Assessing the Literature on Brand Equity: From Past, Present to Future

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ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received 13 November 2013
Received in revised form 25 December 2013
Accepted 31 December 2013
Available online 1 February 2014

Abstract
Background: Brand equity is considered to be one of the most important organizational resources. The history of academic research on brand equity traces back to late 1980s. Until now several contributions have been made from past scholars on this concept from different perspectives. The literature review on this topic reveals that past researchers examined this concept in different country contexts, sectors, and product lines using variety of research methodologies. The focus of research on brand equity has been changing across different decades. Objectives: The objective of this paper was to review the literature on brand equity published since 1990s to date with special focus on various issues relevant to brand equity in different contexts. Conclusion: In 1990s, research focused on the measurement of brand equity, whereas in 2000s the emphasis was shifted towards revealing significant variables as antecedents and consequences of brand equity. In recent years as well, researchers have been focusing on finding new antecedents and consequences of brand equity. The contribution paid by past scholars for this concept is although significant but future research can reveal new perspectives on brand equity using improved research methodologies. There is a host of research on this concept from the quantitative field, but qualitative research can add to this field by employing typical methodologies and designs.

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of brand equity was initially brought into the business literature during the 1980s. Within the period of 1990s, the concept has gain significant attention from academic scholars, which in turn resulted in the publication of several books and articles (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 1998; Keller, 1998). Brand equity still the center of attention for many scholars (Keller, 2001; Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000; Rust, Zeithaml and Lemon, 2004; Sirarmet, Balachander and Kalwani, 2007; Chang and Liu, 2009; Chen and Tseng, 2010; Valette-Florence et al., 2011; Sedaghat, Sedaghat and Moakher, 2012). At the present time, brand equity turned into a strategic marketing tool for business to gain sustainable competitive advantage (Sze, 2012). The excellent management of the brand will have an imperative influence on the position of the organization in the market place and it also improves the profit and sales of that organization (Sze, 2012). Besides, having a powerful brand of an organization will assist consumer to identify their brand easily.

The area of brand equity is progressively becoming the interest of several marketing researchers as they have indicated that strong brands are one of the most important assets that successful organizations have. Indeed, the strategic management of the brand has been considered as the means to the obtaining of competitive advantage over competitors (Choi et al., 2011). As indicated by Amini, Darani, Afsahi, and Amini (2012), having preferred image and positive brand equity will establish a strategic position for the firm in the market. This position plays a central role for gaining sustainable advantage. Smith and Brynjolfsson (2001) demonstrated that the brand is the main factor that influences consumers’ selection, and it facilitates the process of search for a particular product or service. For that reason, brand has been recognized as the key marketing tool to differentiate a brand from its rivals.

Recently, brand equity has received a noteworthy research attention from several academic scholars in different contexts (Thiripurasundari and Natarajan, 2011). Accordingly, present marketing research is attempting to conceptualize measure and manage brand equity in a manner that enhances the market performance of the brand and assist the organization in making strategic decisions.

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This paper offers a systematic review of the literature on brand equity conceptualization and measurement, and concludes with some directions for future research. This article throws light on the conceptualization and operationalization of brand equity during the last two decades. It presents a critical review of studies conducted on brand equity with reference to their research designs and contexts. This article starts by commenting on the concept of brand equity with reference to various definitions given by scholars on brand equity. The next section presents critical review of literature on brand equity. In the end, conclusions and future research directions are discussed.

**The Concept of Brand Equity:**

The construct of brand equity has been viewed from two main perspectives in the literature, the financial perspective, and the consumer-based perspective (Kim, Kim and An, 2003). In particular, the financial perspective underlines the overall value of the brand and answers the question of how well the business performs in the market (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011) Hence, the financial perspective permits firms to take out the financial value of the brand from the total value of the firm. Simon and Sullivan (1993) were among the first scholars to provide a method to measure brand equity mathematically. They measures brand equity on the basis of financial market value of the firm. In contrast to the financial perspective of brand equity, a more consumer-oriented approach flourished as an alternative. The main purpose of the consumer-based perspective is to determine how consumers respond to a brand (Keller, 1993; Shocker, Srivastava and Ruekert, 1994). Based on this perspective, brand equity has been defined by Keller (1993) as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.

Reviewing the existing literature on brand equity, there is a variety of definitions and dimensions for brand equity. Although there is no standard definition of brand equity, there is at least agreement in that brand equity signifies the added value that the brand endows to the product or service (Farquhar 1989, p: RC7). This value provides a linkage between the past experience of the brand and its future expectations (Keller, 2003). The following table illustrates the existing definitions for the concept of brand equity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Definition of Brand Equity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaker (1991, p: 15)</td>
<td>“A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park and Srivivasan (1994, p: 271)</td>
<td>“The added value endowed by the brand to the product as perceived by a consumer”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995, p: 13)</td>
<td>“The enhancement in the perceived utility and desirability a brand name confers on a product”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood (2000)</td>
<td>A relationship between customers and brands resulting in a profit to be realized at a future date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoo et al. (2000, p: 169)</td>
<td>“The difference in consumer choice between the focal branded product and an unbranded product given the same level of product features”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rust et al. (2004, p: 4)</td>
<td>“The sum of customers’ assessments of a brand’s intangible qualities, positive or negative”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey and Ball (2006)</td>
<td>The value that customers and business owners associate with a brand, and the influence of this association on customers’ behavior and subsequent financial performance of the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatjanasaregagul and Wang (2007)</td>
<td>The positive marketing result from a certain good or service that has a brand name, such as high brand preference, market share or profit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasin et al. (2007, p: 39)</td>
<td>“The tremendous value inherent in a well known brand name”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldfarb, Lu and Moorthy (2009, p: 69)</td>
<td>“The difference between equilibrium profit for the branded product and an unbranded, store brand, equivalent”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen and Tseng (2010, p: 25)</td>
<td>“The incremental value of a product due to the brand name”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis and Lombart (2010)</td>
<td>The added value brought by a brand to its products and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haeffner, Deli-Gray and Rosenbloom (2011, p: 251)</td>
<td>“A summary measure of a brand’s ability to attract and retain loyal customers expressed in monetary terms”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedaghat et al. (2012, p: 5)</td>
<td>“The intangible value that accrues to a company as a result of its successful efforts to establish a strong brand”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidently, a variety of researches in the field of brand equity through the years result in diverse sorts of dimension for brand equity that can be related to a brand. However, the frequent denominator in all models is the use of one or more dimension of the Aaker model (Keller 1993; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Villarejo-Ramos and Nchez-Franco, 2005; Yasin et al., 2007; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010). Consequently, the consumer-based brand equity is an asset of four dimensions that are brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty.

Although there is a diversity of definitions for brand equity as suggested by several scholars, but it can be noticed that majority of them point towards the agreement that brand equity is about providing added value to
the customer in various ways. In fact, it can be derived that brand equity reflects consumers’ evaluation of a brand. Therefore, brand equity for any brand must obtain favorable evaluation and perception of users towards its characteristics.

**Empirical Research on Brand Equity:**

A critical review of past studies indicates that the variable of brand equity was most frequently used as dependent variable (Yoo et al., 2000; Ha, Janda and Muthaly, 2010; Valette-Florence, Guizani and Merunka, 2011; Sedaghat et al., 2012). This indicates that multiple researchers in the past have been interested in discovering the influences on brand equity or its determinants. For instance, Valette-Florence et al. (2011) studied the impact of brand personality and sales promotions on brand equity in context of France. The study used survey questionnaire to collect the data from a sample of 538 customers of three different brands (coffee, athletic shoes, and cars). The results indicated that brand personality has a positive effect on brand equity, whereas sales promotion intensity can harm brand equity and has negative effect on its creation process.

Similarly, a recent study was conducted by Sedaghat et al. (2012) to investigate the influence of marketing mix elements (Advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing) on brand equity. The data were collected via a survey questionnaire from 200 respondents. The outcomes of their study revealed that marketing mix elements have positive effects on brand equity. However, certain previous studies had certain limitations. For instance, study of Sedaghat et al. (2012); Sahin, Zehir, and Kitapç (2011) relied on small sample of respondents in contrast to study of Tong and Hawley (2009); Valette-Florence et al. (2011); Ha et al. (2010) which utilized a large sample of respondents. In terms of the sample size, study of Evanschitzky and Woisetschläger (2007) was a rich study as it relied on sample of 5331 respondents. However, the study took secondary data for the analysis.

Moreover, in other studies brand equity was used as a mediating variable (Kim, Kim, Kim and Kng, 2008; Chattopadhyay, Shivani and Krishnan, 2010; Huang and Sarigöllü, 2011; Ko, Kim, Kim, Li, Zou and Zhang, 2009). The inclusion of brand equity as a mediator variable in different research frameworks highlights the importance of discovering antecedents and consequences of brand equity in the same research studies. For example, Kim et al. (2008) conducted a study to identify the factors that influence the creation of brand equity in hospitality industry. The data were collected through survey questionnaire from 532 respondents. The results suggested that hospitals can create a strong image and positive brand equity if they can manage their customer relationships well.

Chattopadhyay et al. (2009) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between marketing mix elements and brand equity in context of automobile brands in India. The study has relied on a large sample size by which the data were collected by survey questionnaires from 644 consumers. The main finding for this study demonstrated that marketing mix elements are necessary for building brand equity. It has indicated that both direct and indirect marketing mix variables have a direct influence on the on the perceived quality of the brand and hence on brand equity of a product.

The review also demonstrates that brand equity was also used as independent variable for certain studies (Baldauf, Cravens and Binder, 2003; Hu, 2011). This indicates the importance of knowing how brand equity affects other variables and what consequences it could produce if put to test. For instance, Baldauf et al. (2003) conducted a study to investigate the effect of perceived brand equity on brand profitability, brand sales volume, and perceived customer value. The study used survey questionnaire to collect the data from a sample of 154 tile retailers in Austria. As a result, the findings indicated strong support for the dimensions of perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness as antecedents of firm performance, customer value and willingness to buy.

Similarly, Hu (2011) conducted a study to determine the relationship between brand equity, marketing mix strategy and service quality with customer loyalty. The study implemented survey questionnaire to collect the data from 200 customers of four retail chain stores in Taiwan. The findings revealed that brand equity, marketing mix strategy, and service quality had significant and positive relationship to customer loyalty.

**Brand Equity in Manufacturing and Service Sectors:**

Brand equity has received significant attention in previous research in manufacturing as well as service sectors. For instance, several scholars such as (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2005; Kabadayi, Aygun and Ciplı, 2007; Yasin et al., 2007; Tong and Hawley, 2009; Sahin et al., 2011; Valette-Florence et al., 2011; He, Li and Harris, 2012; Nemati, 2009; Shahin, Kazemi and Mahyari, 2013) analyzed brand equity in the manufacturing sector. For instance, a significant body of research was centered on testing brand equity variable for FMCGs (Iranzadeh et al., 2012; Mohammad, 2012), mobile phones (Kabadayi et al., 2007; Akbar and Azhar, 2010; He and Li, 2011), and the automobile sector (Evanschitzky and Woisetschläger, 2007; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010).

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2005) conducted a study to assess the importance of brand trust in the development of brand equity for Shampoo and beer. The data was based on a survey conducted in Spain from 271 customers. The results indicated that customer satisfaction had significant positive effect on brand equity.
trust. In addition, the findings of the study revealed that brand trust was positively related to brand equity. Moreover, Yasin et al. (2007) conducted a study to investigate the influences of brand’s country-of-origin image on the development of brand equity for three different household electrical appliances, particularly televisions, refrigerators and air-conditioners, in the context of Malaysia. The data were gathered through survey from respondents. The results confirmed that brand’s country-of-origin image influenced brand equity, either directly or indirectly, through the mediating effects of brand distinctiveness, brand loyalty and brand awareness/associations.

In addition, Tong and Hawley (2009) in their study aimed to explore the effect of marketing activities on the creating process of brand equity in the Chinese clothing market. A survey questionnaire was utilized to gather the data from respondents. The findings indicated positive effects of marketing activities (store image, celebrity endorsement, event sponsorship, web advertising, and non-price promotions) on the formation of brand equity. Hence, different studies on brand equity in the manufacturing context strengthened the body of knowledge on this variable.

On the other hand, brand equity was investigated in the service sectors such as hotel and tourism industry (Vatjanasaregagul and Wang, 2007; Ahmad and Hashim, 2011; Li and Krit, 2012), banking sector (Siddiqi, 2011; Ha et al., 2010; Hosseini and Zaribaf, 2011), education sector (Mutsikwa, Dhliwayo and Basera, 2013), telecommunication sector (Akbar and Parvez, 2009; Roostika, 2011; Nawaz and Usman, 2011; Karunanith and Sivesa, 2013), and airline sector (Budiarti, Surachman, Hawidjojo and Djumahir, 2013).

Interestingly, most of studies used the similar antecedents of brand equity such as service quality, satisfaction, and trust in their investigation. For example, Kim et al. (2008) conducted a study to identify the influence of customer relationship on brand equity in context of Korean hospitality industry. The data was collected via survey questionnaire from 323 respondents. The results indicated that hospitals could be successful in creating strong image and positive brand equity if they could manage their customer relationships well. Similarly, Siddiqi (2011) conducted a study to assess the interrelationships between service quality attributes, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in the retail banking sector in Bangladesh. The survey was conducted to collect data from respondents. The result showed that all the service quality attributes were positively related to customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction was positively related to brand loyalty.

Akbar and Parvez (2009) in their study aimed to investigate the effects of customers’ perceived service quality, trust, and customer satisfaction on brand loyalty. The data were collected from 304 customers of a major private telecommunication company in Bangladesh. The results of the study showed that brand trust and brand satisfaction were significantly and positively related to brand loyalty. In addition, customer satisfaction was found to be an important mediator between perceived service quality and brand loyalty. Like manufacturing sector, researches conducted on brand equity in the services sector also enhanced the understanding of this variable in this context. However, the review of literature indicates that several other variables can be tested along with brand equity in different research frameworks. So, more research could be conducted for these sectors as well as future studies can compare antecedents and consequences of brand equity any manufacturing and service sector in the same research framework.

**Patterns in Past Research:**

The review of the literature in brand equity field has identified interesting patterns within past research. In terms of regional and country focus of the studies, not surprisingly the analysis shows that the majority of research on brand equity were either conducted in Asian context specifically South Asia (Akbar and Azhar, 2011; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010; Thiripurasundari and Natarajan, 2011; Nawaz and Usman, 2011; Kiyani, Niazi, Rizvi and khan, 2012) and South East Asia (Vatjanasaregagul and Wang, 2007; Xu and Chan, 2010; Hu, 2011; Amaretta and Hendriana, 2011; Tu, Wang and Chang, 2012; He et al., 2012; Budiarti, Surachman, Hawidjojo and Djumahir, 2013). Moreover, brand equity was studied in foreign countries such as United States (Angulo, Fernando and Rialp, 2006; Nowak, Thach and Olsen, 2006; Lee and Back, 2010; Choi et al., 2011), Europe (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2005; Ha et al., 2010; Valette-Florence et al., 2011; Gil, Andrés and Salinas, 2007), and Australia (Pappu and Quester, 2006; Pappu, Quester and Cooksey, 2007; So and King, 2010).

However, the fact that only a minority of research were conducted about brand equity in Middle East (Mohammad, 2012; Parahoo, 2012) and African contexts (Viosca, Bergiel and Balsmeier, 2004; Nel, North, Myburg and Hern, 2009; Umar, Mat, Tahir and Alekam, 2012). It is evident from the analysis of research frameworks of the past studies that most of the studies have been examining similar factors over and over in their research designs and certain contemporary issues were left untested in their research. For example, most of the studies involving brand equity tested similar variables in their research such as marketing mix, service quality, country of origin, trust, and customer satisfaction.

To illustrate, the studies of Yoo et al. (2000); Kabadayi et al. (2007); Taleghani and Almasi (2011) utilized similar variables like marketing mix elements and brand equity in their research frameworks and tested them either as independent, or mediating or dependent variables in the analysis. There are as such limited researches
that used contemporary marketing issues in their research frameworks. For instance, it is clear that future research should seek to integrate more diverse research traditions into the international branding field in these countries. As a consequence, future research would be in a position to contribute to the body of knowledge by addressing the under- and unresearched regions of the world: Middle East, Latin America, and Africa (Whitelock and Fastoso, 2007).

**Previous Research Interests in Brand Equity:**

The review of empirical research on brand equity with respect to research designs, contexts and sectors has been presented earlier. It indicates that a sizeable research has focused on this variable with respect to different perspectives. However, by looking at the history of research on brand equity, it seems that the focus of research on brand equity has been changing over the years. Research has been getting different directions and interests in examining the variable of brand equity. The following table synthesizes the previous research interests on brand equity with respect to different time periods.

### Table 2: Summary of Previous Research on Brand Equity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
<th>2010s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antecedents of brand equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Brand Personality</td>
<td>(Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Vatjanasaregagul and Wang, 2007; Ha, 2009; Alexandris et al., 2008).</td>
<td>(He and Li, 2011; Mahf, Naeem and Nasir, 2011; Li and Krit, 2012; Budarti et al., 2013).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Service Quality</td>
<td>(Yasin et al., 2007; Ko et al., 2009).</td>
<td>(Chen, Wu and Chen, 2011; Norouzi and Hosienabadi, 2011; Sanay and Datta, 2011; Shahnin et al., 2013).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Relationship Marketing</td>
<td>Cobb-Walgren, Ruble and Donthu, 1995</td>
<td>(Chang and Liu, 2009; Broyles, Schumann and Leingpibul, 2009; Kim and Cavusgil, 2009; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alema, 2005; Pappu and Quester, 2006).</td>
<td>(Biedebach and Marell, 2010; So and King, 2010; Rios and Riquelme, 2010; Tsang, Lee and Li, 2011; Chen and Green, 2012; Mourad et al., 2011; Benoit-Moreau and Parquet, 2011; Ha et al., 2010; Allaway, Huddleston, Whipple and Ellinger, 2011; Akbar and Azhar, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Others</td>
<td>Cobb-Walgren, Ruble and Donthu, 1995</td>
<td>(Chang and Liu, 2009; Broyles, Schumann and Leingpibul, 2009; Chang, Hs and Chung, 2008.).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of brand equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Purchase Intention</td>
<td>Cobb-Walgren, Ruble and Donthu, 1995</td>
<td>(Chang and Liu, 2009; Broyles, Schumann and Leingpibul, 2009; Chang, Hsu and Chung, 2008.).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Company Image</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kim et al., 2008)</td>
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</table>
Brand Equity in 1990s:

“The "brand" concept evolved in the eighteenth century as the names and pictures of animals, places of origin, and famous people replaced many producers' names. The new purpose was to strengthen the association of the brand name with a product. Producers wanted both to make their products easier for consumers to remember and to differentiate their products further from the competition. In the nineteenth century, a related purpose of branding emerged. A brand was used to enhance a product's perceived value through such associations. The purposes and strategies of branding have evolved even further in the twentieth century”.

(Farquhar, 1989, p: RC-7)

Most of the research on brand equity in the period of 1980s, and 1990s has focused mainly on measuring brand equity (Farquhar, 1989; Simon and Sullivan, 1990; Keller, 1993; Lassar et al., 1995; Aaker, 1996). Several scholars in that period have been working on discovering methodologies or techniques to measure brand equity in their researches. Researchers have been relying on quantitative as well as qualitative research designs to work out better methodologies for measuring brand equity. For example, Simon and Sullivan (1990), established that brand equity can be measured according to the financial market value of the company, by which the evaluation technique derives the value of brand equity from the value of the company’s other assets. Similarly, Keller (1993) suggested that brand equity can be assessed by financial based measures either through the asset valuation of the balance sheet or by using subjective multiplier of brand profit based on the performance of the brand along the following dimensions (stability, leadership, market stability, internationality, trend, support, and protection).

Lassar et al. (1995) suggested that brand equity can be measured from two different perspectives - financial and customer based measure. Indeed, the financial perspective of brand equity is based on the financial asset value it creates to the business franchise, whereas, customer-based brand equity can be measured based on five fundamental dimensions: performance, value, social image, trustworthiness and commitment. Nonetheless, Lassar et al. (1995) focused on measuring brand equity from the customer’s-based perspective assuming that customer-based brand equity is the main source for incremental financial gains to the firm. Besides, managers do not have a customer-based measure to assess brand equity.

Aaker (1996) verified that the challenge for numerous brands was to develop credible and sensitive measures of brand strength that supplemented financial measures with brand asset measures. Aaker added that general improvement in brand equity measurement would assist managers to develop valid instruments for individual brands. Aaker (1996) developed ten criteria for measuring brand equity, they include (price premium, satisfaction/loyalty, perceived quality, leadership, perceived value, brand personality, organizational associations, brand awareness, market share, and price and distribution indices) and grouped them into five categories. The first four categories represented the perceptions of customer towards the brand along the four dimensions of brand equity—brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations. The last five categories incorporated two sets of market behavior measures that represented information acquired from market based information rather than directly from customers. Aaker (1996) pointed out that traditional financial measures such as sales, cost, margins, profit, and return on assets usually dominated brand objectives and performance measures. However, these measures tend to be short term and to provide little incentive for investment in brand building.

Although brand equity measurement has received considerable attention, no agreement exists about which are the best measures to capture this multifaceted and complex construct (Mackay, 2001; Raggio and Leone, 2007). Part of the reason is the different perspectives implemented to conceptualize and measure this variable (Christodoulides and de Chernatony, 2010).

Brand Equity in the 2000s:

The issues pertaining to brand equity in the early 2000s were mainly concentrated on conceptualizing and measuring brand equity (Kim and Kim, 2006; Pappu et al., 2005; Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Atiglan et al., 2009; Mackay, 2001; de Chernatony et al., 2001), along with antecedents of brand equity with regard to marketing mix elements (Yoo et al., 2000; Palazón-Vidal and Delgado-Ballester, 2005; Sriram et al., 2007; Tong and Hawley, 2009). Additionally, certain researchers have been working on examining other antecedents of brand equity such as brand trust (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alema, 2005), country of origin (Yasin et al., 2007; Ko et al. 2009), customer satisfaction (Pappu and Quester, 2006) and service quality (Vatjanasarengagul and Wang, 2007; Ha, 2009; Alexandris et al., 2008).

Rajh (2005) conducted a study to determine the effect of marketing mix elements on brand equity. Survey method was utilized to collect relevant data from respondents, and the findings showed that marketing mix elements play an important role in building brand equity. Similarly, Chang et al. (2008) integrated a model to assess the influence of two antecedents (brand attitude and brand image) on brand equity. Their study focused on service brands, specifically eighteen companies from three service categories. Data in their study were collected through questionnaire from respondents. Generally, the results revealed that brand attitude and brand image had significant influence on the creation of brand equity.
Some scholars have been investigating the consequences of brand equity in terms of purchase intention (Chang and Liu, 2009; Broyles, Schumann and Leingpibul, 2009), and company image (Kim et al., 2008). A few researches have also focused on studying the interrelationships among the dimensions of brand equity (Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Bamert and Wehrli, 2005). Compared to 1990s where the focus of research on the topic was almost exclusively laid on the measurement aspects of brand equity, in 2000s the research got new directions and new ideas were explored in those years.

Chang and Liu (2009) conducted a study to investigate the effect of brand equity on brand preference and purchase intentions in the service industries in context of Taiwan. Data collection was based on a questionnaire sent to 90 customers of mobile telecommunication services, ADSL services, and bank credit card services. Their findings indicated that brand equity plays a significant role in predicting both brand preference and purchase intention. This result was supported by Myers (2003) who found a significant relationship between both variables indicating that the brand with the higher equity significantly lead to greater preference.

Kayaman and Arasli (2007) conducted a study to assess interrelations of the four brand equity dimensions; brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand image in hotel industry. Data were collected through questionnaire, and the sample comprised of 345 customers from 11 different countries whose accommodation in Turkey. Generally, the results proposed associative relationships among the consumer-based brand equity dimensions.

**Brand Equity in More Recent Years:**

Brand equity has gained significant attention from several scholars in the recent years. Their focus was on conceptualization and measurement of brand equity (Chiang and Lee, 2011; Lee and Leh, 2011), finding its antecedents (So and King, 2010; Rios and Riquelme, 2010; Buil, de Chernatony and Martinez, 2011; Zaribaf and Hosseini, 2011; Iranzadeh, Norouzi and heravi, 2012;), and examining the interrelationships among brand equity dimensions (Taleghani and Almasi, 2011; Chen and Tseng, 2010; Balaji, 2011; Iranzadeh, Norouzi and heravi, 2012).

Valette-Florence et al. (2011) conducted a study to investigate the impact of brand personality and sales promotions on brand equity. The study focused mainly on three different brands (coffee, athletic shoes, and cars). The data were collected through survey questionnaire from 538 students and university staff in France. In general, the findings indicated a positive effect of brand personality on brand equity; whereas sales promotion had negative effect on brand equity formation.

It can be noticed from the previous research that the greatest attention was laid on the investigation of brand equity antecedents. For instance, numerous researchers focused on investigating the effect of marketing mix elements (Hosseini, 2011; Amaretta and Hendriana, 2011; Iranzadeh, Norouzi and heravi, 2012; Chen and Green, 2011), country of origin (Chen, Wu and Chen, 2011; Norouzi and Hosienabadi, 2011; Sanyal and Datta, 2011), and shoppers’ age (Chen and Green, 2012) on developing brand equity. Furthermore, a significant amount of literature has been done to understand the interrelationships among brand equity dimensions through the examination brand equity dimensions on each other (Taleghani and Almasi, 2011; Chen and Tseng, 2010; Balaji, 2011; Iranzadeh, Norouzi and heravi, 2012).

For instance, Taleghani and Almasi (2011) conducted a study to determine the interrelationships between the dimensions of brand equity (Brand awareness, perceived quality of brand, brand image and brand associations), and their effect on overall brand equity in Iranian context. The results indicated that brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty significantly contributed to brand equity, while, brand association was insignificant and didn’t have any direct effect on brand equity. Likewise, the dimensions of brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association, were positively associated with brand loyalty. Consequently, brand image, perceived quality, and brand awareness had both direct and indirect effect on brand equity.

**Conclusion and Future Research Directions:**

Brand equity is one of the main assets for any organization. The purpose of this paper was to shed light on the concept of brand equity, and provide critical review for this variable since the beginning of research on this topic. Recently, with increased competition, it has become important to understand brand equity as it plays an important role in brand success and creating sustainable competitive advantage. This paper has also summarized empirical studies that used brand equity as independent, mediator, or dependent variable to look for the trend from past and current research for gaining more insight on this variable. A review of the previous research on this variable in both manufacturing sector as well as service sector was conducted. Moreover, it has discussed the issues on brand equity for 1990s, 2000s, and the more recent years, with regard to the emphasis of past research to facilitate the understanding of the research directions and its focus on brand equity.

The analysis of the literature carried out in this paper has brought to light different stream of research interests within the area of brand equity that can be studied in the future research. For example, future studies can look to new antecedents of consumer-based brand equity in order to gain better understanding on its creation.
process. Surprisingly, most of the previous studies on brand equity were conducted in manufacturing sectors rather than in services sectors. In the review of literature, it has been clearly understood that the focus of brand equity was frequently seen in consumer goods rather than service contexts. Therefore, future research should give a significant attention to brand equity in both the service sectors as well as industrial goods sectors.

Based on the review of the past literature, it indicates that the studies conducted on brand equity in different contexts produced variety of findings. Bearing in mind that cultural differences could play an important role in affecting brand equity creation, we suggest for future researchers to conduct comparative studies among different countries, for instance, across Western and Eastern economics (He and Li, 2011). Future studies may also include some cultural factors and investigate their influence as mediating variables on brand equity.

Moreover, future studies can examine the impact of economic development and positioning strategies on brand equity. Finally, with regard to methodology, the critical review showed that most of the previous research has largely been quantitative in nature. Hence, in addition, qualitative research could also focus on this variable (Whitelock and Fastoso, 2007). For example, through in-depth interviews from customers and store managers in different industries, qualitative research can reveal new dimensions of brand equity and work out on its better measurement techniques.

REFERENCES


