CUSTOMER CENTRIC BRANDING BY LEVERAGING CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY AND CONSUMER BRAND KNOWLEDGE

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DECLARATION BY THE SCHOLAR

I hereby declare that the work reported in the Ph.D. thesis entitled "CUSTOMER CENTRIC BRANDING BY LEVERAGING CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY AND CONSUMER BRAND KNOWLEDGE" submitted at Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida, India, is an authentic record of my work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Y. Medury and Dr. Vandana Ahuja. I have not submitted this work elsewhere for any other degree or diploma.

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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph.D. thesis entitled "CUSTOMER CENTRIC BRANDING BY LEVERAGING CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY AND CONSUMER BRAND KNOWLEDGE" submitted by Nidhi Sinha at Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida, India, is a bonafide record of her original work carried out under our supervision. This work has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or diploma.

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1.1 Basic Introduction

"Corporations do not own brands, people are the owners of brands today"-Marc Gobe

Being heard amid the roar of your competitor's voices is a daunting task in today's crowded marketplace. I find this to be shockingly true each time I read a magazine, watch the television, or surf the web. As a result, businesses are now seeking new and more effective ways of increasing brand awareness and more importantly, create brand loyalty. One of the most important tasks involved in ensuring a brand's success, is to develop an effective branding strategy.

Old certainties of brand building do not hold anymore and new paradigms need to be established for these times. As part of my research, I have explored some fundamental questions about consumer-brand relationships and developed a set of tools and frameworks to help address the challenges of new age brand building.

The ways brands communicate have been permanently redefined. Because I believe that, for many of us, the speed of change has far outpaced our ability as brand custodians to accompany it.

Sure, for some companies or business models, the breathtaking changes in technology have already spelt doom. But the rest of us, for whom predictions of the abrupt demise of way old branding methods have been inevitably shown to be premature, have – after maybe an initial scare – been fixed into a false sense of security about the profundity of the changes that the modern branding era will drive.

In the old world of top-down, one-way communication, a company would tell the consumer what it wanted the consumer to hear, and a consumer had the choice to take it or leave it. In the new world of transparency and ready-access to amazing quantities of detailed information on just about everything, companies will be made much more accountable for what they say and do; for their points of view on issues of concern to consumers; and against an agenda set by the consumer (Keller and Aaker, 1992 and 1998). The reason it's exciting to be in marketing now is because it is brands that are the vehicle through which consumers do this. Brands are the meeting point between consumers' desires and concerns on the one hand, and companies' commitments on the other.

What are those consumer concerns? Increasingly they're broader and deeper than a simple demand for functionality. Influences on consumers come from every quarter, and brands have become conversation platforms where academics, celebrities, experts and key opinion formers discuss functional, emotional, environmental and even social topics. Consumers increasingly want to know what a brand's point of view is on the big issues that interest them.

The core concept in marketing has always been that of transaction, whereby an exchange of values takes place. However, in parallel with changes in cultures, lifestyles, and technologies, the emphasis in marketing has shifted from individual transactions: the new focus is on establishing long-term relationships. Marketing and branding are inextricably linked. To meet demand and facilitate transaction, the objectives that a good brand achieves are to deliver the message clearly, confirm credibility, connect emotionally to the targeted prospects, motivate the end users, and concretize user loyalty. Having a strong brand is invaluable as competition intensifies. Brand management is the art of creating and maintaining a brand—now requires that the whole organization support its brand with integrated marketing. The stronger the brand, the greater the loyalty of the end users (Aaker, 2003).

One underlying attribute of brand management is the ability to react to changes in societal and market dynamics to communicate the brand message better. Key variables affecting brand management are changes in business environments (market complexities, competitive pressures, and global forces), information processes, and societal *forces* (Baker, 1990 and Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). *The core value of brand management is communicating* a message that reacts to these variables.

In broad strokes, organizations are moving from product-centric brands to customer-centric brands. Product-centric brands represent promises about products (or retailers) – "buy this product from us because you can trust that it will be a quality product at good value." Customer-centric brands offer a radically different promise – "buy from us because we know and understand you as an individual customer and we can tailor an appropriate bundle of products and services to meet your individual needs better than anyone else." In other words, customer-centric brands promise that, if organizations give them their attention, they yield greater marketing profitability.

1.1. Need of the study

Brand-The ultimate success symbol

In today's business lexicon, the word 'brand' is being used most heavily (Miller & Muir, 2004). Geoffrey Randall, has mentioned in the very beginning of his book, 'The Art of Marketing – Branding' that 'No one ever got fired for buying IBM' (Randall, 2001). A brand can create value for a business, by enhancing business performance and providing a source of competitive advantage. But what exactly does this 'brand' mean? We take our starting point with the definitions of a brand as given by various authors. David Ogilvy described a brand as 'the intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it is advertised' (Randall, 2001). Stephen King has said, 'a product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a consumer' (Miller & Muir, 2004). Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon, made a similar point when he said that in the factory, he made cosmetics; in the store, his customers bought hope. What do all these mean? Is it that a brand is a 'holistic combination of product and added values'? (Randall, 2001). Instead it is better to say, a brand supports volume and price, it is a symbol of continuity and trust between an organization and its stakeholders, it is an impact of total efforts an organization puts in, it is a perception in the minds of consumers and also it is a source of providing motivation and interest for stakeholders (Sidney, 1991; Randall, 2001; Nicholas, 2003; Clark, 2004; Lindstrom, 2005; Roll, 2006).

Beginning from product quality, price, packaging, distribution, promotion and target segment, marketers try to sell an offering supported by the attitude of consumers towards the product. Along with many other aspects one of the major attributes to evaluate a product and its performance in the market is through measuring its brand performance. This raises a set of questions; what is a brand? What is its importance for an organization from a consumer standpoint? What functions does a brand perform in a consumer mind space? Why do organizations need to concentrate on the brand?

During the past two decades, research has shown that brands are among a company's most valuable assets, and something that plays an important part in everyday life-being the core focus of most marketing strategies (Balmer, 2001; Czellar, 2003; King, 1991; Klink and Smith, 2001; Keller, 2003).

Recent research in marketing has adopted relationship specific concepts and successfully applied them to the consumer-brand domain. Paulssen and Fournier found that, similar to the interpersonal domain, consumers develop different attachment styles in relationships with their brands. Based on their work they concluded that "although the existential reality of the commercial relationship may never be proven, empirical results such as ours, which demonstrate that consumer brand engagements behave in an 'as if' fashion to personal relationships, provide reasons to continue development of the relationship paradigm in consumer research" (Paulssen and Fournier, 2005). Furthermore, (Aggarwal, 2004; Aggarwal & Law, 2005; Aggarwal and Zhang, 2006) have provided first indications that norms may govern consumer-brand relationships and influence consumers' acceptance of certain marketing tactics, perceived as 'brand behavior'. However, by and large, research on consumer-brand relationships remains scarce: "The study of relationships is increasingly important to marketing theory and practice, yet research on consumer product and brand relationships has been limited" (Fournier and Brasel, 2002). It is the aim of this dissertation to fill several important lacunae in consumer-brand relationship research, thereby advancing the field as a whole and providing further evidence for the relationship metaphor in consumer research.

Linked to this gap are observations that many management executives and brand managers are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the reality of an increasingly dynamic market (Guild, 2003; Balmer and Greyser, 2003). The literature review showed that not enough work has been done in the domain of branding form the consumer perspective. However when I commenced this research, I explored the concept of corporate brand identity and a thorough literature review revealed that many studies have been conducted from various stakeholders' perspectives but nothing much has been done from the consumer viewpoint in the domain of brand identity. This gave my research a direction to move ahead the direction of identification of the brand attributes from a consumer perspective. The attributes thus extracted after in depth literature review, an adaptation of the Unique Corporate Association Valence approach (UCAV) (Spears, 2006) method and significant focus group discussions led me to identify the major brand functions.

Nevertheless, in today's competitive landscape, it is not enough to just create strong brands. There is also a need to develop a strong connect with the consumer for future developments and innovations. The focus lies not just in constructing intangible assets (brands), but instead in building an aura for the consumers to find their thought type of association or connection

with the brand. However as I will argue in this research study, the majority of today's established brand concepts do not adequately take into account the myriad types of relationships, sub-strategies and developing customer centricity in a brand that represents today's reality. Instead, the organizations in present times tend to be based on dichotomies and simplifications focusing on specific leverage strategies and therefore missing out on a more holistic perspective of making a brand stand out strongly in today's competitive world which is already overshadowed with multiple brands mushrooming.

Moreover it is necessary that brand culture moves beyond simplistic notions of branding, commits to its own journey and moves away from one dimensional thinking into a more multifaceted understanding of brands and brand management, that resides in the minds of the consumers.

1.2. Conceptual Model of Research

Brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives (Aaker, 1995). This research aims to explore the "consumer-brand relationship" dimension, one of the twelve as identified by Aaker.

The research model, Figure 1, is explained as under the light of the following discussion

Brand awareness is an important and undervalued part of brand equity. Awareness can influence perceptions and attitudes and it drives brand choice and loyalty. It reflects the salience of the brand in the customer's mind. (Aaker, 1996 and Reza Motameni and Manuchehr Shahrokhi, 1998). It has a key role in the consumer decision making process and in determining the consideration. Consumers are aware of a large number of brands when making buying decisions, and brands with higher awareness levels are more likely to be part of the final buying decision. Consumer brand awareness creates an environment for the consumers to make the brand remain alive in their mind spaces which leads to a positive/strong association with the brand. The way the brand associates with the consumer, drives the consumer to develop a perceived value about the brand which eventually leverages the corporate brand identity (Aaker and Jacobson, 1994) in the consumer mind space, is an integral part of my conceptual model. This stimulated the need for the identification of the attributes and the determinants of the Corporate Brand Identity (CBI). For the same, an

exhaustive literature review along with UCAV approach was conducted to define 57 brand identity attributes.

Brand Functions

The corporate brand identity attributes load onto six CBI determinants which helped me further classify each of the brand attributes on the basis of the function they perform for a brand. These functions were Emotional Connection (EMC), My Life Style and Image (LSI), Enhances My Perception (EBP), Consumer Brand Knowledge (CBK), Trust (T) and Responsible towards Consumer (RC).

Brand Customer Centricity

I proceed to use the .weighting technique to use weights extracted from consumer perceptions to formulate a Brand Customer Centricity Calculator (BCCC). This calculator was representative of the degree of Customer centricity of a brand.

Brands can benefit from greater levels of Brand customer centricity. A brand relationship is the commitment and resonance a customer has towards a brand. It goes beyond simple features, functionality, price or total cost of ownership.

The conceptual model hinged on the fact that the six individual brand functions contribute to the degree of customer centricity of a brand and organizations can study the performance of their brand with respect to consumer perception across the various functions and moderate functional brand performance to increase the level of brand customer centricity.

The research progresses to collect data across 50 brands to calculate their Brand Customer Centricity Scores and uses k-means clustering to develop a framework to segment consumers into homogeneous consumer clusters for which targeting strategies can be formulated accordingly.

In the final stage of the study I developed an experiment to use a corporate/product blog to measure the variation in the pre and post level of Consumer Brand Knowledge and Consumer Brand Emotion score and finally draw a correlation amongst the two.

This research work has been based on one of the twelve brand identity dimensions as proposed by Aaker. *The dimension that has been used as the focal point of this study is "consumer-brand relationship"* as shown in the table 1 below.

The work draws the genesis from the identification of the literature that shows that not much has been done in this domain of consumer-brand relationship, thus aiding me in identifying my area of study. In this detailed study of 50 brands I have tried to use the brand identity attributes that helped me to define the brand identity determinants, thereby making the brand functions more clear and concrete in terms of the concept of "customer centric" brand identity. These functions have been used to calculate the Brand Customer Centricity Scores (BCCCS) of each of the 50 brands. These scores have been used for drawing consumer clusters to extract the consumer segments. 11 distinct consumer clusters have been intricately extracted and defined.

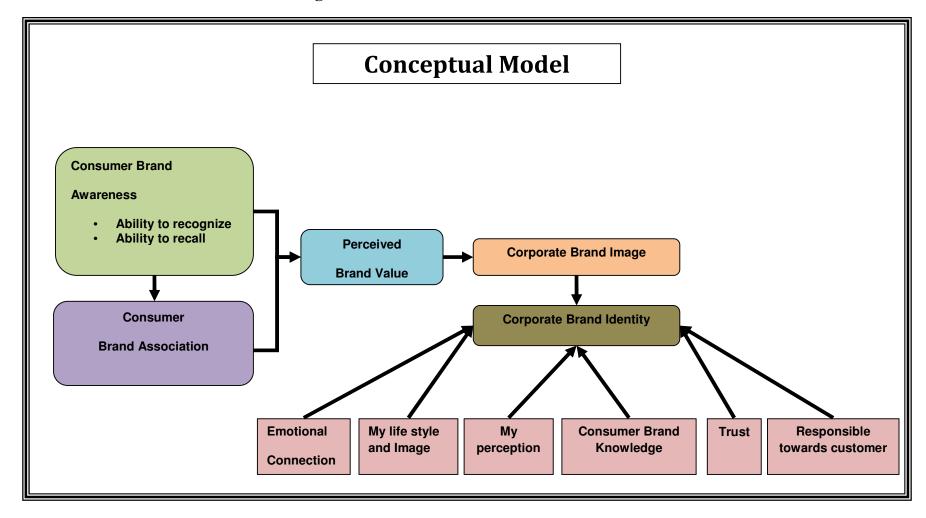
The two key brand functions of *Consumer Brand Knowledge (CBK)* and *Consumer Brand Emotion (CBE)* have been used towards the end to explore the dimension of *consumer-brand relationship*, using the 20 corporate blogs. The two key brand functions were used for the creation of an experiment which aimed to tabulate the responses of a focus group pre and post the exposure to the corporate blog. This helped me to see the effect of increasing Consumer Brand Knowledge (CBK) on Consumer Brand Emotion (CBE). Finally I could see positive and significant correlation between the two scores thus calculated.

Table 1: Dimensions of Brand Identity proposed by Aaker

Dimensions of Brand Identity proposed by Aaker (D.A., 1996)

	Product scope		
	Product attributes		
Brand-as-Product	Quality/value		
Brand-as-Product	Uses		
	Users		
	Country of origin		
Prand as Organization	Organizational attributes		
Brand-as-Organization	Local vs. Global		
Brand-as-Person	Brand personality		
Diand-as-Person	Consumer - Brand relationships		
Deand as Cymbol	Visual imagery/metaphors		
Brand-as-Symbol	Brand heritage		

Figure I: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



1.3. Aim of the research

This research aims to explore the concept of brand identity in the minds of the consumers. (Aaker, 1995) proposed twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives-the brand-asproduct (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin), brand-as-organization (organizational attributes, local versus global), brand-as-person (brand personality, customer-brand relationships), and brand-as-symbol (visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage).

In view of these aspects, it was decided to take up 'Consumer perspective', the consumer-brand relationship dimension as a specific domain and fill the gap by studying the specific brand management strategies from a consumer viewpoint, while taking into account the two major functions: Consumer Brand Knowledge (CBK) and Consumer Brand Emotion (CBE).

I attempt to establish the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response for the marketing of that brand. A brand has positive customer-based brand equity when customers react more favorably to a product and the way it is marketed when the brand is identified than when it is not.

The research aims to explore consumer brand knowledge in terms of two components: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is as reflected by consumers' ability to recall or recognize the brand under different conditions. Brand awareness can be characterized by breadth and depth. The depth of brand awareness relates to the likelihood that the brand can be recognized or recalled. The breadth of the brand awareness relates to the variety of purchase and consumption situations in which the brand comes to mind. Brand image is defined as consumer perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand association held in consumers' memory.

The most valuable brand building block, brand resonance, occurs when all other core brand values are completely "in sync" with respect to customer needs, wants and desires. In other words, brand resonance reflects a completely harmonious relationship between customers and the brand. Achieving brand resonance requires eliciting the proper cognitive appraisals and

emotional reactions to the brand from customers. That, in turn, necessitates establishing brand identity and creating the right meaning in terms of brand performance and brand imagery associations. A brand with the right identity and meaning can result in a customer believing that the brand is relevant and "my kind of product". The strongest brands will be those brands for which consumers become so attached and passionate that they, in effect, become evangelists or missionaries and attempt to share their beliefs and spread the word about the brand.

1.5. Research Objectives

- 1. Identification of the brand identity attributes from a consumer perspective for streamlining brand functions.
- Studying the level of Customer Centricity of a brand by developing a Brand Customer Centricity Calculator to identify specific areas of improvement for making brands more customer centric.
- 3. Designing an experiment to study the use of corporate blogs by organizations for enhancing Consumer Brand Knowledge and Consumer Brand Emotion levels.
- 3a. Study the variation in the pre and post levels of Consumer Brand Knowledge and Consumer Brand Emotion before and after consumer exposure to corporate blogs.
- 3b. Studying the relationship between the Consumer Brand Knowledge levels and Consumer Brand Emotion levels of the consumers.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The challenges and complexities of the modern marketplace make efficient and effective marketing an imperative. A particularly important concept for managing brand equity is that of brand systems. A key to managing brands in an environment of complexity is to consider them as not just individual performers but as members of a system of brands that must work together to support one another. The significance of the study lies in the detonation of the consumer-brand relationship spectrum, which is instrumental in developing a strong bond between the consumer and the company. A host of advertising and communication benefits

may result from creating awareness of and a positive image for a brand. These benefits can be seen by considering the manner in which a consumer responds to marketing communications.

The study is an attempt to assess and analyze the relationship between the level of consumer brand knowledge and the level of emotional connection of a consumer with respect to a brand. Thus, not only is it significant for academicians but also for professionals who can capitalize on every tool at their disposal-and devise ones that are not, in their relentless pursuit of achieving consumer-brand preeminence.

1.7. Scope of the Study

This research work has been designed as a study employing quantitative and scientific methodology to the consumer-brand relationship across a diverse set of brands from amongst several verticals. The work traces the need for the concept of customer-centric branding, explores brand functionalities and proceeds to evaluate the degree of customer centricity of several brands. The study further designs an experiment to explore the usage of a corporate blog as a tool for enhancing consumer brand knowledge and consumer brand emotion.

Academics in marketing develop and test models and different theories in related areas of marketing. I hope to contribute to the literature by empirically testing how the inclusion of Consumer Brand Knowledge level affects attitudinal judgement and recall when information is provided in a verbal or numerical mode and presented in a vivid or non-vivid form. In addition, the scope for examining the information mode and consumer knowledge literature is to attempt to demonstrate that consumers utilize their product knowledge to differentiate among attribute information in a manner consistent with the relative importance of the attributes. Theoretical implications of this research relate to how different consumers process and use numerical and verbal information in combination with a specific presentation form.

1. Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

Today, the primary capital of many businesses is their brands. For decades the value of a company was measured in terms of its real estate, then tangible assets, plants and equipments. However it has recently been recognized that a company's real value lies outside business itself, in the minds of potential buyers or consumers.

A brand is both, tangible and intangible, practical and symbolic, visible and invisible under conditions that are economically viable for the company (Kapferer, 1992).

Brands are built up by persistent difference ever the long run. They cannot be reduced just to a symbol on a product or a mere graphic and cosmetic exercise. A brand is the signature on a constantly renewed, creative process which yields various products. Products are introduced, they live and disappear, but brands endure. The consistency of this creative action is what gives a brand its meaning, its content, and its characters': creating a brand requires time and identity.

The American Marketing Association's (AMA) definition of a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". Within this view, whenever a marketer creates a new name, logo, or symbol for a new product, he or she has created a brand, (Keller, 2003).

2.2. Brand Identity determinants

A Brand identity comprises a unique set of functional and mental associations the brand aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand should ideally stand for in the minds of customers, and imply a potential promise to customers (Aaker, 1996 and Keller 1993).

In depth literature review along with various methodologies like UCAV (Spears, 2006), helped to extract the 57 brand identity attributes. The attributes helped to define the six distinct brand functions used for the research purpose.

2.3. Brand Functions

Although the last decades' specialized literature attempted to crystallize the concept of "brand functions", the term still needs further consideration.

Brand associations include perceptions of brand quality and attitudes towards the brand. Keller and Aaker both appear to hypothesize that consumer perception of a brand are multi-dimensional, yet many of the dimensions they identify, appear to be very similar. The image that a good or a service has in the mind of the consumer, with respect to its positioning, is probably more important to its ultimate success, than its actual characteristics. Marketers try to position their brands so that they are perceived by the consumer to fit a distinctive niche in the marketplace-a niche occupied by no other product (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1994).

In this perspective, the following functions that a brand is expected to perform, have been identified.

2.3.1. Emotional Connection

Building relationships, giving a brand and product long-term value, sensorial experiences, designs that make the consumers feel the product, designs that make the consumer taste the product and finally buy the product, are significant ways that help brands develop an emotional connection with its consumers.

A brand differentiates a product in several forms and it can be broadly divided into two categories- the tangibles (rational), and the intangibles (emotional and symbolic). Either way, while the product performs its basic functions, the brand contributes to the differentiation of a product (Keller, 2003). These dimensions distinguish a brand from its unbranded commodity counterpart and give it equity, which is the sum total of consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes and how they perform, about the brand name and what it stands for, and about the company associated with the brand (Achenbaum, 1993). A strong brand provides consumers multiple access points towards the brand, by attracting them through both functional and emotional attributes (Keller, 2003). Emotional attachment to brands has attracted recent research attention (e.g. Thomson et al., 2006). Researchers have long considered attitudes to be insufficient predictors of brand commitment (e.g. loyalty), and suggest that true loyalty requires the customer to form an emotional bond with the brand (Park et al., 2009; Oliver, 1999).

2.3.2. My Life Style and Image

A brand can be viewed as a person. It can be perceived as being competent, trustworthy, active, or youthful (Aaker, 1996). A brand personality may help communicate a product's attributes and thus contribute to a functional benefit. Similarly, it can help create a self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality.

When consumers believe that a brand is credible, repeatedly purchase the brand, and develop a commitment to the brand, sometimes the brand can imbue so much meaning to the consumer that he/she uses the brand to create and represent a desired self-image or self-concept (Escalas, 2004).

2.3.3. My Perception

Perception is the way that individuals select, organize, and interpret data to create a meaning for themselves. Customers usually view goods based on their perception since they do not buy the goods. Thus, a brand can be seen as a prejudice (Arnold, 1992). Consumers initially have feelings towards a brand before they even consume it (Buttle and Burton, 2002). The perception of the brand image is very important, since consumers analyze the personality of a brand, and then creates meaning out of the brand message (Aaker and Biel, 1993).

2.3.4. Consumer Brand Knowledge

Reflecting the salience of the brand in the customer's mind, brand knowledge is conceptualized in terms of two components, brand awareness and brand image (Aaker, 1996). Brand knowledge can be described as consumer awareness of a brand and the associations with the brand. Understanding whether or not consumers are aware of the brand and what associations they hold towards the brand is key information for developing a strong and equitable brand.

The definition adopted here will be: **Consumer knowledge is information concerning the market stored in consumer's long-term memory.** By market, I mean the products, brands, and their environment.

2.3.5. Trust

Among the main functions of a brand from the consumers' perspective is considered to be the minimization of perceived purchasing risk, which in turn helps cultivate a trust-based relationship (Keller, 1993). Trust is defined as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence. It exists when a party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity and when they share common goals and values. It is a consequence of interdependence due to stable customer experience of expectations being exceeded and of being provided the best value by the existing firm. Brand awareness can influence consumers' perceived risk assessment and their confidence in the purchase decision, due to familiarity with the brand and its characteristics. Satisfaction over multiple interactions leads to a stage where the customer begins to have faith in the offering and its consistency in performance. Satisfaction leads to trust when some more antecedent conditions such as shared values and goals, dependence based on stable expectation/perception of performance and perceived switching costs are fulfilled.

2.3.6. Responsible towards the Customer

Customers get committed to a brand when the brand achieves personal significance for them. It happens when the consumers/buyers perceive it to be a part of them. Organizations were initially sensitive about their image and have now become very sensitive about their reputation. Image is a function of perception-the basis on which brand evaluations are formed. Reputation has more depth, is more involving: it is a judgment from the market which needs to be preserved. In any case, reputation has become a byword as witnessed by the annual surveys on the most respected companies (Aaker *et. al*, 2004). Reputation signals that although the company has many stakeholders, each one reacting to a specific facet of the company (as employee, as supplier, as financial investor, as clients and above all as customers or buyers), in fact they all are sensitive to the global ability of the company to meet the expectations of all its stakeholders.

2.4. Customer Centric Brands

The six brand functions as explained above and the literature review in the associated domains of branding helped identify the specific research area. In this context, I explore the

dimension of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). CRM advances marketing's mission on both fronts. CRM supports the effort to become more customer focused and enables companies to create and share deep customer insight within and beyond the company. CRM can be viewed as an application of one-to-one marketing and relationship marketing, responding to an individual customer on the basis of what the customer says and what else is known about that customer (Peppers *et. al*, 1999). It is a management approach that enables organizations to identify, attract, and increase retention of profitable customers by managing relationships with them (Hobby, 1999) and further identifying strategically significant customers (Buttle, 2001).

To explore this concept, the present research study has used two major functions of Consumer Brand Knowledge and Emotional Connection as explained earlier.

3. Research Methodology

The chapter on methodology has been divided into 3 sections-

- 1. Methodologies used for formation of Research Instruments.
- 2. Methodologies used for Experiment Design.
- 3. Methodologies used for Data Analysis.

The research thesis takes on the scientific method of exploring the concept of corporate brand identity in the minds of the consumers, thus identifying the determinants of corporate brand identity, the value of customer-centric branding and the need to improve consumer brand knowledge. An analysis of brand functions further helps devise a process for consumer segmentation.

- I. The following methodologies derived from Branding literature have been used to formulate the Research Instruments-
 - 1. Adaptation of Unique Corporate Association Valence approach
 - 2. Lexicographic Heuristic model
 - 3. Choice heuristics
 - 4. Weighted linear compensatory model

- II. Further methodologies of Experimental Research Design
 - 1. Datamining
 - 2. Hierarchical Clustering
 - 3. K-means Clustering
- III. Methodologies for Data Analysis
 - 1. Factor Analysis
 - 2. Correlation

The research study was conducted in various phases, which moved through creation of various research instruments. The main evaluation grid used for the purpose of the study asked the respondents to rate the various functions across the attributes loaded onto them. All the items were put on a five-point Likert scale ranging from least important to most important. This helped to calculate the composite brand customer centricity score of an individual respondent. The same was done for each of the 50 brands.

Further to elucidate the relationship between the consumer brand knowledge and consumer brand emotion scores, a simulated experiment was designed to tap the responses of the focus group used for the experiment. This helped to examine the impact of variation in brand information or brand knowledge on consumer's brand emotion with the introduction of moderating variables.

The study was conducted using 50 brands (Adopted from the PAN India survey of "100 Most Trusted Brands" conducted by Brand Equity and Neilsen, Sept'10), published by The Economic Times under the Brand Equity (supplement, dated September 1, 2010) was used as basis for brand selection.

The sampling of the brands under various categories has been explored with great precision. The most Trusted Brand Survey identified brands that bond with consumers. The Survey had a significant representation of 100 brands across the 13 categories outlined as part of the research. A table of percentage of brands across each category was created. Sample of 50 Brands which had an equivalent representation of each category was extracted for the purpose of the research.

The study was conducted using various research instruments intricately designed adhering to validity and reliability. Data collection was done in various phases. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 was religiously used for the statistical analysis.

4. Findings and Results

4.1. Pilot Study-The Brand Association Scores

The first primary pilot study was conducted to see the gap between the brand identity and the brand image in the minds of the consumers. It aimed to see the positioning and identification of a product or corporate brand in the minds of the consumers. The association scores clearly showed that there was a significant disparity in what the company was trying to project about the brand in the minds of the consumers and the way the consumers were able to even associate the respective products with their corporate or the parent brands.

This study provided a conceptual background for the thesis as it helped to identify the gap between the consumer's ability to relate the product brand with the corporate brand identity. An inverse correlation (Table 4.1) was seen in cases where the volume of Individual Product Brands in the pool was high. Corporates with maximum no. of Individual product brand names had the least Consumer Brand Association.

Table 4.1. Correlations (Calculated using SPSS 17.0)

		Brand	Brand Assoc Score		
Vol. Individual Brand/Total	Pearson Correlation	1.000	824*		
Brands	Sig. (2-tailed)		.012		
	N	8.000	8		
Consumer Brand	Pearson Correlation	824*	1.000		
Association	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012			
Score	N	8	8.000		
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

This study provided a conceptual background for the thesis as it helped to identify the gap between the consumer's ability to relate the product brand with the corporate brand identity.

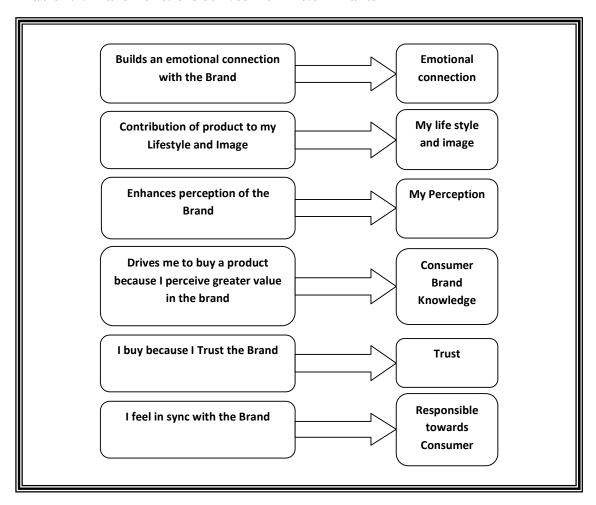
4.2. Determinants of Customer Centric Branding

Using UCAV and in depth literature review, 57 determinants were extracted and were used to create the research instrument. The determinants were subjected to a factor analysis to help load them on the specific brand function.

4.3. Brand Customer Centricity Determinants

The attributes were loaded on the specific determinant using factor analysis. The determinants represented the broader function that a brand performs in the consumer mind space (Sinha, Ahuja and Medury, 2011). This helped me to characterize each of the six functions as shown below. The methods stated above helped me to select each of the attributes clearly, linking it with the specific determinant, thereby giving each of the 6 functions a precise positioning (*Table 4.2*).

Table 4.2. Brand Functions derived from Determinants



The factor analysis was conducted to load the attributes on each of the specific determinant and the evaluation grid was developed to be used for the purpose of the study.

(**Table 4.3**) exhibits the loading of the various attributes and linking them with the specific brand functions.

Table 4.3. Linking Brand Attributes and Brand Customer Centricity Determinants

Emotional Connection (EC;)	My Life style and Image (LI;)	My Perception (EBP;)	Consumer Brand Knowledge (CBK;)	Trust (T;)	Responsible towards Customer (RC;)
 Active Engagement Advertising and Jingle Appealing Attitudinal attachment Behavioral Loyalty Believable Captivating Cheerful Empathy Excitement Intense Likeable Mesmerizing Sensorial Experience Spirited 	 Glorification of "MY" Personality Visual Appeal Wholesome 	Brand Visibility Dynamic Imaginative Meaningfulness Price Recognition Recognition of Logo Stands for something	Admirable Association of celebrity Delivery benefits Dependability Innovative Intelligent Popular Product performance Sophistication of the product Successful Superiority Tough Unique Up to date	 Approachable Authentic Durability Global Image Honest Relevant Reliability Trust 	Corporate values Sense of Community Service oriented Serviceability Social Approval Social Responsibility of the organization Sustainability

4.4. Development of Brand Customer Centricity Calculator (BCCC)

I used the weighted linear compensatory model to incorporate weights of individual brand functions, along with the consumer response on specific brand attributes to develop what I term as the Brand Customer Centricity calculator (BCCC).

Brand Customer Centricity Calculator Score (BCCCS) =

$$n$$
 (BCCCS) = $\sum (0.21*EC_i + 0.12*LI_i + 0.11*EBP_i + 0.20*CBK_i + 0.11*T_i + 0.11*RC_i)$ $i=1$

This helped further to develop the evaluation grid for the purpose of this study. Using the same grid, the Brand Customer Centricity Scores (BCCS) were calculated for 50 brands

which were then subjected to K-means clustering to extract the consumer segments. The eleven distinct consumer segments were extracted on the basis of the brand's performance against each of the six brand functions.

The calculator was further validated by conducting a study across 5 personal care brands of HUL, brand performance across the six specific brand functions was studied and Brand Customer Centricity Scores were subsequently calculated. Brand functions which demonstrated lower scores and showed scope of improvement were consequently identified

4.5. Experiment Creation and Results

The extraction of eleven distinct consumer clusters gave me clear insights about the two focal brand functions, CBK and CBE. In order to improve the effectiveness of a brand in the consumer mind space, I attempted to create an experimental research design. The rationale of this attempt was to see the impact of additional information being given to the respondents/consumers thereby increasing their CBK and CBE. The experiment was conducted in two phases for each of the two functions separately for the 20 corporate/product blogs.

The experiment aimed to calculate the pre and the post CBK and CBE scores of the respondents and also calculate the delta values for both. The delta values were calculated for each of the respondent.

Delta Values

△ Consumer Brand Knowledge= (post score-pre score)/pre score

△ Consumer Brand Emotion= (post score-pre score)/pre score

The results indicated that the consumer knowledge increases when they are exposed to more information about the given product or brand.

In a similar way the results showed that the consumer's emotional scores have also improved when they are exposed to more information about the given product or brand.

This lead me to evaluate the correlation between the two delta values of the functions. A positive correlation was observed between $\triangle CBK$ AND $\triangle CBE$.

A higher assimilation of brand related knowledge results in greater product adoption by the consumers. It is in the organizational interest that ways and means are developed to increase the consumer's knowledge with regard to product or brand. Organizations can successfully leverage brand blogs to engage consumers, build a bond with them, and then subsequently increase their knowledge about organization/product/brand. Developing higher levels of blog interactivity will be useful in this context.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this research study offer both theoretical and managerial contributions to the brand strategy literature. Thus it can be concluded, while developing strategies and tactics aimed at building strong and lasting relationships between customers and brands, it may be important to consider the manner in which the marketing communication messages are bolstered and reinforced. Developing close "connections" with a given brand as well as with the brand community should also solidify strong and lasting relationships between customers and the brand.

The research study was conducted in different phases to achieve the objectives as listed for the purpose of the study. The outcomes of the research study showed that brand attributes are an integral part in defining the functions of the brand (*Figure 2*). The six distinct brand functions which were elucidated in the study helped me to calculate the brand customer centricity score (BCCS) with the help of the calculator developed during the course of the study. The scores thus calculated were subjected to K-means clustering using SPSS 17.0. The results were remarkable as shown in the (*Figure 3*) below. The eleven distinct consumer segments were extracted. Each of the segments (cluster) demonstrated the characteristics and performance of the segment against the six brand functions. By creating well defined targeting strategies for the distinct consumer segments, organizations can benefit by assigning any new consumer who enters the system, to a distinct consumer group. He / She will be automatically be subjected to the appropriate targeting strategies and the organizations can benefit through faster product / brand adoption. The two main brand functions of CBK and

CBE were further used to create an experiment and see the relationship amongst them. The study concluded with drawing the correlation between the delta values of CBK and CBE.

Academics in marketing develop and test models and different theories in related areas of marketing. I hope to contribute to the literature by empirically testing how the inclusion of consumer knowledge level affects attitudinal judgement and recall when information is provided in a verbal or numerical mode and presented in a vivid or non-vivid form. In addition, the scope for examining the information mode and consumer knowledge literature is to attempt to demonstrate that consumers utilize their product knowledge to differentiate among attribute information in a manner consistent with the relative importance of the attributes. Theoretical implications of this research relate to how different consumers process and use numerical and verbal information in combination with a specific presentation form.

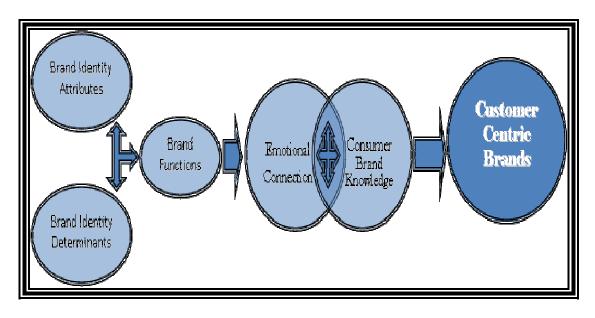


Figure 2: Validation of Conceptual Model

SKEPTICAL ANXIOUS PROACTIVE CONFIDENT **REALISTIC ANALYTICAL PERSONAS UNIMPRESSED CONSUMER / BRAND CONSERVATIVE MAVENS AMBIVALENT EVANGELIST ENTHUSIASTS** CONSERVATIVE UNINFORMED **NONBELIEVERS EMOTIONAL SIMPLETONS NON ASSOCIATED FANCIFUL SMART FANCIFUL SMART USER DYSFUNCTIONAL** LOYALIST **CONSUMERS**

Figure 3: Eleven Consumer Segments

6. Limitations and scope for future work

The research study has certain limitations.

- i. The explores only one dimension of the customer-brand relationship perspective, out of the known twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives of brand identity. Further the data has been collected to explore brand customer centricity across 50 brands. The Brand Customer Centricity Calculator thus developed can be further strengthened and validated through voluminous data collection. It can be further developed into a standard copyrighted tool for corporates, allowing brands to calculate their degree of customer centricity.
- ii. Further the experiment has been conducted on a focus group. The scale of the experiment can further be enlarged. Some extraneous variables which were ignored in the present study can be further controlled and the experiment can be strengthened as a standardized research tool.

7. Organization of the thesis

Work presented in this thesis focuses on the study of the Corporate Brand Identity and its determinants from a consumer perspective and subsequently the determinants of the brand identity. The distinctive determinants perform the 6 diverse functions with respect to a brand in the consumer mind space and accordingly the consumer associates with the brand. This kind of association has been proven statistically in the work done. The various brand functions identified and coined in this thesis, if used appropriately help to develop a consumer-brand connect (emotionally or knowledge wise) can be very fruitful for the organizational brand. This has been the focal point of this research work, the results thus obtained are very encouraging. The study has been organized in five chapters. A brief outline of the various chapters is as follows.

Chapter 1 is an exordium to the thesis. It establishes the opening discussion about developing marketing strategies which is vital for any business, discusses the importance and relevance of the brands in today's consumers' life and exhorts on the idea of making a brand insignificant for the consumer and moves on towards identifying the need of this study. It also underlines the significance of the study and also emphasizes on the source of motivation for the present work. The chapter also throws light on the various research questions that have been addressed in the thesis and clearly delineates the objectives.

Chapter 2 is embellished with an exhaustive and panoptic literature review with respect to the various concepts related to a brand and brand identity also focuses on the brand attributes that have been identified on the basis of the extensive literature review and various discussions with the focus groups. The chapter moves onto the detailed explanation and well worded comprehension of the diverse brand functions. It also exemplifies the research work taking place globally with reference to the corporate brand identity and similar studies. The chapter explores in detail the diverse functionalities and approaches the major functions that a brand can perform in the consumer mind space.

Chapter 3 outline the comprehensive and robust research methodologies used in the research work for-

- a) Development of Research Instruments and
- b) Data Analysis

The chapter proceeds to exhibit the development and testing of the different research tools created for the research study. The chapter commences with the details of the pilot study and its findings and then moves on to research methodologies of the main study. In order to authenticate the attributes of the brand identity (revealed from the literature review and a discussion with the focus group), used in this study, brand attributes were used to create a research instrument and an exhaustive survey of the consumer was conducted on 50 National Brands pan India. The chapter then moves on to trace the various research instruments that were created in the course of the present research study viz., Brand Customer Centricity Calculator (BCCC); Evaluation Grids were developed using the attributes and research experiment developed.

Chapter 4 deals with the elaborate findings of the research studies conducted and the analysis of each of the research objectives of the present study. It begins with the detailed findings of the pilot study conducted for identifying the specific niche area I could work in. The chapter also outlines the 57 attributes which were loaded on to the specific brand functions using a factor analysis, which helped streamline and organize the research instrument.

Eleven distinct consumer segments were extracted using K-means clustering. The detailed specification of each of the clusters extracted was done on the basis of the brand performance according to the consumer perception, across the various brand functions. This led to the identification of the two key functions that took the lead in occupying the consumer mind space.

Finally, the chapter demonstrates the results of the experiment designed to study the correlation between the two key strategic variables, Consumer Brand Knowledge (CBK) and Consumer Brand Emotion (CBE).

					scope for furthe
research in the do	omain of brandin	g from the cor	nsumer perspe	ctive.	

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