many sector young people are advanced users and trendsetters such as cell phone users (Antoine, 2004). Researchers claim that Generation Y has a unique attitude towards brands (Lazarevic & Petrovic-Lazarevic, 2007), which makes them interesting as a research target in the area of consumer – brand relationships (Jurisic & Azevedo, 2010).

6. **Conclusion and Scope for Future Research:**

Brand resonance is the “relationship between consumer(s) and their brand(s); this relationship may be in the form of behavioral, psychological, and social bonding” (Keller, 2008) (Bourbab & Boukil, 2008) (Stratford, 2012) (Rindfleisch et al., 2005) (Esade, p. 16) (Keller, 2001). Based on above construct of brand resonance it reveals that brand resonance and brand, relationship is merely same concept and with the consideration of above construct, we can use brand resonance instant of brand relationship in the branding research.

The literature of branding does not explain the impact and relationship of demographic characteristics of consumers with brand relationship. How the demographics characteristics of consumers helps to building a brand relationship. There is need to find out that whether there is associations between demographics of consumers and brand relationship. Brand resonance
model shows that there is way of development of brand relationship. First stage is brand loyalty, if the consumers become a brand loyal they moves in to the brand attachment stage and then they attached with brand community of their favorite brand, the last stage of formation of brand resonance is brand engagement when consumers start to spent their time, energy on their favorite brand. Branding researchers will have to ascertain the brand resonance patterns amongst young consumers with reference to different product categories. With future research prospective we need to test, brand resonance model with present market setting, also we need to think or need to add more variables that are associated with brand relationship, such as brand satisfaction and brand trust. It will be more interesting to look whether consumers going through every stage of brand resonance or not.

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