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Brand Attachment: Constructs, Consequences, and Causes

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Brand Attachment: Constructs, Consequences, and Causes

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Abstract

This review examines four key issues involved in developing and establishing strong brand relationships with its customers. The first concerns the meaning of "brand attachment" and its critical consequences for brand equity. The second concerns outcomes of brand attachment to customers and the firm. The third concerns the causes of brand attachment. We articulate the process by which strong brand attachment is created through meaningful personal connections between the brand and its customers. We also articulate the identification and management of a strategic brand exemplar that allows the firm to create brand attachment and sustain and grow the brand's competitive advantages.

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Work on relationship marketing suggests that developing strong relationships between consumers and brands is important (Pine II et al., 1995; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Fournier and Mick, 1998; Webster Jr., 2000) given their implications for customer loyalty and price insensitivity (cf. Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Price and Arnould, 1999). In turn, these customer responses can lower costs and increase company revenues (Kalwani and Narayandas, 1995; Pine II et al., 1995; Price and Arnould, 1999).

Unfortunately, little is known about the factors that underlie strong brand relationships. This review attempts to articulate such factors by using the theoretical construct of brand attachment. Below, we define the construct of brand attachment and differentiate it from other constructs. As Figure 1.1 shows, we argue that brand attachment is critical to outcome variables that underscore the brand's value to the firm (see also Thomson et al., 2005). We also add to the literature by articulating the antecedents to strong brand attachments, articulating both the bases on which strong brand attachments form and the marketing activities that foster them. As Figure 1.1 shows, we posit that strong brand-customer attachments derive from the brand's success at





Fig. 1.1 Brand attachment: Construct, consequences, and causes.

creating strong brand self-connections by gratifying, enabling, and/or assuring the self. These successes are themselves contingent on the effectiveness of marketing activities that use affect, typicality, vividness, and rich information to foster a strong brand-self connection through a strategic brand exemplar.

The remaining sections of the review describe the attachment construct, its relationship to other constructs, the nature of brand-self connections, and the role of strategic brand exemplars in creating these connections. Theoretical and managerial issues follow in the discussion section.

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