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**BRAND PERSONALITY AND BRAND LOYALTY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In today's competitive world where thousands of brands exist, for a company to survive in long run, it should build a unique brand personality and loyal customers. Brand personality is the way a brand speaks and behaves. Brand personality is personification of brand. It serves as a basis for distinguishing their goods or services from those of their competitors. Create the brand personality that matches the customers' profile because consumers buy brands that express their personality. Brand loyalty refers to the extent of the faithfulness of consumers to a particular brand, expressed through their repeat purchases, irrespective of the marketing pressure generated by the competing brands on the basis of convenience or price. Brand loyalty usually relates to a product, not a company. The brand loyalty of existing customers represents a strategic asset that, if properly managed and exploited, has the potential to provide value in several ways. The paper tries to explain the above mentioned concepts and their importance for the organization and consumers.*

**KEYWORDS**

attributes, brand personality, customers, loyalty.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In today's competitive world where thousands of brands exist, for a company to survive in long run, it should build a unique brand personality and loyal customers. Without having a strong brand-building, many leading companies may not survive and many developing companies may never emerge to global prominence. Branding is an important means to establish competitive advantage in the overcrowded marketplace full of alternative products and services. It provides the consumers with a reason to buy a particular product. Brand personality is the way a brand speaks and behaves. Brand loyalty reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in the price or in product features. The paper focuses on how a company can establish a unique brand personality and build a loyal customer base and how these would be beneficial to both company and its customers.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To understand concept of brand personality and how it will benefit company and its customers.
2. To know how company can develop and communicate a genuine brand personality.
3. To focus on the concept, importance and levels of brand loyalty.

**3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to carry out the study, various secondary sources like books, research papers and websites have been used.

**4.0 BRAND PERSONALITY**

Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. Personality trait refers to enduring personal characteristics reflected in a particular pattern of behavior in different situations. The Big Five personality traits refer to five broad dimensions used to describe human personality, which are openness to experience (degree of creativity and a preference for novelty and variety), conscientiousness (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless), extroversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved), agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. analytical/detached, well-tempered or not), and neuroticism (degree of emotional stability and impulse control, calm vs. reactive).

Brand personality is the way a brand speaks and behaves. It means assigning human personality traits/characteristics to a brand so as to achieve differentiation. Brand personality includes not only the personality features/characteristics, but also the demographic features like age, gender or class and psychographic features. Example: ESPN's brand personality stands for an authoritative passion for sports, knowledgeable with a bit of irrelevance. Approach sports coverage from all angles.

Personality traits are what the brand exists for. Brand personality is personification of brand. A brand is expressed either as a personality who embodies these personality traits (For instance - Shahrukh Khan and Airtel, John Abraham and Castrol) or as distinct personality traits (For instance - Dove as honest, feminist and optimistic; Hewlett Packard brand represents accomplishment, competency and influence). Brand personality is the result of all the consumer's experiences with the brand and is thus built over a period of time. They are distinctive and enduring.

**4.1 IMPORTANCE OF BRAND PERSONALITY**

Brand personality is beneficial to both the consumers and companies. From the consumers' point of view, brand personality represents a modern way of expressing themselves by affirming their personalities and defining their standards of living by means of material possessions. From company's point of view, brand personality serves as a basis for distinguishing their goods or services from those of their competitors, and also as a means to inform customers about the advantages they can derive from buying their respective goods or services and/or the status connotations of using them.

Brand personality performs symbolic function i.e. it helps in satisfying social or self-esteem needs. Brand personality helps to market the brand better in the following ways:

1. **Differentiates the brand from the competition:** A distinct brand personality can differentiate brands and is especially beneficial when brands have similar product attributes Example: Pepsi vs. Coke. Since brand personality of Coca Cola is better than that of Pepsi, thus, Coca Cola has greater market share.
2. **Communicates good traits about the brand:** Brand Personality can help communicate brand identity with richness and texture by communicating good traits of brand like trustworthy, desirable etc. which can help build customer confidence.
3. **Forms an emotional attachment with the brand:** Consumers are more likely to identify with brands that closely resemble them in terms of personalities. Example: Marlboro is considered as masculine and Virginia Slim is considered feminine.
4. **Creates brand equity:** Brand equity refers to the value of a brand. It is based on the idea that the owner of a well-known brand name can generate more money from products with that brand name than from products with a less well-known name, as consumers believe that a product with a well-known name is better than products with less well-known names. Personality traits help consumers establish a sustainable relationship with a brand.

**4.2 ELEMENTS IMPORTANT FOR A GENUINE BRAND PERSONALITY**

1. **Vision:** Firstly, brand's overall goals give a starting point for shaping its character. Focus on whether the company's current image is good enough or needs to be changed. After reviewing the company's vision and mission statements, make a list of traits the company will put forward to achieve its goals.
2. **Essence:** It focuses on what the brand is all about, how the company wants its brand to be perceived. In other words, capture the spirit of the brand in a single word or a phrase and brand personality should be consistent with the brand essence.

3. **Tone:** The tone of voice is how the brand speaks to its audience. While the company's personality is usually consistent, the tone alters depending on the medium. Like, company would probably take on a more serious tone when communicating to stake holders as opposed to using a light-hearted, upbeat tone when conversing with an online fan.
4. **Customer Connection:** Company should define its target audience and survey what they need, want and like. Then, build the personality profile of the target consumers. Create the brand personality that matches the customers' profile because consumers buy brands that express their personality. Example: Levi's targeted the masculine, youthful and rebellious audience and thus developed brand personality as individualistic, free and American.
5. **Consistency:** Once the company commits to a brand personality, it should try to maintain its consistent brand personality, unless a change is must. In other words, it should try to fulfill its promises in order to develop a loyal customer base.

#### 4.3 COMMUNICATING BRAND PERSONALITY

Once a brand personality has been researched and targeted, advertising must be developed that creates, reinforces, or changes that target personality. Key elements that contribute to a brand's personality are:

1. **SYMBOLS & LOGOS:** Logos should be:
  - Unique but easy to recognize
  - Worth remembering and represent ideas etc.
  - Look simple and yet capture wider meaning
  - Relevant and in tune with the time
2. **SLOGANS / PUNCH LINES**
  - Enhance brand recall
  - Have strong linkage with brand's essence / key values
  - Convey a clear meaning or suggest something about product category / brand / values / features / benefits of the brand
3. **ENDORSER:** The choice of a real person (or persons) to be associated with the image of the brand is important because the image of the people involved can get transferred to the brand with enough repetition. Celebrity enjoys instant recognition & goodwill that can be transferred to the brand.
  - Personality of the brand and celebrity should complement each other. Example: Sachin stands for style, power play, technique and excellence or performance and so best for Boost.
  - Reliable celebrity ensures instant awareness, acceptability and positive attitude towards the brand, which is precursor to buying.
  - Indian celebrity can connect foreign brand with the Indian consumer with great effect. Example: Big 'B' as brand ambassador for Reid & Taylor.
4. **USER IMAGERY:** The kind of imagery user portrayed in the ad can also be very important to create a personality reference.
  - Who or what type of person might use that product / brand. Example: Raymond's ad (playing with puppies) focuses on soft side of man (i.e. caring and loving)
  - Communicates about the life style of the user.
  - Brand personality needs to be updated with change in user imagery and information so that the brand remains relevant.
5. **EXECUTIONAL ELEMENTS:** Elements such as the choice of music, visual elements, pace and nature of editing, colour schemes used, layout, typography can all contribute substantially to a brand's personality.
  - Intelligent and creative ads deliver brand personality in more efficient way.
  - All elements should complement each other to be more effective and eye catchy.

#### 5.0 BRAND LOYALTY

The American Marketing Association defines brand loyalty as:

- Consumer Behavior Definition, "The degree to which a consumer consistently purchases the same brand within a product class".
- Sales Promotion Definition, "The situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category".

Brand loyalty refers to the extent of the faithfulness of consumers to a particular brand, expressed through their repeat purchases, irrespective of the marketing pressure generated by the competing brands on the basis of convenience or price. Brand loyalty is reflected through consumer behavior and is often based upon perception. It is reflected through behaviors like word of mouth publicity, repetitive buying, price sensitivity, commitment, brand trust, customer satisfaction, etc. A consumer will consistently purchase the same product because he perceives it as being the superior product among the choices available.

Brand loyalty usually relates to a product, not a company. For example, while a customer may be loyal to Honda Accord, but when it comes to motorcycles, he might believe that a Harley leaves a Honda motorcycle in the dust.

##### 5.1 TWO APPROACHES TO UNDERSTAND BRAND LOYALTY

- Behavioral approach to brand loyalty views consistent purchasing of one brand over time as an indication of brand loyalty.
- Attitudinal approach to brand loyalty defines brand loyalty as the customer's disposition towards a brand as a function of psychological process and includes attitudinal preference and commitment towards the brand.

Jacoby & Chestnut (1978) propose six loyalty conditions, integrating both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions, and based on which they define the brand loyalty. According to them, brand loyalty is (1) the biased (i.e. nonrandom), (2) behavioral response (i.e. purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by some decision making unit, (5) with respect to one or more brands out of a set of such brands, and (6) is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes.

- **Biased behavioral response:** Brand loyalty is a biased response. There has to be a systematic tendency to buy a certain brand or group of brands and his decision to buy a particular brand cannot be altered by anything to which the customer is exposed to.
- **Expressed over time:** An incidental bias towards a brand does not guarantee brand loyalty. Since the process is dynamic, some consistency is needed during a certain time span.
- **Decision-making unit:** Brand loyalty is defined by the purchase pattern of a decision-making unit which may be an individual, a household or a firm. However, the decision unit does not have to be the actual purchaser.
- **Selection of brands:** It focuses on selection of one or more brands out of a set of brands. It states that consumers may actually be loyal to more than one brand. It also means that in order to have brand loyalty, there must be an opportunity to choose among alternatives.
- **Function of psychological process:** Brand loyalty is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes i.e. consumers should evaluate the brands and form beliefs about the brands and thus, may overtime develop commitment towards the brand. Brand loyalty implies consistent repurchase of a brand which is a result of a positive affection of the consumer towards that brand.

##### 5.2 LEVELS OF BRAND LOYALTY

According to Aaker (1991), brand loyalty measures the attachment that a customer has to a brand. It reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in the price or in product features. In the brand loyalty pyramid, Aaker identifies five levels of brand loyalty ranging from not loyal to very loyal, the lowest level being depicted at the bottom of the pyramid.

1. **SWITCHERS:** Such buyers are not brand loyal and are indifferent to the brand. Brand does not affect decision-making and the purchase is made on basis of convenience and price.
2. **SATISFIED/HABITUAL BUYER:** Such buyers buy brand out of habit because they are satisfied with brand and have no reason to change and thus, do not lookout for alternatives.
3. **SATISFIED BUYER WITH SWITCHING COSTS:** Buyers who are satisfied and also have switching costs in terms of time, money and performance and are thus reluctant to switching to a competitive brand forms the third level.

4. **BRAND LIKER:** These buyers develop brand liking and preferences based upon rational, experiential and symbolic benefits derived from the consumption of branded product.
5. **COMMITTED BUYERS:** These buyers feel proud of being a product or brand user. They buy product because it relates strongly with their values and personality.

### 5.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING BRAND LOYALTY

- **SATISFACTION:** Satisfied customers become loyal and dissatisfied customers move to another vendor. Increased satisfaction increases customer loyalty.
- **BRAND IMAGE:** A consumer to be fully loyal, the brand needs to be a part of both the consumer's self-identity and his or her social-identity.
- **TRUST:** Brand trust leads to brand loyalty because trust creates exchange relationships that are highly valued.
- **COMMITMENT:** Commitment refers to a desire to maintain a relationship. It creates a bond that keeps customers loyal to a brand.
- **WORD-OF-MOUTH:** Positive word of mouth plays an important role in strengthening brand loyalty and widening its reach as it acts as a free advertisement declaring information on the satisfying experience with the brand and offering proven benefits that can lead to an automatic recruiting of new consumers, who may do the same and pull in more new consumers.
- **IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP:** Loyalty is also often characterized as a desire to preserve a valuable or meaningful relationship. Brand loyalty is regulated by the importance of the consumer-brand relationship and it can be increased by increasing importance of the product or service.

### 5.4 BENEFITS OF BRAND LOYALTY

Aaker (1991), the brand loyalty of existing customers represents a strategic asset that, if properly managed and exploited, has the potential to provide value in several ways:

1. **REDUCED MARKETING COSTS:** Loyal customers reduce marketing costs, since it is much less costly to keep a customer than to gain and regain, since loyal customers have no incentive to look for alternative brands.
2. **TRADE LEVERAGE:** Brand loyalty provides trade leverage because channel members have less uncertainty dealing with a proven brand name that has already achieved recognition and has established strong associations.
3. **ATTRACTING NEW CUSTOMERS:** Loyal customers can create brand awareness and generate reassurance to new customers. Positive word of mouth is usually high in case of loyal customers and effectively provides a company with costless advertising.
4. **TIME TO RESPOND TO COMPETITIVE THREATS:** As brand loyalty increases, customers will respond less to competitive moves and actions. Brand loyal customers remain committed to the brand and thus provide time to company to respond to competitive threats.

### 6.0 CONCLUSION

- Companies should focus on managing their brands carefully as it is a source of competitive advantage.
- Companies should try to develop a genuine and unique brand personality and monitor it regularly.
- Company must periodically audit their brand's strengths and weaknesses and should ask: Does their brand deliver such benefits that consumers truly value? Is brand appropriately positioned? Does brand receive proper, sustained support?
- If a company wants to survive in long run, then it should focus on building loyal customer base.

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