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BRAND EQUITY FOR TABLET CHOCOLATE AND CONVENIENCE PRODUCT PURCHASES BY WOMEN

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ABSTRACT: *This research aims to demonstrate direct influences of marketing mix variations on the customer-based brand equity process for tablet chocolate and convenience products. The proposed model examines product quality, price perception, reaction to stock-outs, the perceived effect of advertising as antecedents of the customer-based brand equity process, along with the moderation of brand consciousness. Methodology includes simple random sampling and the partial least squares. Sample involves 172 female tablet chocolate consumers out of Generation X and Millennials in Istanbul, Turkey. Results indicate that product quality generates brand knowledge and loyalty, but price perception generates only loyalty. Besides, brand consciousness moderates the effect of product quality on brand knowledge. Implications include the effects of neglecting brand experience, the link between operations and marketing, and transition of marketing mix. The final model is proposed as a minimum requirement to substitute tablet chocolate branding due to concerns about public health and sugar consumption.*

KEYWORDS: Brand Equity, Marketing Mix, Brand Experience, Convenience Products, Chocolate, Women

INTRODUCTION

The customer-based brand equity notion emphasizes that a brand can develop superior brand equity only through relevant customer perception. It empowers customers as the ultimate source to determine brand value. Consumers are among the most powerful constituencies in business, seeing through their eyes remains as a necessity for today's organizations. Such insight is critical for branding, because brands can extend these evaluations that depend on positive ratings from consumers into brand equity. So, organizations should consider a diverse set of brand equity constructs to enjoy fruitful outcomes. However, organizations can prioritize some elements of branding and neglect others due to micro and macro forces, organizational aims and resources, and competition. Thus, organizations can search for ways to gain quick and direct reactions from consumers and consequently brands can switch to alternative business processes.

The purpose of this article is to show that brands of tablet chocolate and convenience products can achieve quick and direct effects on customer-based brand equity. Customer-based brand equity development should start earlier by considering antecedents and moderators. The marketing research problem is gaining insight about the direct impact of marketing mix variations on the customer-based brand equity process with moderation of brand consciousness. Because, product quality and the perceived effect of advertising indirectly influence “customer-based brand equity” process for tablet chocolate and convenience products, and “brand experience” directs these effects (Bozkurt, 2014). Differently, this article argues the customer-based brand equity development without considering brand experience. So, how can the

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absence of brand experience constructs influence a model?

This article aims to reach both academicians and practitioners. Its academic value lies in its ability to develop an alternative process for a common goal and to integrate different quality views. Besides, an international scientific conference committee supports the full text of an earlier version of this paper with a different title and text order for a presentation and the conference proceedings compact disc (Bozkurt, 2015). This research offers practical insight and suggestions for convenience products and it selects tablet chocolate to represent such product class. Because, "brand strength" requires shifting organizational focus from current priorities towards a diverse set of brands and markets; benchmarking a brand to brands in unrelated categories to find positioning possibilities; and measuring equity of brand assets (Aaker, 1995). Practitioners can use such insight for competitive advantage, new product development, and substitution.

Convenience products are for satisfying immediate needs and consumers usually buy these products, but they spend less energy to pick one product (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Tablet chocolate as a convenience product holds economic significance, dark chocolate improves heart health, and women have powerful relationships with chocolate (Loffredo et al., 2014; Zarantonello and Luomala, 2011). The growing Turkish tablet chocolate market is worth 324 million Turkish Liras; brands penetrated into 85.7% of households; besides, Istanbul and its region generated 40% of sales (Ipsos, 2013).

There are concerns for sugar consumption (USDA and HHS, 2015). Pure chocolate generates the health benefits of dark chocolate, not the sugar in the product. Examining such controversial product can uncover the branding foundations behind, since brands can learn the minimum level of branding they should achieve to substitute tablet chocolate. Tablet chocolate brands can consider the feasibility of products that can minimize concerns to continue present branding achievements. So, tablet chocolate is selected to represent convenience products.

This article focuses on female consumers in Istanbul, Turkey, who are Generation X (birth years: 1965-1979) or Millennials (birth years: 1980-1994) (Schiffmann et al., 2010). Because, consumers aged between 20-49 spent 4,832,557,009 Turkish Liras for food (ages above 14 spent 9,730,474,706 Turkish Liras) (TurkStat, 2014a; TurkStat, 2014b). Moreover, in Istanbul, 86.4% of women, 54.5% of men, 10.0% of children, and 1.6% of elders were generally purchase decision makers (Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2014). Besides, women benefit from "consumer culture" environments (Chytkova and Kjeldgaard, 2012).

The research questions are below:

First research question: What are the antecedents of the customer-based brand equity process, regarding branding of tablet chocolate and convenience products?

Second research question: Can brand consciousness (as a moderator) alter the influence of the customer-based brand equity process' antecedents on the process' stages, regarding branding of tablet chocolate and convenience products?

Third research question: What are the stages of the customer-based brand equity process, regarding branding of tablet chocolate and convenience products?

Initially, the research model proposes four antecedents of the customer-based brand equity process. Each antecedent depends on a marketing mix element. Firstly, the model examines

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product quality. Second construct is price perception. Third one is the reaction to stock-outs. Last one is the perceived effect of advertising. The model examines if these antecedents influence the customer-based brand equity process (process stages are awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty). The model also examines the moderating effect of brand consciousness between an antecedent and a brand equity stage. Despite its roots in the conventional marketing mix, variations in the proposed research model are more focused. Results can also encourage a weighted list of marketing mix constructs to update marketing mix elements.

The proposed research model is fully perceptual (Zeithaml, 1988). Two quality factors in the model (product quality: from an operational perspective, perceived quality: from a marketing perspective) involve different indicators.

Results can provide new support for a perceptual link between operations and marketing. Additionally, this study can strengthen the approach that handles quality earlier in brand equity management. Integrating operations and marketing as well as segmenting young consumers can be dominant by 2030 (Haymarket Network Limited, 2012).

LITERATURE

A research stream examines direct and indirect impacts of marketing management constructs on brand equity stages as presented by Aaker (1995). These factors are related to advertising and promotions for sportswear, consumer electronics, and cars (Buil et al., 2013); pricing and advertising for mobile phones (Shafi and Madhavaiah, 2013); pricing for olive oil (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011); advertising, pricing, and promotions for clothing (Tong and Hawley, 2009); advertising and pricing for washing machines (Villarejo-Ramos and Sanchez-Franco, 2005). Pricing, advertising, and retailing constructs directly and indirectly influence brand equity for athletic shoes, camera film, and television (Yoo, et al., 2000).

Previous studies refer to brand equity as a great outcome of mixing marketing elements. Differently, this research applies these conceptions to a different product and draws conclusions on behaviours of female consumers and generations. Text below explains constructs in the proposed research model, as this conceptual background was the main motivation for the research scope.

The customer-based brand equity process

“Customer-based brand equity” generates a significant difference between a brand and another one or a generic product (Keller, 1993). It is mainly a process; since awareness, associations, “perceived quality”, and loyalty measure brand equity (Aaker, 1995). Loyalty is the ultimate outcome, loyal customers tolerate price premiums, loyalty protects a brand against price wars, it attaches customers to a brand during time-lag that occurs when reacting against competitor achievements; and it is a barrier against newcomer competitors (Aaker, 1995). “Perceived quality” is linked to pricing, usage rates, customer benefits, framing, and segmentation (Aaker, 1995). Brand or product associations reveal uniqueness, which is based on “brand image” and associations' measures gather around the value proposition, anthropomorphism, and owner organization (Aaker, 1995). Awareness is an early indicator of brand equity, and it is linked to “salience” (Aaker, 1995). “Salience” examines “brand knowledge” and gathering pieces in memory (Vieceli and Shaw, 2010). Customers attach adjectives to brands, therefore “brand

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image" and "brand awareness" contribute to "brand knowledge" (Keller, 1993).

Such perceptual and behavioural perspective indicates differences in customer reactions to marketing activities of brands or products accordingly with "brand knowledge" (Keller, 1993). So, this article studies customer evaluations of ongoing branding capabilities, exact stages of customer-based brand equity, and their places in the model.

Product Quality

"Cue utilization theory" indicates that consumers relate a cue or cues to a product's quality or performance (Richardson et al., 1994). A debate argues if quality is objective or subjective; but it is totally perceptual, because always a consumer, a marketer, or another person perceives it (Valos et al., 2010; Zeithaml, 1988). So, all there is to quality is perceived quality. However, "perceived quality" is not necessarily a "key driver" of brand equity (Aaker, 1995).

Food consumers continuously expect fair quality levels from brands, and these stakeholder expectations urge brands to meet consumer requirements (Manning, 2007). Quality as a tangible aspect can add value to food branding (Manning, 2007). It highly increases brand equity (Farquhar, 1989). Consumers tend to buy brands with high brand equity, and as high brand equity allows consumers to associate positive adjectives to brands, they become so sure that they will be delivered products with certain levels of quality, these evaluations hint trust, and result in profitable relationships (Ponnam et al., 2015). These studies provide great support for the inclusion of product quality to this article.

Quality conception and ratings should be fused into brand management. Although, quality is not necessarily an exact stage of brand equity, it can be an antecedent. To resolve, the proposed research model includes two quality factors. One is labeled as product quality and is an antecedent of the customer-based brand equity process. Its indicators are workmanship, requirements, dependability, and durability (Dodds et al., 1991). These indicators belong to dimensions from a managerial and operational definition that assumes objectivity (Hitt et al, 2012). The proposed model uses this factor to link operations and marketing by letting consumer perception evaluate operational and organizational quality dimensions and to detect if these managerial conceptions are meaningful for consumers. The significance of this construct can expose that all quality is perceptual. However, Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) used these operational indicators to measure "perceived quality". The third stage of the brand equity process with the label of perceived quality is more marketing-oriented. It indicates the possibility and functionality of quality (Yoo and Donthu, 2001).

Price Perception

Branding involves internal cues that cannot be changed without altering physical aspects of products and external cues that can be changed due to organizational purposes (Field et al., 2012). Mainly, price is considered as "extrinsic" (Dodds et al.,1991; Zeithaml, 1988).

Branding is often linked to the willingness of consumers to pay more for a specific brand (Aaker, 1995). Price perception contributes to brand equity for store brands (Porral and Levy-Mangin, 2015). Heavily investments in marketing by service expenditures can generate long-term outcomes and brand equity will be higher (Davcik, 2013). Davcik (2013) proposes that a high price level increases brand equity and shows that pricing for enriched-food significantly impacts brand equity. Differently, brand equity impacts food pricing (Davcik and Sharma, 2015). Thus, price perception can be related to branding and can trigger the customer-based

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brand equity process.

Reaction to stock-outs

Reaction to stock-outs refers to a consumer tendency to search for a preferred brand store by store and it can indicate loyalty (Ulas and Arslan, 2006). Consumer options can be store-switching, substitution outside or within the brand, postponement, and not purchasing (Corsten and Gruen, 2003). So, "brand assortment" impacts "customer-based brand equity", due to its effect on "brand image" (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). So, reaction to stock-outs can be an antecedent of the customer-based brand equity process.

The perceived effect of advertising

Protecting or increasing brand equity is a major aim of marketing communications, but measurement is challenging (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000). "Uses and gratifications theory" indicates that goals direct persons and people find ways to satisfy their needs by referring to the mass media (O'Donohoe, 1993). This theory treats the media as a resource for people, but it does not examine the effects of the media on people (Katz, 1959). Marketing communications on media "lead" consumers to "gratification" through satisfaction of personal needs (Whiting and Williams, 2013).

Through the mediation of brand reputation, advertising influences brand equity outcomes like sales and relative price; it also has a direct effect on sales (Chaudhuri, 2002). Advertising equity has strong relations to brand equity, it emphasizes the effects of previous advertising efforts on consumer perception (Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015). Informative, entertaining, and economic aspects of advertising achieve positive perceptions (Coulter et al., 2001). Negative perceptions relate advertising to materialism, declining social values, and false themes (Coulter et al., 2001). These studies link advertising, branding, and consumer perception, and encourage future research about the influence of advertising on branding.

Brand consciousness

"Brand consciousness" hypothesizes the willingness of consumers to pay price premiums for brands with high "brand awareness" and its dimensions refer to product quality, pricing, retail environments, and advertising (Sproles and Kendall 1986, 1990). The first dimension states that brand conscious consumers consider well-known brands; the second one measures if choice sets of consumers include expensive brands; the third one states that a high price indicates high quality; the fourth one examines if "product assortment" in department and specialty stores are very satisfactory; the fifth one examines a consumer tendency towards buying best-sellers; the sixth one examines satisfaction for heavily advertised brands; and the last dimension examines if consumers expect perfect products for satisfaction (Sproles and Kendall, 1986, 1990).

Due to its effects on branding, brand consciousness studies can expand brand equity (Yim et al., 2014). Since, it is a general consumer tendency towards brands, this research treats it as a possible moderator. It is also more influential on women than men (Workman and Lee, 2013).

Previous research and conceptual background confirm that treating marketing mix variations as antecedents of the customer-based brand equity process is reasonable. This research uses a different variation of the marketing mix, and is a further step in examining the brand equity development in the absence of brand experience as a mediator.

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METHODOLOGY

Research questions and hypotheses

First research question: What are the antecedents of the customer-based brand equity process, regarding branding of tablet chocolate and convenience products?

H1a: Product quality can influence brand awareness

H1b: Product quality can influence loyalty

H2a: Price perception can influence brand awareness

H2b: Price perception can influence loyalty

H3a: The perceived effect of advertising can influence brand awareness

H3b: The perceived effect of advertising can influence loyalty

H4a: Reaction to stock-outs can influence brand awareness

H4b: Reaction to stock-outs can influence loyalty

Second research question: Can brand consciousness moderate the influence of the customer-based brand equity process' antecedents on the process' stages, regarding branding of tablet chocolate and convenience products?

H5a: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of product quality on brand awareness

H5b: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of product quality on loyalty

H6a: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of price perception on brand awareness

H6b: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of price perception on loyalty

H7a: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of the perceived effect of advertising on brand awareness

H7b: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of the perceived effect of advertising on loyalty

H8a: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of reaction to stock-outs on brand awareness

H8b: Brand consciousness can moderate the influence of reaction to stock-outs on loyalty

Third research question: What are the stages of the customer-based brand equity process, regarding branding of tablet chocolate and convenience products?

H9: Awareness influences associations (Aaker, 1995).

H10: Associations influence “perceived quality” (Aaker, 1995).

H11: “Perceived quality” influences loyalty (Aaker, 1995).

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Sampling, data collection, and analysis

The unit of analysis, sampling units, and the extent are female (Generation X and Millennials) purchase decision makers for tablet chocolate, households, and the city of Istanbul, respectively. Istanbul generated 23.5% of consumption spending among households in Turkey and spending for food and non-alcoholic beverages in Istanbul was 16.3.% (TurkStat, 2014a; TurkStat, 2014b).

Sampling is probabilistic and the sample is picked from a finite population due to simple random sampling procedures. As, cellular phones penetrated into 91% of Turkey population (Mobilike, 2013), sample frame is a cellular phone directory. Sample size is 172. Goodhue, Lewis, and Thompson (2012) examine significance, accuracy, and power of sample sizes for variance and covariance based structural equation modeling. They demonstrated that despite suggestions of a minimum of 200, there are no statistical differences between 150 and 200 for partial least squares method. 172 is also above 151, which is the size, the formula suggests. The tolerated amount of error is 0,16 (Cochran, 1977). Confidence interval is 95%. Pilot study sample size is 49 (conducted to detect problems) and is relevant; because it is above 30 (0.20 times 151) (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007).

Before data collection, the researcher conducted a depth interview with the manager for a Turkish luxurious tablet chocolate brand and received professional support for the proposed model. The research data set is a subset of a doctoral thesis data set (Bozkurt, 2014). Data collection duration is nearly two months. Data aimed to reflect actual percentages in target population regarding generation by education to increase research quality.

A commercial sample generator software selected members randomly. Firstly, interviewed consumers were asked to think about tablet chocolate brands in general for brand consciousness items. Otherwise, consumers were asked to think about a specific tablet chocolate brand.

Data analysis started with data cleansing, factor and reliability analyses. Since, this research offers a branding process model; methods are structural equation modeling, partial least squares, bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapping.

Scaling

Scale selection criteria are reliability, theoretical foundations, richness, statistical significance, and suitability to marketing and consumer behaviour (Bruner II and Hensel, 2001; Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999). Scale references are Dodds, et al. (1991) for product quality (factor name was altered due to the quality definition by Hitt, et al. (2012)), Ismail (2011) for price perception and the perceived effect of advertising (factor names were altered to truly represent the construct focus), Ulas and Arslan (2006) for reaction to stock-outs (generated from explanations), Sproles and Kendall (1986, 1990) for brand consciousness, and Yoo and Donthu (2001) for the customer-based brand equity process. Scales were back-translated and wording was customized against misunderstandings. The survey involves a five-point Likert scale (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”).

The reliability item of product quality is synonymous with dependability (another item of product quality) in Turkish and is omitted. A repeated price perception item of reasonable price is omitted. A brand consciousness item is changed to include all brands not only national ones. The last item of brand associations is changed from “imagining in mind” into “lack of identity” for easiness.

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RESULTS

Demographics

Sample demographics are similar to the target population demographics (in terms of generation by education level). Actual percentages for Generation X about target population, primary school, secondary/high school, and higher education percentages were 55%, 37.76%, 39.07%, and 14.25%, respectively and for Millennials, these were 45%, 15.96%, 55.79%, and 18.26%, respectively (TurkStat, 2012). In the sample, Generation X corresponds to 42.1%, 44.2%, 13.7% for primary school, secondary/high school, higher education, respectively. For Millennial sample members, these are 15.6%, 63.6%, 20.8%, respectively. 55.2% of the sample are Generation X and 44.8% are Millennials. 30.2% of the sample corresponds to primary school, 52.9% corresponds to secondary or high school, and 16.9% corresponds to higher education. 39.5% of the sample are single with no children, 2.9% are single with children, 8.1% are married with no children, and 49.4% are married with children.

Factor and reliability analyses

Factor and reliability analyses were applied by using SPSS. Final factor analysis indicates that the sampling is adequate and sample size is large enough to be homogeneous (KMO: 0.73094). Bartlett test validates correct item designs (Significance: 0,00000).

The reliable factors extracted by the last factor analysis (varimax rotation and the rotated factor matrix) are the perceived effect of advertising, product quality, brand knowledge, loyalty, and price perception, respectively. The perceived effect of advertising indicators are generating positive feelings, motivating consumers towards purchase, visualizing customer experience, and favourable reactions (Cronbach's alpha: 0.8011). The second factor is the product quality with indicators of overall quality rating, dependability, durability, and workmanship (Cronbach's alpha: 0.7288). The third factor combines the first indicator of brand associations with brand awareness. “Brand associations” and “brand awareness” form “brand knowledge” (Keller, 1993). Indicators reveal if a consumer can quickly remember the brand, if a consumer is aware of the reviewed brand and if a consumer can recognize the brand in a competitive environment (Cronbach's alpha: 0.7868). Loyalty indicators are referring to self as loyal, low tendency towards brand switching, and priority of a brand in the choice set, respectively (Cronbach's alpha: 0.7760). The last factor combines first and last items of “price perception”, and indicates reasonable and pleasing prices (Cronbach's alpha: 0.7104).

Model Revision

Factor and reliability analyses suggest revision of the proposed research model and hypotheses. The revised research model hypothesizes the influence of the perceived effect of advertising, product quality, and price perception on brand knowledge and loyalty. Brand consciousness is hypothesized to moderate the influences of these three factors on brand knowledge and loyalty. The revised model also hypothesizes the influence of brand knowledge on loyalty.

The structural equation modeling

SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2014) validates product quality, price perception, brand knowledge, and loyalty. Figure 1 reveals significant paths in the final model (Xs on the figure stand for a brand name). The revised version of Hypothesis1a for the influence of product quality on brand knowledge is supported. Product quality influences loyalty and Hypothesis1b is supported. The

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revised version of Hypothesis2a is supported for the influence of price perception on brand knowledge. Hypotheses 9, 10, 11 were revised, and results support that brand knowledge results in loyalty. Expectations-satisfaction threshold as a brand consciousness dimension moderates the relationship between product quality and brand knowledge. Some consumers do not demand perfect products (Sample size: 108, Regression weight: 0.237, Standard error: 0.100). The other group demands perfect products for satisfaction or they are neutral (Sample size: 64, Regression weight: 0.602, Standard error: 0.082). The second group is more effective (t-statistic: 2.539) (Gaskin, 2012). So, the revised version of Hypothesis5a is supported and product quality influences brand knowledge with moderating effect of brand consciousness.

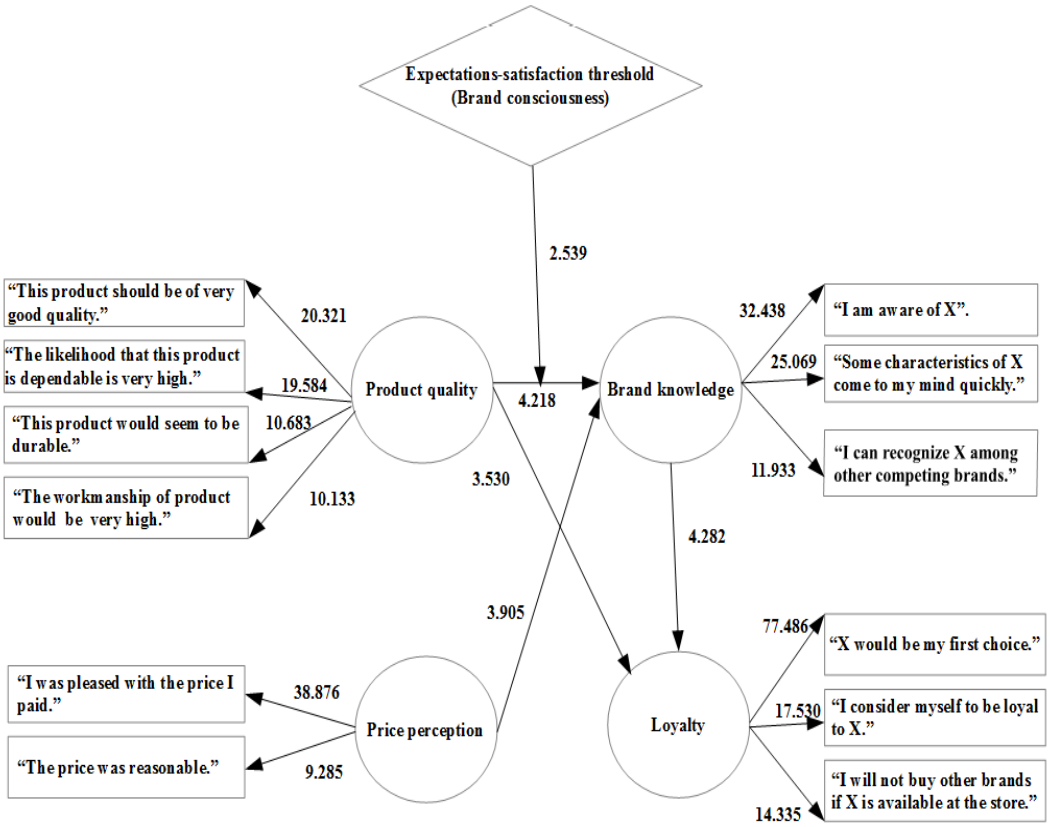

Figure 1. The final model (with indicator items and t-statistics)

DISCUSSION

Research expectations were to suggest significant marketing mix elements in brand equity management, to detect moderating abilities of brand consciousness dimensions, to reveal if tablet chocolate brands can enjoy rich and successful branding, and to recommend the findings to tablet chocolate and convenience product brands and other brands. The results satisfy all expectations.

Firstly, this study contributes to the tablet chocolate literature, because of a different approach than other accessible and significant studies, and by filling a void in literature. Research demonstrates that the trend of declining brand equities is apparent also for chocolate (Gabay et al., 2009). Besides, there is a shortage of loyalty research for chocolate and research

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demonstrates that brand equity is an antecedent of loyalty for chocolate (Kuikka and Laukkanen, 2012). This study also introduces brand loyalty as the final outcome of brand equity management. Additionally, it recommends a different theoretical and managerial perspective and road map to maintain a loyal customer base. For chocolate and cereals, brand extensions, which involve "mutual brand symbiosis" enhance favorable associations that result in purchase (Laforet, 2011). Since, a purchase is the first stage of building loyalty, this research deepens such perspective by showing the effect of brand knowledge on loyalty in the presence of antecedents other than brand extensions. For chocolate candy and chocolate chip cookies, brands can stabilize loyalty very rarely and reasons include the changing nature of customers who have become more intelligent and savvy; since, they react to organizational mistakes dynamically (Gabay et al., 2009). This study demonstrates that loyalty and brand equity can still be maintained through a careful selection of antecedents, constructs, and activities.

Data structure and modeling push previous research further. For example, consumers significantly combine branding factors; so the model and hypotheses were revised. Brand equity studies often examine four stages of the customer-based brand equity. Differently, research results show a combined effect of brand knowledge in addition to loyalty. Instead of a sequence of recognizing the brand among others and being aware of the brand before assigning associations to product characteristics, consumers refer to these indicators as a whole. This revision reflects a transformation into complex branding, because consumers have a greater understanding of activities. Future studies can use the revised model as a proposed research model.

Research suggests integrating quality approach to operations management through careful observation of every production stage for chocolate to enjoy relevance to consumers (Saltini, 2013). Differently, this research examines what happens after the products are offered to consumers and confirms consumer requirements. Consequently, consumer perception significantly turns quality achievements into equity.

In a brand positioning article, young consumers evaluate chocolate bars according to prices and other attributes (Dulea, 2013). Moreover, pricing is the only antecedent for olive oil (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011). There is a link between positioning and equity for chocolate, because positioning can overcome brand equity problems (Gabay et al., 2009). This research, almost like an extension of these conceptions, places price perception in tablet chocolate and convenience product branding and deepens our understanding of a problem in research and marketing.

Results are different from the final model by (Bozkurt, 2014); because, price perception replaced the perceived effect of advertising in the final model. Differently, advertising is the most common antecedent of customer-based brand equity for a diverse set of apparel, electronics, and durable goods; and another common one is pricing; in addition, retailing is also influential depending on the research design (Buil et al., 2013; Shafi and Madhavaiah, 2013; Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011; Tong and Hawley, 2009; Villarejo-Ramos and Sanchez-Franco, 2005; Yoo, et al., 2000).

Customer expectations of product perfection or being neutral about it definitely change branding. Although, customer satisfaction is a familiar research subject in marketing, this finding is relatively new for tablet chocolate. This finding is a further step in understanding consciousness within a different scope. Because, consciousness involves diverse constructs; for instance, chocolate paste as a convenience product obtains "consciousness of kind", which

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indicates belonging to brand communities (Cova, Pace, 2006; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Finally, starting with conceptual thinking, narrowing the research focus, and applying these conceptions to specific circumstances are significant. Although, there are several studies with the same constructs, this research clearly considers branding with different indicators and a distinctive scope, and extends previous research through a consumer-oriented marketing perspective.

IMPLICATIONS

Academic Implications

The earliest traces of branding significance can be seen in relatively unrelated activities like production, operations, and marketing mix management. Instead of examining obvious equity indicators, revealing antecedents and moderators is likely to enrich branding literature. Because, such perspective can set strong foundations and can signal possible outcomes. So, customer-based brand equity management starts earlier by managing its antecedents. Constructs about quality management and pricing strategies are more likely to add new knowledge for women's consumption of convenience brands.

The marketing mix variations in the final model suggest customization to different circumstances. These are also different from the ones in reviewed previous research. The transition of marketing mix continues. Revealing different aspects of mix elements can prioritize changes to be made to the marketing mix; because brands cannot heavily depend on all elements, but only the ones with significant outcomes. For instance, this study demonstrates that product quality is more effective than price perception.

Research validates that an operational definition of product quality significantly contributes to customer-based brand equity management. Operations are reasonable and meaningful according to consumer perception. This is another demonstration of the link between operations (defends objective quality) and marketing (defends perceived quality). It demonstrates that all quality is perceptual.

Brand knowledge and loyalty are basic stages of the customer-based brand equity process. Branding constructs like quality should be considered before brand equity indicators occur.

Offering a perfect or the best product moderates customer satisfaction. Consumers see possibilities and they push organizational and branding capabilities forward. Customers also have high expectations that make delighting customers a more complex task. So, customer preferences can require stronger means, but can result in stronger branding.

Managerial Implications

Brands can manage activities significantly by directing operational practices not from a general or obscure marketing perspective, but from a branding perspective. Organizations can set branding goals for most activities.

Brands can segment younger generations and customize solutions for Generation X and Millennials. Convincing target customers requires using strategies that do not hurt. Positive evaluations by women will also contribute to branding.

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Brands can gain stabilization by offering quality standards of perfection as determined by consumers. Satisfying or delighting consumers through high quality at an early stage in branding builds awareness, attaches positive adjectives to a brand, and establishes a loyal consumer base. Durability is influential on high level quality. Also, pricing is crucial to stabilize the consumer base. Brands can examine pricing thresholds and can set prices that contribute to customer-based brand equity.

The absence of influential advertising is a problem. Brands should prefer themes that contribute to branding. Such contribution can be indirect for a richer branding. Brands can determine key branding factors that direct the relationship among advertising and customer-based brand equity stages to validate the significance of advertising.

Brands should consider multilevel customer-based brand equity development. Rather than a very narrow focus on few outcomes, organizations should process a diverse set of branding elements.

Social Implications

Tablet chocolate branding for women holds statistical significance. Other brands can extend the implications to their products without involving in healthy diet debates. These extensions, brand extensions, or superior branding can motivate customers to switch to products with health benefits.

CONCLUSION

This research customizes branding to tablet chocolate and convenience products, and reveals significant activities about female consumers, Generation X, and Millennials for both academicians and practitioners. This research shows that the absence of brand experience constructs generates a significant, direct, different; but a less detailed and prioritized solution. Organizational purposes can motivate brands to neglect some branding aspects, but they should consider that such preference involves trade-offs and different marketing processes.

This study answers all of its research questions. It introduces a flow of activities for convenience product branding, for tablet chocolate branding, and for other brands that aim extraordinary positions. Through the antecedents and consequences of significant customer-based brand equity development, it introduces new insights. Besides, it enriches such process by introducing a brand consciousness dimension as a new moderator. Apparently, results suggest relevant branding practices for female consumers from Generation X and Millennials.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research can include other products, geographic regions, and samples. Exactly-normal samples can be considered instead of a near-normal distribution; but due to statistical debates, normality can be neglected.

Research can inject mediators except brand experience into the proposed research model to find out differences. Research can integrate the models of this research with problems of tablet chocolate branding such as the feasibility of healthy products and innovation.

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