



An integrated retailer image and brand equity framework: Re-examining, extending, and restructuring retailer brand equity



Johan Anselmsson^{a,*}, Steve Burt^b, Burak Tunca^c

^a Lund University School of Economics and Management, P.O. Box 7080, S220 07 Lund, Sweden

^b University of Sterling, 3B13, Stirling FK9 4LA, United Kingdom

^c School of Business and Law, University of Agder, Post Box 422, 4604 Kristiansand, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Retailer image
Store image
Brand equity
Retailer equity
Retailer trust

ABSTRACT

Retailers are amongst the world's strongest brands, but little is known about retailer brand equity. In spite of their extensive use, we argue that current operational models are too abstract for understanding the uniqueness of the retail industry and too simplistic to understand the interrelationships among the dimensions in the retailer brand equity building process. This study contributes to the existing and largely generic retailer equity frameworks in three ways: first, by incorporating retail specific dimensions from the retailer image literature; second, by re-examining and developing the structures and relationships between the dimensions of retailer equity by testing alternative structures commonly used in the more general brand equity literature; and finally by creating a short and parsimonious scale for assessing retailer brand equity in different contexts. Three alternative models are compared and tested on six brands in both convenience and shopping goods categories, ranging from discount to middle range price levels. The outcome is an operational framework supporting the main building blocks of the conceptual brand resonance model presented in Keller (2001) with seven dimensions structured in a four-step sequence as awareness → pricing policy, customer service, product quality, physical store → retailer trust → retailer loyalty, thereby describing retailer brand equity as a four-step process. The extended, although parsimonious, 17-item retailer equity scale can be used by academics as well as practitioners to examine the underlying values of retailer brands and has the potential to incorporate additional dimensions and attributes to investigate specific retail contexts without creating lengthy questionnaires.

1. Introduction

Several of the most valuable brands in the world are retailers. For instance, in the *Interbrand* (2016) listing of the top 30 global brands, four are pure retail brands (Amazon, H & M, IKEA, Zara) and another ten can be related to retailing either through flagship stores or branded dealerships (e.g., Apple, Nike, Samsung, Toyota). A similar pattern is found in the *BrandZ* (2016) ranking, which also includes retailers like the Alibaba group, Home Depot, and Walmart.

The strategic importance of branding for retailers has been repeatedly highlighted in retail management research (e.g., Burt, 2000; Jara and Cliquet, 2012; Pappu and Quester, 2006). One crucial aspect of strategic branding is understanding, measuring, and evaluating brand equity (Keller, 1993). Brand equity is an important concept for retailers given its association with purchase behavior, market share, financial performance, and shareholder value (Aaker, 1991; Anselmsson and Bondesson, 2015; Keller and Lehmann, 2003; Srivastava et al., 1998; Swoboda et al., 2016). Given the intensified

competition in the retail industry, a better understanding of retailer brand equity is strategically important for both retail management and retail performance (Arnett et al., 2003; Das et al., 2012; Keller, 2010; Londoño et al., 2017; Swoboda et al., 2013).

The current conceptual and operational brand equity models capture various dimensions such as awareness, associations to quality and service, symbolic values, and consumer loyalty (Aaker, 1996). There are several examples of retailer equity scales, but because these scales are based on general models, they currently fail to capture important dimensions that are unique to the retailing industry. One major limitation of applying general brand equity models is that as they have been developed with the ambition of being universally applicable (e.g., Aaker, 1991; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Yoo et al., 2000), they are often less useful for understanding specific industries (Anselmsson et al., 2007). Hence, many brand equity studies have focused on specific businesses (see Lassar et al. (1995), Martin and Brown (1990) and Washburn and Plank (2002)). We therefore argue that retailer specific dimensions should be better reflected in retailer brand equity

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Johan.anselmsson@fek.lu.se (J. Anselmsson), s.l.burt@stir.ac.uk (S. Burt), burak.tunca@uia.no (B. Tunca).

measurement models. In particular, we suggest that elements of retailer image research, which examines retailer specific aspects, can be integrated into retailer brand equity models to extend and improve the existing frameworks (for similar suggestions see Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). It is unfortunate that such closely related research areas have not combined their knowledge and understanding but have developed separately over the years.

A further limitation of existing scales is that empirical retail brand equity studies are relatively simple and far from the complex and sequential brand building process found for example in Keller's (2001) brand resonance framework. Often, they only capture outcomes of brand equity (e.g., Arnett et al., 2003) or they view brand equity as a two-step process with a number of image attributes leading to loyalty (Choi and Huddleston, 2014; Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009). This means that our understanding of brand building in the retail industry is reduced to investigating the effects of associations on loyalty, rather than exploring how consumers evaluate, feel and act in relation to the brands and how these elements are related.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the central aspects of customer-based brand equity in retailing and to develop a more retailer specific measurement model, by integrating dimensions and attributes found in the retail image literature, in order to understand how customers evaluate retailers from a brand equity perspective. Another ambition is to test alternative structural models found in the general brand equity literature to explicate the relationships between relevant brand equity dimensions. Additionally, in keeping with the emergence of ultra-short multidimensional scales (e.g., Geuens et al., 2009; Rammstedt and John, 2007), we aim to develop a parsimonious retailer brand equity scale which encompasses core brand equity dimensions alongside retail specific dimensions. Such a scale could then be used in retailer equity research where more dimensions and theoretical contexts need to be added without creating extensive questionnaires.

2. Brand equity and retailer equity

Much of the research focus within the brand equity literature has been on customer perceptions, and how value is created through customer beliefs, values, and behaviors, that is *customer-based brand equity*. One rationale for a focus on consumer perceptions is that what customers think and do precedes, and contributes to, brand equity (Keller, 1993; Keller and Lehmann, 2003; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). How consumers perceive brands and what motivates them to act is therefore important. Brand equity research is often about understanding concrete marketing actions or assets like the brand name and how these relate to rational dimensions such as customer quality perceptions, more symbolic dimensions like brand image, and outcomes such as purchase intentions and loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). With regard to the structure of general brand equity frameworks, the existing literature presents two main approaches. First, a rather simplistic approach is that all brand equity dimensions function in a parallel fashion (Aaker, 1996). The other extreme approach, presented mainly in Keller's brand resonance pyramid (2001), is more complex as it views brand building as a multi-step process consisting of salience (awareness about the brand), image and performance (perception and meaning of the brand), response (overall attitude in terms how customers feel or think), and resonance (relationship and customer loyalty).

According to Baldauf et al. (2009) retailer equity can be defined from a customer perspective as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service" (2009, p. 439). Given the importance of branding for retail management, a burgeoning body of research has emerged investigating retailer brand equity. Despite the popularity of the construct, our review of this literature shows that there is no consensus as to how retailer brand equity should be measured (see Table 1). While some articles relied on a single factor with multiple items, others used multi-dimensional scales with general brand

Table 1
Summary of articles examining retailer brand equity dimensions.

Article	Single Retailer Equity Dimension (RE)	Awareness (AW)	Image /Associations (AS)	Perceived Quality (PQ)	Loyalty (LO)	Personality (PE)	Price Image /Value (PI)	Service Quality (SE)	Number of dimensions	Number of items	Structural Framework
Arnett et al. (2003)	X								1	5	-
Baldauf et al. (2009)		X		X	X				3	10	RE → AW, PQ, LO
Choi and Huddleston (2014)		X	X	X	X				4	14	AW, AS, PQ → LO
Das (2015)		X	X	X	X				4	12	-
Das et al. (2012)		X	X	X	X				4	12	-
Gi-Saura et al. (2013)	X								1	4	-
Jara and Cliquet (2012)		X		X		X	X	X	5	26	AW → PQ, PE, PI, SE
Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009)		X	X	X	X				4	18	AW, AS, PQ → LO
Londoño et al. (2016)	X	X		X	X				4	15	AW, PQ, LO → RE
Pappu and Quester (2006)		X	X	X	X				4	15	-
Samu et al. (2012)	X								1	3	-
Swoboda et al. (2013)	X								1	3	-
Swoboda et al. (2016)	X								1	4	-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5111373>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5111373>

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