



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research



Emphasizing brand heritage: Does it work? And how?

Gregory M. Rose^{a,*}, Altaf Merchant^{b,1}, Ulrich R. Orth^{c,2}, Florian Horstmann^{d,3}^a Milgard School of Business, Dougan Hall, Suite 414, University of Washington Tacoma, 1900 Commerce Street, Tacoma, WA 98402-3100, United States^b Milgard School of Business, Dougan Hall, Suite 412, University of Washington Tacoma, 1900 Commerce Street, Tacoma, WA 98402-3100, United States^c A&F Marketing-Consumer Psychology, Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel, Wilhelm-Seelig-Platz 6/7, 24098 Kiel, Germany^d Department of Innovative Brand Management, Universität Bremen, Hochschulring 4, 28359 Bremen, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 July 2014

Received in revised form 8 June 2015

Accepted 9 June 2015

Available online xxxxx

Keywords:

Brand heritage

Branding

Nostalgia

Regulatory goal focus

Brand attachment

Brand Trust

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the consequences of brand heritage. It integrates and builds on previous qualitative studies by developing a nomological network examining: (a) the consequences of brand heritage; (b) its impact on purchase intention; (c) the moderating role of regulatory goal focus and (d) the mediating role of trust, positive emotions, brand attachment and commitment. The research progresses from discovery-oriented exploration, to an experimental examination of the effect of brand heritage (Study 1), to an examination of the mediating variables between brand heritage and purchase intention (Study 2). The findings indicate that brand heritage positively impacts purchase intention, especially for consumers with a low promotion focus, and that brand heritage inspires positive emotions, engenders trust, and facilitates brand attachment and commitment. Theoretical and managerial implications are presented.

© 2015 Published by Elsevier Inc.

1. Introduction

Creating strong consumer relationships is fundamental to branding (Keller, 1993). Previous research has emphasized the importance of successfully articulating, communicating, and delivering a brand's promise (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). More recent research has built on this perspective and asserted that brand heritage, invoking a brand's past (or elements thereof) may be useful in differentiating and positioning offers (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007). Previous conceptualizations (e.g., Hakala, Lätti, & Sandberg, 2011; Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011) of brand heritage emphasize longevity, core values, use of symbols and most importantly the "organizational belief that its history is important" (Urde et al., 2007, p.4).

The quantitative investigation of brand heritage and its consequences, however, remains largely unaddressed. One study (Merchant & Rose, 2013) developed a scale for measuring brand heritage and demonstrated that invoking vicarious nostalgia – a longing for a period

in which an individual did not live (e.g., a Wells Fargo ad depicting idyllic aspects of the old west) – could increase perceptions of heritage. Advertisements invoking vicarious nostalgia generated fantasies about past eras, which generated positive emotions that increased brand heritage evaluations and, consequently, brand attachment. Thus, Merchant and Rose's (2013) study examined brand heritage in an advertising context, but did not address how brand heritage works in a broader marketing context.

The present study aims to fill this gap by empirically investigating the outcomes related to brand heritage. It qualitatively examines consumers' perceptions of the meaning and consequences of brand heritage, quantitatively demonstrates the impact of brand heritage on consumers' purchase intentions, investigates the moderating role of a promotion focus, and empirically relates brand heritage to a nomological set of affective and cognitive consequences. These consequences include positive emotions, trust, brand attachment, commitment, and purchase intention.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, it reviews previous research related to brand heritage, qualitatively explores consumers' thoughts and feelings related to its outcomes, and develops hypotheses. Next, two quantitative studies are presented. Study 1 experimentally examines the impact of brand heritage on purchase intention and the moderating role of a consumer's promotion focus. Study 2 embeds brand heritage in a nomological network of consequences. The final section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of our research along with its limitations and directions for future research.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 253 692 5687; fax: +1 253 692 4523.

E-mail addresses: rosegm@u.washington.edu (G.M. Rose), altafm@u.washington.edu (A. Merchant), uorth@ae.uni-kiel.de (U.R. Orth), fhorstmann@uni-bremen.de (F. Horstmann).

¹ Tel.: +1 253 692 5684; fax: +1 253 692 4523.² Tel.: +49 431 880 4417; fax: +49 431 880 2044.³ Tel.: +49 421 218 66580; fax: +49 421 218 66573.

2. Theoretical background

Successful brands differentiate themselves by promoting trust and consistently delivering a distinct set of benefits (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Previous research highlights the importance that consumers place on a brand's past (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003; Orth & Gal, 2012). Studies of authenticity similarly assert that authentic brands often "acquire an aura of authenticity" by faithfully maintaining a commitment to tradition (Beverland, 2005; Leigh, Peters, & Shelton, 2006; Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2014, p. 1091). Collectively, these studies document the link between associations that consumers have with the past and present perceptions of brands. Successfully invoking the past can contribute to and create brand meaning, by conveying a sense of stability. Invoking the past can also create positive emotions, enhance brand bonds (Merchant, Latour, Ford, & LaTour, 2013), and provide a meaningful tool for promoting a brand (Hakala et al., 2011).

Invoking a brand's heritage is thought to provide a means of relating a brand's past history to its current position. Previous studies of brand heritage have examined specific brands within the auto (Simms & Trott, 2006; Urde et al., 2007; Wiedmann et al., 2011), the furniture (Urde et al., 2007), the banking (Urde et al., 2007), and the food industries (Hakala et al., 2011). These studies attest to the importance, use, and utility of brand heritage within specific contexts. Additional research has recently operationalized brand heritage (Merchant & Rose, 2013); however, that study focused primarily on the antecedents, and dimensions of advertising-evoked vicarious nostalgia. Thus, previous research has not fully examined the process of how brand heritage relates to important consequences. Given the emergent nature of available research with this focus, exploratory research was conducted to enrich our understanding of the workings of brand heritage and to assist in hypothesis development.

3. Qualitative results and hypothesis development

3.1. Discovery oriented research

Qualitative research explored consumers' understandings, perceptions, and associations connected to brand heritage and its consequences. One of the authors conducted ten in-depth interviews in Germany with six females and four males (age ranging from 22 to 86 years). Results from these interviews were combined with and informed qualitative research conducted in the U.S., where research assistants and two of the authors conducted four focus groups (aged from 20 to 65 years old, 10 females and 10 males). Respondents in both nations were selected to generate a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Given differences in temporal orientation (Bergadaa, 1990) and attitudes toward time (Usunier, 1991), collecting data in both the U.S. (where Americans more strongly place an emphasis upon the future, which is anticipated to be bigger and better) and Germany (where consumers tend toward a past orientation) helps to at least partially enhance the generalizability of the findings. The U.S. and Germany, moreover, are known to be relatively similar on several cultural parameters (in comparison to other nations, such as Japan or China). They both have similar scores on Hofstede's cultural dimensions of power distance (USPower Distance = 40, GermanyPower Distance = 35); and while the U.S. is somewhat more individualistic than Germany (U.S. = 91, Germany = 67), both are individualistic nations (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Both the U.S. and Germany are also considered to be low context communication nations (Hall, 1977), which depend on explicit, verbally expressed communication. Thus, these nations provide a reasonable setting for examining the consequences of brand heritage. They are similar on some dimensions (e.g., cultural context/communication), but differ in their extent of orientation toward time and the past.

3.2. The impact of brand heritage on purchase intention

Brand heritage represents a value proposition to consumers. Successful heritage brands position themselves based on their past history and relate that history to current circumstances (Urde et al., 2007). Previous research highlights the importance of heritage, consistency, and a sense of grounding in consumers' determinations of authenticity and brand positioning (Beverland, 2005, 2006). The benefits of invoking brand heritage include, conveying a sense of stability (Hakala et al., 2011; Wiedmann et al., 2011), particularly regarding core values (Urde et al., 2007); communicating originality; establishing that a brand is the first of its kind (Merchant & Rose, 2013); and enhancing brand equity by linking past performance and a brand's history to a brand's current potential to fulfill its promise (Beverland, 2006). These themes (stability, history, and performance) frequently emerged in our qualitative research:

Wiebke (German, age 86, female): I'm thinking about the life stages that I have gone through with that brand (beauty cream), like when I was young and naturally had very soft skin. I was thinking about the good reputation that that brand had in those days. ... It represents to me a kind of attachment and reliability. Even when I grew older I could feel a kind of excellence by using it.

Christine (American, Female, 45): Craftsman, in order to be around that long and to have such a good reputation, it has to have a good product.

Ines (German, Female, 80): It's more like feeling; it is a respected brand with a strong reputation. I mean it's a dependable brand with reliability and the stability of its values over time.

In sum, brand heritage should positively impact consumer purchase intentions. Brands that have consistently performed over time, with a history of delivering value, should invoke an increased propensity to purchase that brand among consumers. We expect:

H1. Brand heritage will positively impact consumer purchase intentions.

3.3. The moderating role of regulatory focus

While there is sufficient conceptual and empirical support for the prediction that brand heritage will positively influence behavioral intention, questions remain as to the motivational conditions that attenuate or enhance this effect. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) proposes that prevention oriented individuals focus on security, safety, and protection, while promotion oriented individuals focus on personal growth, pursue pleasure, and place less value on security and avoiding negative outcomes (Higgins, 1997). Thus, promotion (prevention) oriented individuals should place less (more) value on stability to prevent negative outcomes. Thus:

H2a. The effect of brand heritage on purchase intention will be weaker when the consumer is more promotion focused.

H2b. The effect of brand heritage on purchase intention will be stronger when the consumer is more prevention focused.

3.4. Intervening variables: how brand heritage impacts purchase intention

The remaining hypotheses explore how brand heritage impacts consumer purchase intention. The conceptual model presented in Fig. 1 explicates the proposed relationships between the constructs. Specific hypotheses are developed below.

Previous studies (e.g., Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993) emphasize the importance of both cognitive and affective drivers of consumer-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10492875>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10492875>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)