
Original Article

Brand manifestation and retrieval effects as drivers of buying behavior in Mexico

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ABSTRACT This research addresses brand manifestation and its effects on purchase behavior of consumers. The discussion in the study fills an important knowledge gap by investigating the brand–consumer association considering economic, cognitive and relational variables that help consumers analyze the brands’ manifestation. The study proposes five constructs that represent brand attractiveness, availability, awareness, quality and service association that explains how the relative importance of brands differs across purchase situations. On the basis of data from 231 respondents in Mexico, the study proposes an integrated branding perspective, which conceptualizes the co-construct between brand appearance and brand meaning among consumers. Finally, the implications of such an approach for future research and brand management are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Brands express themselves in terms of tangible and intangible elements. The tangible elements are associated with color, size, calligraphy, punch line and reputation of the company, while intangibility of brands is manifested in reference to quality, referrals and brand relevance. Brand manifestation may be defined as an integration of customer centric and market oriented attributes including adherence, popularity, ability to maintain price point, portraying social and cultural values, and competitive advantages of the brand that

lead to reveal the emotions associated with the brand. What is considered a tangible manifestation of a brand is continuously negotiated and (re)defined by market players, including manufacturers, distributors, retailers and consumers who are interested in the brand. At the same time, brand expression also depends on the brand meaning – verbatim or colloquial. Other research has shown that places and events may also drive the brand experience among various market players.¹

Manifestation signifies expression in a cognitive sense. Brand manifestation is

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largely driven by the extent of customer loyalty, brand popularity, price advantage, and competency of the firm in delivering non-price factors such as quality, services and style. Today a major intervening variable on brand manifestation is the online social communities and postings that essentially define or redefine a product or service brand. Previous studies have acknowledged that social intervention prompts asymmetrical performance of brands and determines the brands' market power.² It has been observed that there is a need for the forward integration of manufacturing companies into retailing, through the establishment of flagship stores, which offer such companies an opportunity to provide a context for their brand and exercise a level of control over its manifestation.³ Brand manifestation reveals the brand health of the products. The set of brand-health elements serving as leading indicators of sales risk and potential include brand leadership, attractiveness, distinctiveness, satisfaction and liabilities.⁴ Brand appearance 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.⁵

This article discusses the attributes of brand manifestation and its impact on the retrieval of brand among consumers. First, it presents a brief review and discussion on various brand attributes to map consumer behavior on various expressions of the brand with reference to color, calligraphy, brand name, logo, punch line and anchor of the brand, studied in contemporary marketing literature. These variables have been discussed in the article based on the empirical evidence from consumers in Mexico. Then, it conceptualizes the co-construct between brand appearance and brand meaning among consumers that manifests in mapping the attributes

of brands. Finally, the implications of such an approach for future research on brand management are discussed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND FRAMEWORK OF HYPOTHESES

Brand personality

An interesting brand expression in some developing countries is that calling to nationalist or religious feelings in order to create support for an ideology or religious faith. Brand identity and brand image are the core determinants of the brand manifestation. Brand identity can be influenced by different notions of identity. In fact, identity represents the firm's reality, while image represents consumer behavior.⁶ The brand's emotional attributes are manifested by the metaphor of personality, which, among other sources, evolves from the brand's core values. Personality traits are further developed through associations with the 'typical user' imagery, endorsers and consumers' contacts with the company's employees.⁷ Firms therefore need to ensure that a brand's personality is conveyed consistently by both its salespeople and market communications. Another influential source for a brand's personality is its positioning and an integrated approach to branding that can help in reinforcing the synergy.⁸

Brand expression stimulates brand identification, which is a cognitive state where the individual comes to view himself or herself as a member of a social entity.⁹ The consumer perceives 'familiarity with or belongingness with an entity' upon realizing the similarities and dissimilarities between members of the social in-group and various out-groups. This distinction allows the individual to create a social identity. When consumers strongly identify with a brand, there is convergence between their self-schema and the entity's schema. It is important to recognize that brand

expression is a cognitive measure of the brand personality that develops emotional behavioral and buying inclination of consumers with regard to the brand.¹⁰ In view of growing competition, most companies are driving brand–consumer interactions through virtual platforms in order to create top-of-the mind brand images. A study observed that offline-based extension brands have an advantage over cyber brands when it comes to translating a brand identity into a successful brand image, especially in the early Internet stages (that is, introduction and elaboration stages). Extension brands gain positive spillover effects from their mother brand or counterparts and create a successful brand image that manifests in consumer preference for the brand.¹¹

Brand expression largely depends on visual stimuli among consumers. There is a significant relationship between brand design and the strategies to position brands in the market. For example, Asian brands tend to express themselves in the market with reference to perceptions of quality, recognition, consensus in meaning and *feng shui*.¹² It has been observed that learning to see intangible values and symbols as resources is the necessary step in brand orientation. For certain companies, this can mean a step into a new reality known as brand reality. The organization's overall goals, values and positions come to be expressed through brands, and thus acquire an identity.¹³ There are three kinds of human beliefs, descriptive, informational and inferential, that drive brand perception among consumers. Descriptive beliefs derive from direct experience with the brand. Informational beliefs are those influenced by outside sources of information such as ads and friends. Inferential beliefs are those formed by making inferences (correctly or incorrectly) based on past experience as this experience relates to the current stimuli. Images held in the consumer's mind are one manifestation of these beliefs. Under

the effect of communication and previous use, consumers form images about product cues that will serve as a basis for judgment in future evaluations.¹⁴ Brand image is the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to a specific brand. It consists of functional and symbolic brand beliefs. Brand expression is viewed by the consumers in reference to satisfying their needs. There are three brand dimensions that contribute to the brand image: symbolic benefits, experiential benefits and functional benefits.¹⁵

Hypothesis 1(a): Brand image in reference to product attractiveness and perceived use value inculcates brand preference among consumers.

Brand personality and consumer inclination toward a brand is also developed through celebrity connections and meanings of brand names. According to the theory of meaning,¹⁶ symbolic properties of the celebrity first become associated with the brands the celebrity endorses. Next, these symbolic meanings are transferred from the celebrity to consumers as they select brands with meanings congruent with their self-concept. When the symbolic properties associated with brands via celebrities are used to construct the self or to communicate the self-concept to others, a self–brand connection is formed.¹⁷ A consumer may appropriate symbolic brand meaning derived from a celebrity who has characteristics that the consumer aspires to possess. Therefore, the activation of self-enhancement goals by a threat to the self should increase the extent to which celebrity endorsement influences self–brand connections. It is argued in some research studies that celebrity-based brand associations can help consumers achieve goals that are motivated by the self when celebrity-based brand associations are linked or connected to individual

preferences.¹⁸ Consumer involvement in brand develops possessive behavior and consumption culture not only with individuals but also among peers. Possessions can be used to satisfy psychological needs, such as actively creating consumer self-concept, reinforcing and expressing self-identity, and allowing one to differentiate oneself and assert one's individuality. Possessions can also serve a social purpose by reflecting social ties to family, community and cultural groups, including brand communities.^{19,20}

Hypothesis 1(b): Brand expressions revealed through peer satisfaction, beliefs and perceived benefits drive consumer involvement with the brand.

The brand meaning analysis process establishes that non-verbalized personality associations of celebrity endorsers on these dimensions can indeed reinforce equivalent consumer beliefs about a brand's fun and stylishness benefits. However, this occurs only if a social consumption context is evoked, and only if the brand image beliefs are appropriate to the consumer schema for the product category involved. Moreover, under these facilitating conditions, such ad-created brand image beliefs have an impact only on brand purchase intentions and not on brand attitudes.²¹

Brand involvement

Brand expression of a product or service significantly contributes to building brand image and loyalty among consumers. Some interdisciplinary studies reveal that brand identity grows through economic, cultural, sociological and historical attributes of brand perception among consumers. Brands get involved with the consumers demonstrating product attributes, perceived use value, economic advantage and image of the company. Brand involvement often triggers product involvement among

consumers.²² However, in a competitive marketplace, low brand involvement may be coupled with high product involvement and *vice versa*. This is because involvement and loyalty are consumer-defined phenomena, as opposed to product-defined. As a result, it is believed that each involvement and commitment of brand can be thought of as a continuum along which consumers are distributed.²³

Effective marketing communication has emerged in the recent past as a significant tool for driving brand involvement among consumers. One of the central aspects of relationship marketing is communication with customers. Involving consumers in a marketing dialogue is a prerequisite for achieving brand involvement and loyalty, which, in turn, affects the prospects of establishing positive market relationships.²⁴ A large number of firms are recognizing the advantages of Web-enhanced brand communities as a potential lever for developing marketing communication to converge brand effects with the buying decisions of consumers. In addition to Web-enhanced communities, the inflow and outflow of word of mouth in social networks also increase the extent of brand involvement among consumers. Such informal networks leverage the involvement of customers in products and services by communicating the brand effect to a wider audience. In turn, customer involvement in the buying decision of product or service supports brand involvement because it allows customers to review the brands in reference to perceived use value.²⁵ The 'Super Chief' Santa Fe train, one of the best selling LEGO items in 2002, is an example of brand and consumer involvement that not only helped the Lego Company to reach high target of sales, but also drove consumer involvement in designing the product. Lego trains are very popular among adult consumers, and various Lego train clubs exist around the

world that contribute to developing the train designs.²⁶ One particular aspect of brand involvement relates to the development of consumption culture, and consuming often involves sustainable product experience. Brand involvement captures the social trend to engage the consumer's cognition. A study²⁷ argues that the love a biker feels for his or her motorcycle consists of three variables: Eros (passionate love), mania (possessive love) and *agape* (altruistic love).

Hypothesis 2(a): Brand involvement relates positively to the satisfaction perceived by customers with a preferred brand.

In view of the previous concepts of involvement of the brand in driving buyer behavior, it is argued that the involvement may be expressed as the role of a stimulus in individual behavior. This approach is independent of the individual motives or values of the consumer, and relates solely to the stimulus and its characteristics.²⁸ However, in a competitive retail environment, brand involvement drives the state of activation, motivation or interest among consumers by way of reviewing the product experience. It is evoked by factors specific to the individual, to the stimulus or to the situation, and reflects the willingness to act upon the stimulus cognitively or emotionally.²⁹ In order to understand brand involvement, its attributes, competitive advantage and corporate image are to be viewed in terms of perception of buyers. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the higher the involvement of brand with consumers, the greater their personal interest/relevance and their emotional and cognitive commitment, which determine the more complex and in-depth processing of information, as well as the more detailed experiences by individuals of the brand.³⁰

Brand involvement builds brand associations with consumers that help them process and retrieve brand information and

differentiate or position the brand. Positive brand associations create beneficial attitudes and feelings and provide a reason to buy.³¹ Such brand associations represent the core structure of memory of consumers over a period of time. Retrieval from long-term memory occurs when information is recalled through a process of spreading activation. This process involves the activation of one node, which leads to the further activation of linked nodes within the mind map of brands in consumers. If enough nodes are activated across the network to break the recall threshold, recall occurs in the mind of the consumer.^{31,32} Some associations are more unique than others. This means that some associations may be shared with many competing brands and may be typical for a product category, whereas others may be unique to just one or a smaller number of brands.³³

Hypothesis 2(b): Consumers develop strong attitudinal loyalty with higher involvement of brand that drives prompt brand retrieval effects among consumers.

The linkage between brand development and customer relationships has received increased attention both in research and practice. Firms often profile brand names and firm reputation to varying degrees in marketing and sales to acquire and retain customers. Brand profiling emphasis refers to the extent to which the company profiles its brands and reputation in its sales and marketing activities. A strong brand-profiling emphasis may thus result in customers who are less motivated to be involved in new product development.³⁴ Brand involvement as a state of emotional attachment is characterized by strong positive affection toward the brand, high arousal caused by the brand, and a tendency of the brand to dominate the consumers' cognition. Feelings such as love, attraction, desire, pleasure, fun and excitement belong

to the constellation of emotions that are derived from a brand. Love is the emotion that one may develop pursuant to a strong attraction, while some attachments based on attraction may not develop into love. Thus, brand love would indicate the presence of attraction. Similarly, consumers may feel an intense attraction to certain brands, though they may not be agreeable to declaring their love for these brands.³⁵ Consumers' love includes attributes of passion for a brand, brand attachment, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand and declarations of love toward the brand.²⁷

Hypothesis 2(c): Brand involvement generates positive emotions, arousal and purchase intentions among consumers that contribute to the strength of the brand.

Customer-centric brand value

Customer-centric brand value is a set of features customers associate with the product, services and corporate image. Brands vary in the amount of power and value they have in the marketplace. Brand value may be defined as all of the tangible and intangible assets of a brand held in the mind of the consumer. Brand value increases as the brand becomes better known and as the company supports the brand at the different contact points. Hence, firms need to continue research and development investment, skillful advertising, and efficient and effective interactions with the trade and with the consumer.³⁶ For instance, to improve the identification of Knorr soups and condiments, Unilever expanded the product line and, at times, advertised the whole line on television.

The brand value of products is grown as a combination of product line availability, preferential prices and perceived use value.³⁷ The low price of the product can, however, reflect negatively on perceptions

of quality, as price often sends quality cues to customers.³⁸ Such price perceptions demonstrate the importance of players in the value market focusing not only on price but also adding value to the whole brand experience.³⁹ Small firms can compete successfully in the competitive and dynamic markets by developing strong customer-centric brand value. For example, Palliser Estate Wines of New Zealand is one of the small firms that could manage to develop a strong brand. Adhering to a core set of values, it has ensured the effective use of limited resources and has built a competitive advantage through considered action. The customer-centric value has been developed by Palliser through architecting product value, relationship value, entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation of the brand. Integration of these factors led the firm to develop cultural values within the organization, customers and market players, including suppliers, retailers and bottlers.⁴⁰ A key area of controversy on brand manifestation lies in competing approaches to the concept and measurement of brand personality and behavioral loyalty of customers driven by the attitudinal dimensions in becoming associated with the brand. Typically, brand loyalty is defined with reference to either attitudinal or behavioral components.⁴¹ Most companies are putting their efforts toward creating pride in the brand by improving the service quality attached to the brand and social networking to build customer loyalty through a sense of derived brand value within consumer community.⁴²

Hypothesis 3(a): Competitive benefits of preferred brand deliver high customer-centric value that helps in building brand image and loyalty.

It has been argued in some studies that the firm does not create and deliver

brand value to the passive customers, but bidirectional interactions and dialogues between the firms and customers encourage co-creation of brand value. This moves the focus of marketing to a process of co-creating brand value by ways of sharing product and brand experience among consumers and market players.^{43,44} By taking an experience-centric view of creating brand value, it is argued that brand value derived from the consumer experience of brand can deliver sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational value to customers. To be a successful brand, thus, consumer experience of brand should have positive perceived consumer value and offer an element of surprise, engender learning and engage the customer with the brand. Co-creating value for each of the case brands requires skillful and well-trained staff, who can successfully engage through multiple channels in an appropriate dialogue with the ultra high- and high net-worth individuals who constitute intensive market segments for the specific brands. Venues are also important, with each of the brands having iconic destination outlets of high prestige and design content, which add value for their customers.⁴⁵

Hypothesis 3(b): Brand involvement is stronger when brands are co-created with the customer, as such brands develop cognitive value for customers.

STUDY DESIGN

Sampling

In order to measure the brand manifestation and its retrieval effects, respondents including both men and women in the age group of 18–45 years were selected. The study was conducted among shoppers at three major departmental stores in Mexico – Liverpool, SEARS and Palacio de Hierro, which cater to consumers of

the A/B and C+ demographic segments. The September–December period has been identified as the leisure period as the early sales for Christmas begin from September in Mexico. The data were collected on 35 variables that were closely related to influencing customer values. These variables include various perspectives of brand equity, brand value, brand image, customer satisfaction and brand promotional strategies applied in positioning of various brands by the stores to gain optimal market share and enhance aggregate value on shopping. In all, seven brands of different categories were selected for the study (breakfast cereals, natural beverages, energy products including vitamins, fashion apparel and accessories, fitness equipment, home decor, and family products such as televisions). The data sets have been categorized into the relational and economic variables selected for the study as illustrated in Table 1.

Data were collected from 254 respondents purposively selected, who were involved in shopping at chosen retail self-service stores in Mexico City, by administering a semi-structured questionnaire. Of the total sample, men constituted 36.22 per cent and women shoppers represented 63.78 per cent. The data from 23 respondents were omitted from the data analysis due to paucity of information. The respondents were involved in buying current, contemporary designs, including fashion brands. In all, the data of 231 observations were analyzed in the study. It has been found that the overall response rate in the survey was 90.94 per cent. The data collected from respondents were tested for their reliability by applying the Cronbach's α test. Variables derived from test instruments are declared to be reliable only when they provide stable and reliable responses over a repeated administration of the test. The test results showed high reliability ($\alpha=0.81$) on average for all observations included for analysis in reference to all variables pooled under different segments.

Table 1: Variables chosen for the study and descriptive statistics (*n*=231)

<i>Variable segments</i>	<i>Product-based (VS₁=4)</i>	<i>Perceptual (VS₂=6)</i>	<i>Economic (VS₃=5)</i>	<i>Co-creation (VS₄=5)</i>
Brand manifestation lexicons	Health family technology	Happiness romance future	Savings future	Happiness family
Hypotheses	Hypothesis 1(a)	Hypothesis 1(b), Hypothesis 2(a)	Hypothesis 2(b), Hypothesis 3(a)	Hypothesis 3(b)
Data variables	Appearance Sensory Durability Newness	Value and lifestyle Family orientation Perceived use value Communication	Value for money Price advantage Value additions	Display Customization Network marketing
Mean	3.572	3.261	4.283	4.513
Standard deviation	0.738	0.741	0.495	0.624
Standard error	0.138	0.063	0.049	0.114
Skewness	-0.832	-1.015	-1.059	-0.822
Sample variance	1.321	0.548	0.326	0.472
α -Scores	0.84	0.78	0.86	0.82

Figures in parentheses indicate variable segment (VS) and number of variables.

Data collection tools

Initially, focus group discussion was carried out of a representative sample of consumers who preferred to buy the products from selected categories as discussed in the previous section. In the two focus group sessions, 12 and 16 respondents participated, respectively, on a scheduled date and in a scheduled place. The focus group sessions were conducted as described below:

- Introduction on the theme: This was an initial kick-off to the discussion by portraying the attributes of brand manifestation and retrieval effects that help consumers in making buying decisions.
- Focus group facilitator: One of the project members who had bilingual (Spanish–English) proficiency had coordinated the focus group sessions. The proceedings of the sessions were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.
- Discussion tools: Participants of the focus group were provided with the attributes of the selected brands in different categories along with the pictures that expressed the brands. Such exercise was used to stimulate the identification and retrieval of brands among the participants. The pictures that revealed the brand expression are exhibited in Figure 1. The respondents had chosen seven lexicons (words and phrases used

to express brands) and the images out of 12 exhibited to them. The lexicons and images preferred by the respondents for discussion revealed the expressions⁴⁶ of family (1), savings (2), organic food (5), health (7), romance (8), fashion (9) and lifestyle (12).

- Issues for discussion: The major issues for discussion included knowledge on brand, perceived values, brand preference, price, promotions, quality, consumer attitude toward fashion apparel and satisfaction. The specific questions raised during the focus group are illustrated in Table 2.
- The focus group session was concluded with the closing remarks taking clues from the discussion and vote of thanks was expressed at the end of the session.

Accordingly, pre-coded questionnaires were developed for the study and administered to the respondents. In addition to questions with pre-coded options, some open-ended questions were also administered separately for qualitative assessment of the responses. The content analysis was done to summarize the open-ended questions using the QSR NVivo2 software. This software has powerful tools for combining subtle coding with qualitative linking, shaping and modeling qualitative information. The analysis of



Figure 1: Brand manifestation images submitted to respondents.

Table 2: Dimensionality and factors of correspondence analysis (N=231)

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Singular value</i>	<i>Inertia</i>	χ^2	<i>Proportion explained</i>	<i>Cumulative proportion</i>
1. Brand attractiveness	0.2481	0.0381	124.81	52.34	—
2. Brand availability	0.1836	0.0162	96.77	19.81	—
3. Brand awareness	0.1482	0.0025	28.38	16.61	—
4. Brand quality	0.0973	0.0134	24.45	6.19	—
5. Brand services	0.2138	0.0093	88.17	5.05	—

qualitative responses has largely benefited in deriving appropriate managerial implications of the study.

Questionnaires were initially drafted in English and later translated to Spanish for use in Mexico. The translation of questionnaires from English to Spanish and responses of subjects from Spanish to English was carried out by professional translation services. During the process of translation, it was ensured that the core

meanings of the sentences were retained. The translations of questionnaires both ways (framing questions and responses) were carried out by the professional translators. All precautions were taken to retain the original sense of responses made in Spanish. Some responses were recorded and later transcribed. Items were modified to fit the Spanish language, and, to accommodate all customers and questionnaires, were double back-translated.⁴⁷ A pilot test

showed that consumers understood the questions correctly. Questionnaires were administered by the undergraduate students of a marketing program. In translating some questions, the technique of equivalence or reformulation has been used to give a correct sense to the sentence.

Data collection process

The use of a picture-based survey enabled data to be collected on brand manifestation and consumer preferences for brands to investigate various dimensions of brand expression in the market. The first step of the survey is designed to reveal subjects' opinions relative to brands in general. Subjects then indicate three brands they wish to discuss in the second step. The chosen images symbolize their relationship with the brand and they explain their choice. The objective of this step is to identify the relationship between the brands and the consumer's perceived use value, which determines the preference toward the brands. This step validates recognition of brands by the respondents as expressed by these images. Observing the post-second step brand experience, respondents indicated whether they feel the brand is special and justify their perception, which clarifies the relationship between the consumer and the brand, in the third step. This method is based on the theory that brands express the value-based relationship with consumers to enable them to make the right buying decision.

Attributes of instrument

Data were collected on the variables closely related to influencing the brands, encompassing overall customer satisfaction, extent of perceived use value, brand arousal leveraging *me too* feeling and retailing strategies. The results on the analysis of the selected variables refer to the short-term customer values associated with arousal and happiness with regard to the preferred brand.

Seven attributes of brand manifestation that influenced buying decisions of consumers were family, savings, happiness, health, romance, fashion and lifestyle. Eight impersonal sources of influence brands were fashion magazines, non-fashion magazines, catalogs, Internet, television programs, celebrities, social media and store displays. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 4-point Likert scale (1 – Totally agree; 4 – Totally disagree) when they make a purchase decision on fashion apparel. Much research in academia uses a 5-point scale as this may produce more reliable or valid results. However, the response format of this study used a 4-point scale because the researchers believed that deleting the neutral point might result in more accurate responses. The general information on respondents included age, gender, education, annual household income and country of origin.

It was observed while analyzing the responses on the Likert scale that there were multiple responses to some construct-related questions. In order to resolve this dichotomy, data were totaled on a socio-metric matrix to document scale scores relative to subject and object interaction choices. Further, Guttman's coefficient⁴⁸ has been calculated for those variables showing multiple responses and the results were found to be in the range of 0.73–0.88, which revalidates the dichotomy of responses in the Likert scale. The results were found to be significant ($p > 0.05$). Guttman's coefficient results were derived using the following equation:

$$\lambda = \frac{(nX - E) - e}{nD}$$

where λ represents Guttman's coefficient, X denotes total number of respondents, n indicates number of construct-related multiple responses, E shows the number of individual error responses and D refers to the

total number of different responses that emerged during the survey. In the above equation, e indicates number of different response patterns.

Construct of measures and data validation

The constructs of the study were measured using reflective indicators showing effects on the core variables. Purchase decision on preferred brands is derived from the brand image, brand attributes, and store-based and product economy-related variables (VS_1 , VS_2 and VS_3). The effect of these decision variables on making purchase decisions was measured with 21 variables (Product-related VS_1 -7, Store-based VS_2 -8 and economic variables VS_3 -6) on a self-appraisal perceptual scale originally derived on the basis of focus group analysis as mentioned in the pretext. Motivation about this construct has been derived from an original scale developed on market orientation,⁴⁹ which conceptualized it as a multivariate construct comprising customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination as principal behavioral components. This scale also comprised triadic decision coordination among store sales ambiance, brand and consumer preferences.⁵⁰⁻⁵²

Constructs related to brand display, arousal and merriment as cognitive drivers among consumers in making buying decision (VS_4 and VS_5) were measured using a 13-variable 'self-appraisal perceptual scale' comprising shopping preferences of customers, customer relationship effects and shopper's perceptions. The perceptual behavior of consumers that support the buying decision (VS_4) were measured using eight variables: display of fashion apparel, store promotions, availability of brands, personalization, brand attributes, perceived use value, simulation and product mix.^{49,53,54} Other variables were selected on the basis of focus group discussion. The

construct of arousal and merriment (VS_5) was measured in reference to a 5-variable 'self-appraisal perceptual scale', consisting of hands-on experience, celebrity promotions, creative styles, brand advertising and trustworthiness of the brand.⁵⁵

All reflective constructs for all variable segments of the study were analyzed through the factor analysis model as a single confirmatory test. The goodness-of-fit statistics⁵⁶ comprising χ^2 statistics (6.82), root mean square error of approximation (0.471), Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI) (0.492), comparative fit index (CFI) (0.406) and incremental fit index (IFI) (0.518) indicate that the model used for analysis in the study fits the data adequately. All variables were loaded significantly on their corresponding segments, which revealed a significant p -value at 0.01–0.05 levels.

The data collected from respondents were tested for their reliability by applying the Cronbach's test. Variables derived from test instruments are declared to be reliable only when they provide stable and reliable responses over a repeated administration of the test. The test results showed an acceptable reliability level for all observations included for analysis in reference to all variables pooled under different segments as discussed in the pre-text.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Correspondence Analysis (CA) was carried out to derive a spatial representation of qualitative profiles in a reduced Euclidean space. This is a descriptive technique to analyze and depict the relationships between the row and column profiles in a two-way table. In practice, the method decomposes the overall χ^2 statistic by identifying a small number of dimensions to represent deviations from the expected values. CA is used to study the connections between the lexicons (words and phrases used to express brands) and the images of brands to represent the nature of the relationship with the product or service. The use of CA

enables an understanding of the structure of the lexicons used for brands for which consumers have varying levels of indulgence with the brands. A study also motivates to use the CA as an analytical tool.²⁷ As a statistical technique of choice, CA is very useful when associations between two or more multi-level categorical variables have to be examined. In measuring the brand effects specifically, it is an extremely useful application because of the large number of categorical variables used for analysis.⁵⁷ Fundamentally, consumer motivation to become associated with a brand is best explained by motivation theory, which contends that cognitive or affective motives seek individual gratification and satisfaction. Several studies have evaluated consumer motivations toward shopping contexts such as quality of product, perceived use value, economic advantages or savings, convenience, social interaction, and brand experience.⁵⁸

SPSS 16.0 was used to analyze the data. In CA, $k-1$ dimensions are drawn based on the number of categories in the column of the contingency table.⁵⁹ With six determinants of brand manifestation for analysis spread across the rows, five dimensions were drawn from the analysis, as is evident in Table 2. CA provides statistical measures for describing the number of dimensions, and the proportion of variance explained by each dimension. These are called singular values and are to be neatly encapsulated in the singular-value decomposition. These values should be greater than 0.20 to be accepted as a viable dimension.⁶⁰ Singular values for extracted dimensions indicate a single dimensional solution with a 0.24 value for Dimension I. Dimension I (brand attractiveness) explains 52.34 per cent of the variance of the cumulative solution. The second dimension was related to availability and explained 19.81 per cent of the variance, whereas other dimensions did not manifest in creating effective relationships with the

brand. It can be observed from Table 2 that product attractiveness builds the brand image and perceived use value inculcates brand preference among consumers. Accordingly, it can be stated that the results shown in Table 2 are consistent with Hypothesis 1(a). The following dimensions are therefore retained as major dimensions of brand manifestation:

- Functional perceptions (quality of the brand – 6.19 per cent)
- Commitment (services offered by the brand – 5.05 per cent)

This indicates that the motivations for consumers are complex towards getting associated with their preferred brand. Brands express distinctively to create long- or short-term impact on consumers.

It can be seen from Table 3 that the brands express many attributes that act as drivers for making buying decisions. The results of the table indicate that point of purchase arousal is an outgrowth of consumer experience of manifested brands that leads to determination of purchase intentions. These variable segments are considered to be a single construct made up of five dimensions of brand manifestation situations that influence purchase intentions of consumers toward shopping.

The results exhibited in Table 3 reveal that consumers tend to choose brands whose perceived images are similar to consumers' perceived value and economic and social benefits. This outcome of brand manifestation shows that perceived image self-congruity affects brand preferences and hence affects sales. Accordingly, the results advocate strong support for brands to have a multiplicity of image attributes to enhance their marketability. Moreover, the development of customized products is of paramount importance for value generation among customers. The attractiveness of a brand depends on its design, quality and price, the user experience of a product in

Table 3: Measurement of constructs: Confirmatory factor analysis and regression values (n=231)

Factor segments	Attributes (scale: 1 – strongly agree, 4 – strongly disagree)	α -values	β -values	Factor loading	χ^2	Variance (var)	t-value	Goodness-of-fit measures
Brand attractiveness	Happiness	0.74	0.473*	0.86	84.69	0.385	14.26	RMSEA=0.065
	Health	0.70	0.381**	0.89	98.16	0.136	23.06	TLI=0.729
	Family	0.73	0.219***	0.81	126.55	0.035	18.25	CFI=0.681
	Newness	0.67	0.267***	0.71	24.37	0.283	14.03	IFI=0.784
	Sensory	0.74	0.184***	0.78	56.31	0.163	16.92	
Brand availability	Durability	0.62	0.132	0.68	49.35	0.084	15.37	
	Future Technology	0.88	0.396*	0.63	73.04	0.142	13.48	RMSEA=0.032
Brand awareness	Romance	0.75	0.482*	0.88	137.39	0.382	26.14	TLI=0.83
	Value for money	0.81	0.497*	0.82	134.60	0.415	18.01	CFI=0.81
	Price sensitivity	0.77	0.317**	0.92	191.07	0.032	12.82	IFI=0.637
	Value and lifestyle	0.81	0.336**	0.72	98.73	0.084	16.39	RMSEA=0.038
	Communication	0.72	0.282**	0.83	124.81	0.109	18.37	TLI=0.91
Brand quality	Social networks	0.76	0.214***	0.78	96.32	0.037	19.11	CFI=0.86
	Perceived use value	0.70	0.332**	0.87	83.77	0.362	24.92	IFI=0.84
	Saving	0.74	0.394*	0.84	170.29	0.081	15.76	RMSEA=0.027
	Quality	0.86	0.475*	0.63	122.65	0.592	19.08	TLI=0.90
Brand services	Value additions	0.82	0.208***	0.71	96.73	0.276	21.87	CFI=0.92
	Display	0.76	0.144	0.88	104.82	0.337	14.52	IFI=0.86
	Customization	0.70	0.364**	0.56	265.40	0.228	13.28	
	Brand promotion	0.80	0.407*	0.66	195.31	0.492	19.77	

RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, TLI= Tucker-Levis Index, CFI= Comparative Fit Index, IFI= Incremental Fit Index.

* $P < 0.01$, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $P < 0.10$.

terms of user satisfaction, and brand loyalty.⁶¹ The results suggest a good fit of statistics toward measuring product attractiveness. The TLI (0.729), CFI (0.681) and IFI (0.784) indicate that the model used for analysis in the study fits the data adequately. The RMSEA is below 0.10 and the root mean square residual (RMR) and the standardized RMR are 0.079 and 0.060, respectively, which are considered acceptable. Hence, the results discussed above reveal that peer satisfaction, beliefs and perceived benefits derived from the brand manifestation drive higher consumer involvement with the brand. These attributes generate positive emotions, arousal and purchase intentions among consumers that contribute to the strength of the brand. Hence, the results shown in Table 3 support Hypothesis 1(b) and Hypothesis 2(c).

Brand manifestation is revealed in economic stimuli toward buying behavior of consumers defined by three attributes: (i) uniqueness, which adds to the social image; (ii) price level, which determines the value for money; and (iii) offering price discounts combined with cross-promotions and credit facilities that the brand induces. The results of the study suggested that the cue pertaining to brand involvement helps enhance purchase involvement among consumers. There was also some evidence to suggest that those consumers who had high brand involvement placed less importance on price. On the contrary, those consumers who had low brand involvement placed greater importance on price discounts.⁶² The results suggest a good fit of RMSEA = 0.038, CFI = 0.86, TLI = 0.91 and IFI = 0.84. Measures of GFI, CFI, TLI, and IFI indicators are valid at the recommended level 0.80. The RMSEA is below 0.050 and the RMR and the standardized RMR are 0.012 and 0.027, respectively, which are very good levels. Accordingly, it may be observed that

consumers develop strong attitudinal loyalty with higher involvement of brand that drives prompt brand retrieval effects among consumers. In addition, the results discussed above show that brand involvement is stronger when brands are co-created with the customer (customization), as such brands develop cognitive value for customers. Therefore, the conformity of Hypothesis 2(b) and Hypothesis 3(b) can be established.

The cognitive brand manifestation affecting the purchase intentions among consumers include personalization of brands, and visual and experiential determinants. It was observed during the study that the appearance of new brands (or of new attributes) had a visual effect that enhanced the customization services provided by the brands. Such brand manifestation stimulates or stifles the purchase intentions of consumers. The utility of consumer brands depends not only on the personalized preferences and perceived use value associated with them, but also on their image in contributing to the lifestyle. The qualitative observation during the study showed that when consumer networks were shorter, the brand image and loyalty turned fragile. In this factor segment (cognitive determinants), the results also indicate a good fit of the model with RMSEA = 0.027, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.90 and IFI = 0.86. Measures of GFI, CFI, TLI, and IFI indicators are valid at the recommended level 0.80. The RMSEA is below 0.032 and RMR and the standardized RMR are 0.027 and 0.031, respectively, which were found significant for Hypothesis 2(a) and Hypothesis 3(a). Accordingly, the results discussed above reveal that brand involvement relates positively to the satisfaction perceived by the customers, and perceived benefits of the brand delivers high customer-centric value that helps in building brand image and loyalty.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Competition in the global marketplace is increasing rapidly, which requires companies to strengthen their brands to gain sustainable growth. Managers need to improve the brand manifestation scenarios in the marketplace and obtain a 360-degree view of a brand in its marketplace that could provide a wide-angle view of consumers and map their buying behavior. Managers should enhance the attractiveness of consumer brands and link them to business performance. There are new interactive capabilities that need to be built by the firms, such as brand information call centers and online brand–customer interfaces designed to deepen consumers’ connection to the brand, in order to uphold the brand value. The successful global brands make best use of the rich brand experience and converge with their geographical diversity across the consumer segments. Although brand expressions invariably drive the cognitive behavior of consumers, flexible and open-minded managers can propagate brand insights with universal attributes to make them global.

Effective brand management requires making the brand stronger in communicating to consumers. Strong manifestations of brands reinforce and revitalize brands through consumer networks. Brand can also be reinforced by improving brand attributes that ensure innovation in product design, manufacturing, and merchandising and ensuring relevance in user and usage imagery. Another critical consideration managers can make in reinforcing brands with sensitive expressions is the consistency of the cognitive support that the brand delivers, both in terms of the value for money and perceived use value to the consumers. Managers should look into the two general approaches of expanding the reach of brand awareness by improving brand recall and recognition of consumers during purchase or consumption

settings, and improving the brand communication to the consumers in order to augment brand image. Brand expressions can be communicated through the Internet to onset brand messages to the consumer networks. Successful Web-based marketing campaigns have an appealing message that delivers brand fantasy, fun and divulgence, prompts visibility and leverages the convergence of technology.

At the retail point of purchase, the convergence of customer loyalty, value for money and competitive product advantages drives the loyalty of retail stores. In addition, manager needs to measure periodically the impact of brand manifestation on buying potential of customers. Success of brands grows with the customer satisfaction, value for money, repeat buying behavior and increase in the sales of products. A strategic focus considering how customers and competitors will react to brand expressions, managers should not only tailor brand programs successfully to target customers, but also skillfully monitor brand’s manifestation through customer culture and competition challenges.

CONCLUSION

Manifestation of brands develops consumer association and customer-centric orientation of the firm in the competitive marketplace. Brand associations are important to the consumer marketing firms for a variety of reasons, including retrieval of brand information and differentiating the brand. It has been observed during the study that if the brand manifestation is positive, it will create beneficial feelings and provide a reason to buy among consumers. Attractive brand expressions define brand–consumer associations as *subject linked in memory to a brand*, create a meaning for consumers and help retrieval of the brand. The study reveals that the brand manifestation generates economic stimuli among consumers toward buying behavior in

reference to newness and price advantage, and drives buying behavior led by the brand promotions. Brand expressions support cognitive platforms of the customer's mind and provide novelty, excitement and arousal. Repeated interactions constitute brand retrieval effects by featuring new experiences, insights and perspectives, not unlike a developing romantic relationship where partners progressively discover each other, and long to be together. The brand manifestation develops emotional attachment with the brand, and stimulates purchase intentions among consumers, including personalization of brands and visual and experiential determinants. The study reveals that positive brand expressions develop emotional attachment to a brand among consumers, and consumers may be committed to a brand for various economic, cognitive and relational reasons. Throughout this research, a key metric for brand success is maintained to ascertain the attributes of brand expressions that influence the buying behavior of consumers. If brand manifests high attractiveness, attitudinal brand loyalty may also be high, and thus marketers should focus their brands on creating conditions that are conducive to consumer emotions so that sustainable loyalty to brands can be developed.

Like many other empirical studies, this research might also have some limitations in reference to sampling, data collection and generalization of the findings. Samples drawn for the study might have been insufficient to generalize the study results. The study does not indicate how brand manifestation governs behavior control or quality differentiation, and promotion design efficiency overrules the price and volume discount stimuli among the customers.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could examine issues related to the brand perceptions of quality and

design for sustained response among consumers. The impact of economic variables on the brand arousal and buying behavior in response to competitive brand manifestation may also be considered as a tool to drive market orientation. The roles of retail competition, account retail strategy and demographics in determining brand response are also potential issues to be pondered in future research. Issues related to effectiveness of brand promotion programs, with the premise that the level of brand attractiveness will encourage the consumer behavior toward brand association, may also be considered as topics for further research.

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