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The Effects of Brand Image on Customer Attitude and Purchasing behavior (Carrefour Chain Stores)

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ABSTRACT

A general definition of brand image should be presented for its identification. Most of the researchers argue that the image is a defined vague term which is associated to the feelings, emotions or effects under the sensory threshold. Like other factors in marketing, not only designing the image is obtained through the logic and systematic methods, but also this achievement is a basic measure. To do this, a person should think in a practical way and study all elements which make the images and then design an image which is both attractive and satisfactory for consumers. This study is applied in terms of objectives, and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection. A questionnaire with closed questions, rated from very high to too low according to five-point Likert scale, was applied for data collection. The data analysis was done through SPSS software. The spatial domain of research includes all Carrefour chain stores in Malaysia. The time domain of research was in 2013. The statistical population of this study was randomly selected from Carrefour chain stores' purchasers. Sampling method in this research had the cluster type and the content validity method was applied in order to determine the validity. Cronbach's alpha method determined the research reliability. The total computational alpha was obtained equal to 0.84. The analysis of factor based on application of VPLS software was applied in order to determine the relationships between variables and their correlation coefficients. According to the measured structural equation modeling, the coefficient of determination for the brand image was obtained $R=0.921$ and the coefficient of determination for the customer attitude equal to $R=0.824$. According to the main result of this study, there is a direct and significant relationship between the brand image frames and the customer attitude in Carrefour chain stores. Furthermore, the variables such as brand awareness, association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty have the significant direct relationship with the customer attitude with coefficients of 0.536, 0.318, 0.434, 0.631 and 0.714, respectively, and also the variables such as the emotional, economic and the operational values have the significant direct relationship with the brand image with the coefficients of 0.224, 0.419, and 0.357, respectively from Carrefour chain stores customers' perspective. These factors are ranked in the following order: Brand awareness, loyalty, equity, perceived quality, and brand association.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the service sectors are the major determinants in the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of developed economies; however, a few studies have been conducted in the field of improving the performance of service brand names (Brady, 2005). The brand naming of services differs from brand naming of physical goods due to the characteristics such as intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and undurability. The conducted research in the service sectors such as the retail stores and banks indicate that the dimensions of brand names such as the brand evidence and communications significantly affect the customer attitude and satisfaction and finally repurchase the brand in the service sector (Chernatony, 2003) Brand naming is far beyond creating or naming an external sign under which a product or service has received the organizational sign. The brand names are the parts of strategy which is developed with the aim at differentiation (Kapferer, 2006). Several theoretical frameworks are provided for understanding how the consumers think and react to the brand names (Chernatony, 2001). These frameworks tend to conceptualize the brand name of services like the characteristics of physical goods with a minimum emphasis on the service brand names. Despite the fact that some of these models can be

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applied both in the goods and services areas (Grace, 2003), the application of these models can be questioned according to the marketing principles and main differences between the goods and services (Berry, 2000). The public perception of brand is resulted from the brand overall impact which is created based on an image and overall view of brand. Accordingly, the impact of brand image plays the important role in the customer decision making.

The main objective of this paper is to identify the factors affecting the customer attitude and purchasing behavior and to study the role of brand image on the customer attitude and their purchasing behavior.

Research Principles:

A general definition of brand image should be presented for its identification. Most of the researchers argue that the image is a defined vague term which is associated to the feelings, emotions or effects under the sensory threshold. Like other factors in marketing, not only designing the image is obtained through the logic and systematic methods, but also this achievement is a basic measure. To do this, a person should think in a practical way and study all elements which make the images and then design an image which is both attractive and satisfactory for consumers. The most important 5 elements in image-making are as follows,

1- Brand image:

The color and shape of packages make the brand core and essence. They are made during the periods and need to be continued to be designed during the time. They make a bank, from which we can withdraw if we want develop the production line developed or release another product in the market. The brand image is formed during the time and proportional to the shapes, measures and events which have the specific meaning for current or future customers.

2 - Product image:

This image depends on the real features of product. In summary, the product image is what a product or service is supposed to do.

3- Associating image:

It associates the mental effort to find the common field with the consumption. These associations are not appeared immediately, but the associating image should be considered like other elements of marketing and the strategy should be developed on this basis.

4 - Consuming image:

The consuming image describes which groups of people tend to apply the product. It aims at showing the customers the advertisements and affecting them.

5 - Application image:

This image shows how a product is and is applied and whether it is possible to find another application for it? Depending on the audience, there is a significant variety of "application image".

Consumers finally will find the image of a company, product and brand, either they knowingly have made efforts for it or not. Packaging, the distribution sites, marketing and all the things a customer sees or listen from the manufacturer or supplier make an image in his mind and this image affects his decisions to purchase or not. The theoretical principles of study investigate the factors influencing the consumer attitude and purchasing behavior.

Theoretical Principles:

In this paper, the purchasing behavior is assumed as a function of customer attitude; the factors affecting the customer attitude are defined and explained as follows. Furthermore, the factors influencing the customer attitude were determined as the emotional, economic, and operational factors, respectively. The variables affecting the brand image are the brand equity, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty which are defined as follows.

Emotional value: It changes the person to who enjoys, feels satisfied and becomes happy by consuming the products. Furthermore, it persuades the person to apply the product.

Economic value: It makes the higher value than the similar products in terms of economy. In other words, there is a more special factor than other products according to the quality, service, delivery, and other relevant variables based on which the customers purchase the product.

Operational value: The selected product by the customer has higher adaption with the customer's needs and expectations than other products in terms of operation and performance, thus the customer decides to choose and purchase that products.

Brand equity: It refers to a value which is given to the product by a brand. In general, the brand equity is the customer perception of the whole advantages which a brand has compared to other competing brands (Gil, R. et. al, 2007).

Brand Awareness: It refers to the purchaser's ability to remember a brand in a specific product category (Aaker, D.A., 1991).

Brand association: Aaker defined the brand association as the correlation in the memory with a brand. The brand association is also considered as a part of brand image in the mind (Aaker, D.A., 1991).

Perceived quality: It is the consumer's judgment about superiority of a product (Zeithaml, V. 1988).

Brand loyalty: The prestigious names have the consumer's priority which means that the customers show a kind of loyalty to it. A significant number of customers demand for this brand even an alternative product with low price is available in the market (Katler, F. *et al*, 2005).

Research Literature:

S.S. Bhakar investigated the responses received from 150 respondents selected on the basis of non-probability (Purposive) sampling technique in his study. The results indicated that country of origin negatively affects the purchase intention of a customer while buying a fridge and the effect becomes significant when country of origin is evaluated along with brand image at the same time (S.S. Bhakar, 2013). Makarand Upadhyayaè attempted to study the effectiveness of projective techniques in exploring the brand image of ego-sensitive brands, possessing minimal functional differentiation. The paper examines four finest perfume brands. (Stefan Buehler, 2011), this paper studies profit-maximizing seller behavior when brand image affects demand. They consider a seller facing a population of consumers with heterogeneous tastes regarding product quality and brand image (Makarand Upadhyayaè, 2012). Wen-yeh Huang investigates the relationship between a brand story's structure, including authenticity, narrator and plot, and consumers' perceptions of brand image in his paper. A2×2×2 experimental design was employed to test the effect of the above mentioned components on perceived brand image. Data was collected from a convenience sample consisted of college 211 college students in Taiwan. Findings suggested that a brand story with high authenticity, clear plot, and told by the first-person narrator tends to be perceived with more positive brand image than one with lower authenticity, an unclear plot and told by a non-first-person narrator (Wen-yeh Huang 2010). Martínez Salinas analyzes how brand-extension evaluation can affect the current brand image and proposes a theoretical model formed by five main factors related to brand associations, extension congruency and extension attitude. The model estimation includes structural equation analysis using data from 699 surveys developed under market conditions. The results verify that extension attitude influences brand image, whereas initial brand associations and perceived fit between the new product and either the remaining products (category fit) or the brand image (image fit) are able to strengthen consumer attitude (Martínez Salinas, 2009). Rafael Bravo has developed a scale to analyze the corporate image in banking. Derived from a review of literature, a scale with the most cited dimensions of analysis is developed. This scale is then tested by means of an empirical study of 450 individuals and the dimensional, reliability and validity requirements are confirmed. Both theoretical and managerial implications are presented in that study (Rafael Bravo, 2008).

Research Methodology:

This study is applied in terms of objectives, and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection. A questionnaire with closed questions, rated from very high to too low according to five-point Likert scale, was applied for data collection. The data analysis was done through SPSS software. The spatial domain of research includes all Carrefour chain stores in Malaysia. The time domain of research was in 2013.

Statistical Population and Sampling Method:

The statistical population of this study includes Carrefour chain stores' customers who were randomly selected. Since the statistical population is unlimited; the following equation is applied in order to obtain the sample size.

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 p(1-p)}{\epsilon^2} = \frac{3.8416 * 0.25}{0.0036} = 266.78$$

The success ratio (p) was determined equal to 0.5, the coefficient of error (ε) equal to 0.06 and α calculated equal to 267 samples. However, since it was possible not to receive some of questionnaires, 270 questionnaires were distributed, and finally 268 ones were collected and analyzed.

The cluster sampling method was done in this study. Therefore, 4 branches of Carrefour chain stores in Malaysia were selected randomly from 10 branches and then an estimate of population size was obtained according to the information obtained from store officials. The obtained estimate was divided by the sample size and the resulted number became the basis of selecting the sample members by the random systematic sampling.

In other words, a questionnaire was handed out to each number of people entered the store and the equivalent of this number was obtained.

Research Reliability and validity:

The content validity method was applied for determining the validity. Therefore, a sample questionnaire was given to the professors, experts in Marketing Management Science, in order to gain their viewpoints on the accuracy and clarity of questionnaire items and they finally confirmed the validity of questionnaire.

Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of research. To evaluate the reliability, the questionnaire was initially distributed among 30 customers of statistical population and then analyzed after collection. The calculated Alpha for each variable is presented in Table 1. The total computational alpha was obtained equal to 0.84.

Table 1: Results of Cronbach's alpha.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Number of samples
Emotional value	0.89	268
Economic value	0.92	268
Operational value	0.91	268
Brand equity	0.88	268
Brand awareness	0.81	268
Brand association	0.79	268
Perceived quality	0.80	268
Brand loyalty	0.83	268

Given the obtained results, which are higher than 0.77, the reliability of study is approved.

Research hypotheses:

- Main Hypothesis
 - There is a significant relationship between the brand image and customer attitude.
- Subsidiary Hypotheses
 1. There is a significant relationship between the brand equity and customer attitude.
 2. There is a significant relationship between the brand awareness and customer attitude.
 3. There is a significant relationship between the brand association and customer attitude.
 4. There is a significant relationship between the perceived quality and customer attitude.
 5. There is a significant relationship between the brand loyalty and customer attitude.
 6. There is a significant and measurable relationship between the emotional value and customer attitude.
 7. There is a significant and measurable relationship between the economic value and customer attitude.
 8. There is a significant and measurable relationship between the operational value and customer attitude.

Conceptual Model:

This study considers the customer attitude as the dependent variable and the brand image as the independent variable. The components of customer attitude include the emotional value A1, economic value A2, and operational value A3, and the components of brand image include the brand equity B1, brand awareness B2, brand association B3, perceived quality B4, and brand loyalty B5. The conceptual model of research is displayed in Figure 1.

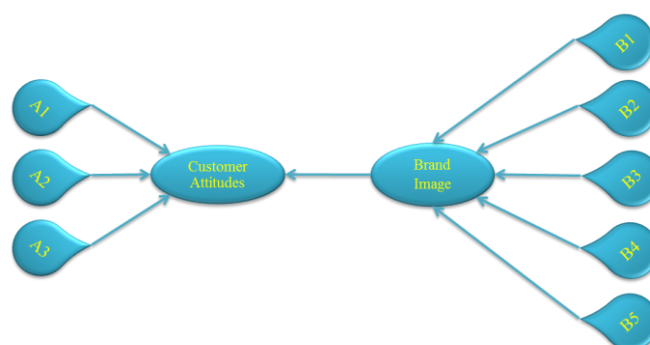


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of research.

Descriptive Statistics of Research:

- ✓ Respondents' status in terms of gender:

The demographic data of respondents is presented in Table 2 based on the gender and educational level. Moreover, the descriptive statistics of information in the questionnaires are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: The samples' frequency and frequency percentage based on the gender and educational level.

Gender	Frequency		Percentage
Women	159		59.33
Men	109		40.67
Total	268		100
Educational level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency percentage
High school diploma	163	60.82	60.82
Associate degree	40	14.93	75.75
Bachelor	33	12.31	88.06
Master	29	10.82	98.88
PhD	3	1.12	100
Total	268	100	

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Research.

Statistics	Brand Image	Customer Attitudes
Mean	2.9423799	3.0247369
Standard Error	0.0823704	0.085218
Standard Deviation	1.1413581	1.1808146
Sample Variance	1.3031531	1.3956546
Kurtosis	-1.164244	-1.24921
Skewness	0.0679919	-0.0543
Minimum	1.0220344	1.0177496
Maximum	4.9852596	4.9784173

Research findings:

Data Normality Test:

The data normality was calculated by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Investigating the data normality by Kolmogorov- Smirnov test.

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional value	0.514	0.954
Economic value	0.743	0.639
Operational value	0.606	0.857
Brand equity	0.597	0.868
Brand awareness	0.451	0.987
Brand association	0.452	0.987
Perceived quality	0.808	0.531
Brand loyalty	0.667	0.765

Given the significance level higher than 5% for each of the questionnaire variables, the normality of sample distribution is not rejected.

Factor Analysis method based on applying VPL Ssoftware:

Factor Analysis method on the basis of new and advanced method, Visual Partial Least Square (VPLS), was utilized in order to analyze and investigate the major factors and coefficients, estimate the coefficients of independent variables, and determine the effect of each independent variable on the other. The graph (Figure 2) of VPLS software output, containing the coefficients of variables and their significance (statistics t), is shown in Figure 2.

According to the calculated structural equation modeling, the coefficient of determination for the brand image is equal to $R=0.921$ indicating that the changes of dependent variable (brand image) with dimensions (brand equity, awareness, association, perceived quality, and loyalty) are described and explained with estimation of 92% in this study. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination for the customer attitudes is equal to $R=0.824$ indicating that the changes in the dependent variable (customer attitude) by dimensions (emotional, economic, and operational value) are described and explained with estimation of 82% in this study.

Table 5 represents the impact factor of each independent variable on the dependent variable as well as t-statistics for investigating the significance of variables.

Ranking the effect by brand image on the customer attitude and purchasing behavior:

Friedman test was applied for ranking the components of brand image. The results of measurement are shown in Table 6.

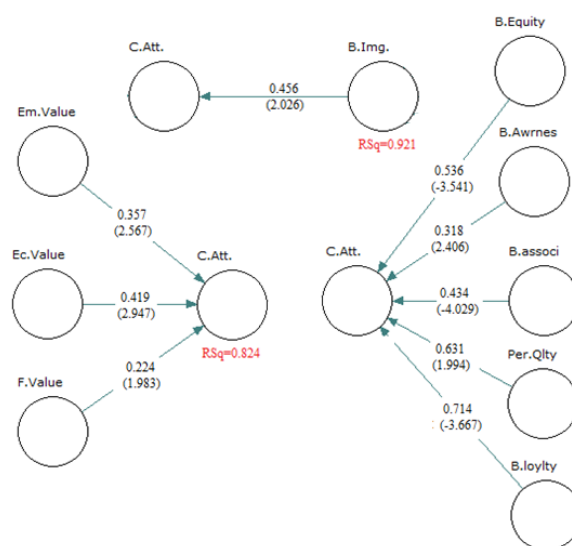


Fig. 2: The relationship between the independent and dependent variables and their components(VPLS)

Table 5: Estimation of model coefficients.

Urbanization Indicators	Estimated coefficients of model	Student's t	Result
Brand image → Customer attitude	0.456	2.026	Significant direct relationship
Brand equity → Customer attitude	0.536	-3.541	Significant direct relationship
Brand awareness → Customer attitude	0.318	2.406	Significant direct relationship
Brand association → Customer attitude	0.434	-4.029	Significant direct relationship
Perceived quality → Customer attitude	0.631	1.994	Significant direct relationship
Brand loyalty → Customer attitude	0.714	-3.667	Significant direct relationship
Emotional value → Customer attitude	0.357	2.567	Significant direct relationship
Economic value → Customer attitude	0.419	2.947	Significant direct relationship
Operational value → Customer attitude	0.224	1.983	Significant direct relationship

The absolute value of student's t for estimation of each coefficient of model is higher than the confidence level of 95% (1.96), thus it can be concluded that the research hypotheses are confirmed as follows.

There is a significant direct relationship between the brand image and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.456. Furthermore, according to the subsidiary hypotheses of research:

1. There is a significant direct relationship between the brand equity and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.536.
2. There is a significant direct relationship between the brand awareness and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.318.
3. There is a significant direct relationship between the brand association and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.434.
4. There is a significant direct relationship between the perceived quality and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.631.
5. There is a significant direct relationship between the brand loyalty and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.714.
6. There is a significant direct relationship between the emotional value and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.357.
7. There is a significant direct relationship between the economic value and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.419.
8. There is a significant direct relationship between the operational value and the customer attitude with the coefficient of 0.224.

Table 6: Friedman rank test.

Barriers	Average rank	Rank
Brand equity	2.99	3
Brand awareness	3.08	1
Brand association	2.96	5
Perceived quality	2.97	4
Brand loyalty	3.00	2

Conclusion:

Given the research results and proved relationships between the variables, the relationship between brand image and customer attitude in this study is consistent with the already mentioned studies such as (Abdolhamid et al, 2008), (Samiei-Nasr, M. et al, 2011), (Salar, J., et al, 2013), (Saffar, R., et al, 2007) regarding the implemented methods (Statistics - Mathematics) and with the obtained methods and results in this paper according to some of the results.

The main result of study:

According to the main result of this study, there is a significant direct relationship between the brand image and customer attitude in Carrefour chain stores. Furthermore, the variables including the brand equity, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty had the direct significant relationship with the customer attitudes with the coefficients of 0.536, 0.318, 0.434, 0.631, and 0.714, respectively, and also the variables such as the emotional value, economic value and operational value had the direct and significant relationship with the customer attitudes with the coefficients of 0.357, 0.419, 0.224, respectively, in terms of Carrefour chain stores' customers. Ranking these factors has the order of this brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand equity, perceived quality, and brand association.

Research suggestions :

- ✓ Supplying the products based on the brand equity in the stores and not supplying the products without the brand and recognized by the customer.
- ✓ Producing the expense reports and marketing activities in the field of brand loyalty by the product suppliers in Carrefour chain stores.
- ✓ Performing the independent measures of marketing in the field of brand awareness and brand association of products supplied in Carrefour chain stores for determining the brand awareness of products and reporting to the suppliers of goods, so that the companies in Carrefour chain stores are ranked and can apply them for granting the collective facilities.
- ✓ Evaluating the product suppliers and exhibitors' performance by Carrefour chain stores about the quality of supplied products for ranking the suppliers in the stores and reporting to the suppliers in order to improve or maintain the quality.
- ✓ Creating the continuous interaction in the field of marketing and overlapping the joint activities for the sales interaction between Carrefour chain stores and product suppliers.

Suggestions for future studies:

- ✓ Investigating this model in other associated organizations with the customer and brand according to the comparison with the results of other studies.
- ✓ Investigating the effect of other variables on the brand choice by the consumers.
- ✓ Investigating this model in other statistical population according to the cultural differences due to the effective variables such as the family.

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