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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 58 (2012) 1361 – 1369

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

The 8th International Strategic Management Conference

Does Brand Communication Increase Brand Trust? The Empirical Research on Global Mobile Phone Brands

Şahin Azize[a], Zehir Cemal[b], Kitapçı Hakan[b*]

[a]*BRANDCOMM-Brand Communication Network, 34752 Istanbul-Turkey,*
[b]*Gebze Institute of Technology, Gebze-Kocaeli-Turkey*

Abstract

This research investigates the effects of brand communication on brand trust through brand satisfaction. An empirical study shows some evidence of a positive relationship between brand communication and brand satisfaction, and stronger evidence of a positive relationship between brand satisfaction and brand trust. Existing research on these constructs and collecting behaviour is useful in explaining this result. Some implications for advertising strategy are provided and several avenues for further research are suggested to build on this study.

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Keywords; Brand communication, brand satisfaction, brand trust

Introduction

Relationship marketing has been defined as "all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Brand trust is a desired benefit in relational exchanges that is weighed against the costs of maintaining the relationship. The objective of the present study is to add to this body of empirical research and examine the influence of brand communication and brand satisfaction on brand trust. A review of these constructs is presented from extant literature and hypotheses for relational exchange mechanisms that affect brand trust by focusing on two determinants; brand communication and brand satisfaction.

1. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

1.1. Brand Communication

Communication is the human activity that links people together and creates relationships. Communication functions such as meaning making and organizing functions play important role in building brand

* Corresponding author. Tel.: 90-533-520 5897; fax: 90-216-574 3222. *E-mail address*: azize.sahin@gmail.com.

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relationships (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). Brand communication is the primary integrative element in managing brand relationships with customers and creates positive brand attitudes (Kempf and Smith, 1998) such as brand satisfaction and brand trust. It can be one-way (indirect communication) and two-way (one-to-one or direct communication). *One-way (indirect) communication*; One-way communication consists of print-TV-radio advertising etc. This type of communication mainly aims to increase brand awareness; to improve brand attitudes such as brand satisfaction and brand trust; and to affect purchasing behavior, such as brand choice (Zehir et al. 2011). *Two-way (direct) communication*; Two-way or direct brand communication focus mainly on directly influencing existing-customer buying behavior and are essentially transaction oriented (Crosby and Stephens, 1987; Sahin et al. 2011). Several previous studies have shown that direct brand communication can influence consumers' satisfaction for a brand (Crosby and Stephens, 1987; Zehir et al. 2011; Sahin et al. 2011). To summarize above mention, the research hypothesis is proposed as below:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): One-way brand communication has a significantly positive effect on brand satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Two-way communication has a significantly positive effect on brand satisfaction

2.2. Brand Satisfaction

Satisfaction can either refers to transactional measures focusing on a discrete incident or a cumulative construct resulting from a series of transactions (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). Satisfaction is an antecedent of brand trust, with increases in satisfaction leading to increases in brand trust (Bolton 1998). The relationship between satisfaction and trust has received some attention in the empirical studies published to date (Singh &: Sirdeshmukh 2000; Zehir et al.2011), because trust development is generally portrayed as an individual's experiential process of learning over time (Williams 2001; Sahin et al.2011). Several authors support this idea. Clara and Singh (2005), and Sahin et al. (2011) affirm that trust evolves from the result of past experience and prior interaction, and Garbarino and Johnson (1999) view trust as a high-order mental construct that summarizes consumers' knowledge and experiences. To summarize above mention, the research hypothesis is proposed as below:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Brand satisfaction has a significantly positive effect on brand trust.

2.3. Brand Trust

In the branding literature the concept of brand trust is based on the idea of a brand-consumer relationship, which is seen as a substitute for human contact between the company and its consumers (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Zehir et al.2011). Agustin and Singh (2005) define trust “as a consumer's confident beliefs that he or she can rely on the seller to deliver promised services, whereas a relational value can be defined as consumer's perceptions of the benefits enjoyed versus the cost incurred in the maintenance of an ongoing exchange relationship. The trust in the purchased brand may be viewed as leverage of its credibility, which in return may reinforce the consumers' repeat buying behaviour. The domain of trust in this study is a desired benefit in relational exchanges (Agustin and Singh, 2005; Sahin et al.2011). The concept of brand trust is related to the brand communication and satisfaction of consumers toward a particular brand in a product class and is gaining increasing importance in consumer behaviour. Customer trust for the brand is the important consequence of brand satisfaction and brand communication.

2. Methodology

3.1. Research Model

The research model investigates the effects of brand communication on brand trust through brand satisfaction. The study is organized as follows. First, a conceptualization for the study is developed

through the exploration and definition of the constructs of conceptual model. The authors do this by defining each construct of brand communication, brand satisfaction and brand trust. For each construct, its relationship with the other constructs is investigated and research hypotheses are proposed (Figure, 1). Secondly, the sample and measures employed in the study are described, and then the empirical research results are reported. In conclusion, the results are discussed along with the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings.

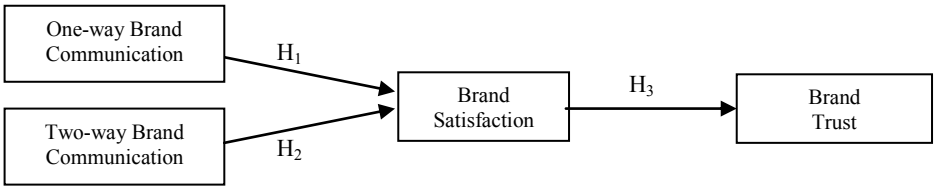


Figure 1: Research Model

The hypotheses in this research:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): One-way brand communication has a significantly positive effect on brand satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Two-way communication has a significantly positive effect on brand satisfaction

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Brand satisfaction has a significantly positive effect on brand trust.

3.2. Sample

This study was designed to investigate the effects of brand communication on brand trust through brand satisfaction in mobile phone brands. Mobile phone product class was chosen for several reasons. First brand involvement is very high in mobile phone product class. Second, mobile phone marketers have been spending high brand communication expenditures. Third, brand satisfaction is very important for mobile phone consumers. Fourth, brand trust is very important for the mobile phone marketers. Data were collected from a convenience sample of master students (N = 550) enrolled at a major institute in Kocaeli, Turkey. The respondents answered the self-administrated questionnaire in a classroom setting on a voluntary basis. Out of 422 usable surveys, 54% of the sample was male; 64% of the sample was single and 79% of the sample was undergraduate. The descriptive statistics values are shown on table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Gender			***Marital Status***		
	Frequency	**Valid %**		**Frequency**	**Valid %**
Male	227	53,9	Married	149	35,6
Female	192	45,8	Single	269	64,4
Total	419	100,0	Total	418	100,0
Brand			***Education***		
	Frequency	**Valid %**		**Frequency**	**Valid %**
SAMSUNG	101	23,9	Undergraduate	301	79,1
NOKIA	207	49,1	Graduate	117	20,9
IPHONE	48	11,4	Total	418	100,0
Others	66	15,6			
Total	422	100,0			

3.3. Measures

We developed the items for measuring the constructs of the study, drawing on prior research in the literature. We used multi-item five-point Likert scales anchored by 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". *The brand communication*: Items for measuring the brand communication were adopted from previous studies (Debra and Aron 2005; Youjae and La 2004). The modified brand communication scale consists of 13 items. *The brand satisfaction:* Items for measuring brand satisfaction were adapted from previous studies (Debra and Aron 2005; Fullerton 2005). The modified brand satisfaction scale consists of 11 items. *The brand trust:* They were adapted from a variety of sources (Delgado-Ballester and Aleman-Munuera 2001; Caceres and Paparoidamis 2007; Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). The modified brand trust scale consists of 9 items.

3.4. Analysis and Results

Partial least squares (PLS wrap 1.0, Kock, 2010) approach was used to calculate the structural parameters. Brand trust, brand satisfaction and two dimensions of brand communications were investigated. A two-dimensional measurement of brand communication makes this study different.

3.5.Validity and Reliability of Measurement

Kleijnen et al. (2007) work in parallel with this study; reflective scales were used for all variables. Calculating the reliability of the composite scale reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) coefficients was used. All measurements were 0.70 for the PLS based on `in which the threshold value is the value of CR, and AVE values are also exceeds the threshold value 0.50 (Table 2).

Table 2: Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted Values

Variable	*CR*	*AVE*
One way brand communication	0.871	0.576
Two way brand communication	0.907	0.583
Brand satisfaction	0.933	0.561
Brand trust	0.892	0.515

Following this, the discriminant validity of the measurements has been validated. The correlation, means and standard deviations values calculated for this purpose are given in table 3.

Table 3: Correlation, Mean and Standard Deviation Values

		M	**σ**	**1**	**2**	**3**
1	One way brand communication	3,10	,90			
2	Two way brand communication	3,25	,83	0.312**		
3	Brand satisfaction	3,69	,80	0.385**	0.297**	
4	Brand trust	2,92	,90	0.354**	0.373**	0.710**

***P<0,01*

Fornell and Larcker `s (1981) stated that the AVE value is calculated for each variable, the latent factor correlations between pairs of variables are high. In addition, convergent validity of the measurements by calculating the relevant concepts has been tested on the standardized installations. Installation of all measurements were found to show an excess of `0.60 (Table 4). Measurements used in this way, meet the criteria of validity and reliability

Table 4. Factor Analysis

	One-way brand communication	*Two-way brand communication*	*Brand satisfaction*	*Brand trust*
I react favorably to the advertising and promotions of this brand	(0.797)			
I feel positive toward the advertising and promotions of this brand	(0.847)			
The advertising and promotions of this brand are good	(0.684)			
The advertising and promotions of this brand do a good job	(0.725)			
I am happy with the advertising and promotions of this brand	(0.734)			
This brand spend time to know its regular customer		(0.667)		
This brand creates a dialogue with its customers regularly		(0.772)		
This brand asks information from its regular customers about their satisfaction and happiness with the products-brands		(0.808)		
This brand informs its customers by email		(0.766)		
This brand informs its customers by mail		(0.834)		
This brand informs its customers by brochures		(0.750)		
This brand informs its customers by sms		(0.741)		
I am very satisfied with the service provided by this brand			(0.806)	
I am very satisfied with this brand			(0.888)	
I am very happy with this brand			(0.776)	
I am very satisfied with the service provided by this brand			(0.833)	
This brand does a good job of satisfying my needs			(0.873)	
The service-products provided by this brand is very satisfactory			(0.850)	
I believe that using this brand is usually a very satisfying experience			(0.801)	
I made the right decision when I decided to use this brand			(0.821)	
I am addicted to this brand in some way			(0.654)	
This brand keeps its promises				(0.790)
This brand is trustworthy				(0.747)
Open me a product with a constant quality level				(0.651)
Help me to solve any problem I could have with the product				(0.794)
Offer me new product I may need				(0.788)
Be interested in my satisfaction.				(0.790)
Value me as a consumer of its product				(0.692)

3.6 Tests of Hypotheses

In order to test the relationships within the scope of the theoretical model shown in Figure 1, the latent variable (LV) scores in a clear manner that allows calculation of the PLS analysis were used. In order to test whether or not these relationships are statistically significant wrapPLS 1.0 was used. In this procedure, 100 sub-sample were randomly selected to replace the original data includes cases. Path coefficients formed for randomly selected each sub-sample. In order to show statistically significant effects on relations, for each coefficient between sub-samples on the basis of stability T significance values are calculated. The results are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	**Relations**	**ß**	**Results**
H_1	One way brand communication → Brand satisfaction	0,34**	Supported
H_2	Two way brand communication → Brand satisfaction	0,21**	Supported
H_3	Brand satisfaction → Brand trust	0,73**	Supported
Model fit indices and P values	**Variables**	**Final model**	
R^2	Brand satisfaction	0.21	
	Brand trust	0.51	
APC=0.420, P=<0.001			
ARS=0.358, P=<0.001			
AVIF=1.130, Good if < 5			

***P< 0.01*

As shown in Table 5, results confirm our hypothesis. One-way brand communication and two-way brand communication have positive effects on brand satisfaction (ß = .34, P<0.01; ß = .21, P<0.01). Brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .73, P< 0.01). Therefore, H_1, H_2 and H_3 were accepted. Variables of one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication explains %21 of variation (R^2) on the brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction explains %51 of variation (R^2) on brand trust.

3.7 Brand Level Analysis

Relations within the scope of the proposed theoretical model were tested separately for each brand.

IPHONE

For Iphone brand, one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication have positive effects on brand satisfaction (ß = .46, P<0.01; ß = .17, P<0.10). Brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .54, P<0.05). Variables of one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication explain %29 of variation (R^2) on the brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction explains %31 of variation (R^2) on brand trust. The results are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Results for Iphone Brand *(N=48)*

Relations		**ß**
One way brand communication → Brand satisfaction		0,46*
Two way brand communication → Brand satisfaction		0,17***
Brand satisfaction → Brand trust		0,54**
Model fit indices and P values	**Variables**	**Final model**
R^2	Brand satisfaction	0.29
	Brand trust	0.30
APC=0.391, P=0.003		
ARS=0.293, P=0.009		
AVIF=1.106, Good if < 5		

****P<0,10, **P<0,05, *P<0,01*

NOKIA

For Nokia brand, one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication have positive effects on brand satisfaction (ß = .27, P< 0.01; ß = .31, P< 0.01). Brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .48, P<0.01). Variables of one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication explains %21 of variation (R^2) on the brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction explains %23 of variation (R^2) on brand trust. The results are shown in table 7.

Table 7: Results for Nokia Brand *(N=207)*

Relations		**ß**
One way brand communication → Brand satisfaction		0,27*
Two way brand communication → Brand satisfaction		0,31*
Brand satisfaction → Brand trust		0,48*
Model fit indices and P values	**Variables**	**Final model**
R^2	Brand satisfaction	0.21
	Brand trust	0.23
APC=0.350, P=<0.001		
ARS=0.220, P=<0.001		
AVIF=1.096, Good if < 5		

**P<0,01*

SAMSUNG

For Samsung brand, one-way brand communication has positive effect on brand satisfaction (ß = .38, P<0.01). Brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .44, P<0.01). Variables of one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication explains %17 of variation (R^2) on the brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction explains %19 of variation (R^2) on brand trust. The results are shown in table 8.

Table 8: Results for Samsung Brand *(N=101)*

Relations	**ß**

One way brand communication → Brand satisfaction		0,38*
Two way brand communication → Brand satisfaction		0,12
Brand satisfaction → Brand trust		0,44*
Model fit indices and P values	**Variables**	**Final model**
R^2	Brand satisfaction	0.17
	Brand trust	0.19
APC=0.313, P=<0.001		
ARS=0.180, P=0.005		
AVIF=1.008, Good if < 5		

*$P<0,01$

Discussion

Contemporary thought in marketing recognizes that trust is a critical factor in relational exchanges between consumers and brands. Although our findings cohere with this basic thought, we refine and extend the literature in several important ways. The most important modeling innovation of our proposed approach is to measure the effects of two-dimensional brand communication on brand trust through brand satisfaction. By including two dimensions of brand communication, including one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication, marketing managers can interpret these results as helping to justify expenditures on brand and consumer related marketing activities that create such long-term effects on consumers as brand communication, brand satisfaction and brand trust. We can summarize the results of this study as follows;

The effects of brand communication: The study shows that one-way and two-way brand communications have positive effects on brand satisfaction. These findings are supported by Debra and Aron (2005), Youjae and La 2004. One-way and two-way brand communications have positive effects on brand satisfaction based relationship platform between brand and consumer. In the brand level analysis for example for Iphone brand, one-way brand communication and two-way brand communication have positive effects on brand satisfaction (ß = .46, P<0.01; ß = .17, P<0.10), for Nokia brand, one way brand communication and two way brand communication have positive effects on brand satisfaction (ß = .27, P< 0.01; ß = .31, P< 0.01), for Samsung brand, one way brand communication has positive effects brand satisfaction (ß = .38, P<0.01). For Samsung brand, two-way brand communication does not effect brand satisfaction.

The effects of brand satisfaction: As research results show, brand satisfaction has a significantly positive influence on brand trust. These results were supported by those of previous studies done by other researchers (Debra and Aron 2005; Fullerton 2005; Sahin et al. 2011; Zehir et al. 2011). Brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .54, P<0.05). Brand satisfaction in brand level analysis for example for Iphone brand, brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .54, P<0.05), brand satisfaction explains %31 of variation (R^2) on brand trust. For Samsung brand, brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .48, P<0.01) and brand satisfaction explains %23 of variation (R^2) on brand trust. For Samsung brand, brand satisfaction has positive effect on brand trust (ß = .44, P<0.01) and brand satisfaction explains %19 of variation (R^2) on brand trust.

The antecedents of brand trust: The results show that brand communication and brand satisfaction are the antecedents of brand trust. Brand communication has positive effects on brand trust through brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction leads to brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Because satisfaction and trust create exchange relationships between brand and consumer (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Thus, trust underlies the ongoing process of continuing and maintaining a valued and important relationship that has been created by trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Limitations and Future Direction

This study is subject to several limitations. The primary limitation of this research is that it explores only one-product category, potentially limiting the generalizability to other domains. The study can be strengthened by increasing the sample size and including participants in other geographical areas. The present study did not examine such personal factors as product involvement, variety seeking, impulsiveness, consumer demographics and so forth. Overall, the more detailed understanding of the effects of brand communication and brand satisfaction on building brand trust. Further research should focus on the antecedents and long-term consequences of brand trust.

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