

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND AFFECT,
BRAND QUALITY, AND CUSTOMERS' BRAND
EXTENSION ATTITUDE: EXPLORING
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF
CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

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This research intends to propose a conceptual framework that will investigate the effects of brand affect and brand quality on customers' brand extension attitude mediated through customer loyalty. To test the framework, multiple regression analysis was applied to data collected from 100 customers of a particular brand. Primarily this study aims to test the theoretical models to measure the causality whether brand affect and brand quality can foster customers' brand extension attitude. The initial results of the study indicate that brand affect, brand quality and customer loyalty are significantly and positively related to customers' brand extension attitude.

INTRODUCTION

New products are launched in the market with an objective to attract more and more customers and thereby, increase market share. With increasing competition, customers are being provided with various options. Successful organizations all over the world recognize the importance of new product launches (brand extension) as a means of organic growth and as a means to differentiate themselves from others. At the same time, it must be remembered that it is not an easy task to create winning products in an increasingly competitive environment. Considering the high failure rate of new products, launching a new product is a risky proposition (Panwar & Bapat, 2007). Under this circumstance brand extension might receive success if consumers accept the extended brand category product.

Brand extension involves the use of a brand name established in one product class to enter another product class (Aaker, 1990; Tauber, 1988). This strategy is often seen as beneficial because it reduces new product introduction marketing research and advertising costs, and increases the chance of success due to higher preference derived from the core brand equity (Chen & Liu, 2004). All investigations on the determinants of successful brand extensions initially assume that a brand is an accumulation of associations (Keller, 1993) and the parent brand associations can influence consumers' reactions to brand extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bhat & Reddy, 2001). In previous studies different authors identified some antecedents of brand extension attitude of consumers. The antecedents they have identified are parent brand trust and parent brand affect.

According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), brand attitude can be measured via brand trust, brand affect, and brand quality. Brand attitude is the highest level of brand association and it frequently forms the basis of consumer behavior (e.g., brand choice) (Keller, 1998). Aaker and Keller (1990) proposed a relation between perceived quality of parent brand and consumers' attitude toward the extensions. Chen (2001) also suggested that the perceived brand quality provides the reasons to buy and it affects the user's attitude toward brand extension.

On the other hand Reast (2005) stated that when the extended brand is launched the expected loyalty factor will drive trial – if the consumer is loyal to the parent brand there is a good chance that they will try the extended brand. Thus, the parent brand can lower the risks of new product failure (Thiele & Mackay, 2001).

Aaker and Keller's (1990) framework has been subjected to substantial scrutiny as a widely replicated study (Bottomley & Holden, 2001). Barwise (1993) argued that a model which does not stretch beyond Aaker and Keller's (1990) choice of brand extensions is of limited scope and therefore of negligible value.

The current study is a broad replication of Aaker and Keller's (1990) model in the sense that it does not generalize across brand extensions, but does attempt to make a generalization of the model by extending the model through adding three more anticipated antecedents of customers' brand extension attitude. In this study the researchers used the brand trust, brand affect, and brand loyalty (parent brand loyalty) as added variables to empirically investigate whether the extent of parent brand trust, parent brand affect, and parent brand quality have effects on consumers attitude towards brand extension mediated through parent brand loyalty.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brand Extension Attitude

A brand extension strategy involves using an established brand name in one product class to enter another product class. Many firms have used this strategy in the last decade to further leverage brand equity. A “good” brand extension strategy is one where the brand name aids the extension, while a “very good” brand extension also enhances the brand name (Aaker, 1991). Consumer evaluation of a brand extension is often described as a process by which the core brand associations of the parent brand transfers to the extension. Thus, a key aspect contributing to the success of such strategies is to

understand how consumer perceptions towards the brand in the established as well as new category are altered by the extension. According to Keller (2003), a brand extension is defined as when a firm uses an established brand name to introduce a new product.

Brand Trust

Trust is a key variable in the development of an enduring desire to maintain a relationship in the long term. The construct, trust is variously defined as a generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word of another can be relied on (Rotter, 1967); the extent to which a person is confident, and willing to act on the basis of the words, actions, decisions of others (McAllister, 1995); and, uniquely in the consumer domain, the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). It is being seen as multidimensional in the majority of marketing studies (Raimondo, 2000), trust is reported to be: involved, as part of “brand credibility”, in brand extension acceptance (Keller & Aaker, 1992); fundamental to the development of loyalty (Berry, 1993; Reicheld & Schefter, 2000); as critical in maintaining successful agency-client relationships (Labahn & Kohli, 1997); as a component of brand equity (Dyson et al., 1996); and as essential in building strong customer relationships on the internet (Urban et al., 2000), and perhaps the single most powerful relationship marketing tool available to a company (Berry, 1995).

Trust therefore is defined as the confidence that one will find desired from another (Deutsch, 1973). It represents the confidence that the relational party in an exchange will not exploit another's vulnerability. Considering brand trust as expectancy, it is based on the consumer's belief that the brand has specific qualities that make it consistent, competent, honest, responsible, and so on, which is in line with the research on trust (Andaleeb, 1992; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2002) defined brand trust as the willingness of the average consumer relying on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function.

Brand Affect

Brand affect is defined as the potential in a brand to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its usage (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Morgan & Hunt (1994). In another study, brand affect is defined as a brand's potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its usage (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992).

Brand Quality

The concept of product quality can be analyzed under two main different perspectives: the objective quality and the perceived quality (Brunsø et al., 2005). Objective quality refers to the technical, measurable, and verifiable nature of products/services, processes, and quality controls. Subjective or perceived quality refers the consumers' value judgments or perceptions of quality.

The concept of quality, or more exactly the perception of quality, varies depending on a range of factors such as the moment at which the consumer makes the

purchase or consumes a product, and the place where it is bought or enjoyed, to name but a few. Quality can, then, be defined in terms of the moment at which the consumer receives information or cues about the characteristics of the product while shopping for or consuming it (Becker, 2000). Thus, consumers evaluate the functionality or utility of the product on the basis of their needs.

Brand Loyalty

It is widely considered that loyalty is one of the ways with which the consumer expresses his/her satisfaction with the performance of the product or service received (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). The loyalty that consumers show to a given brand is, in part, constructed from consistent satisfaction with the performance of the brand.

The concept of loyalty has not been uniquely defined. In marketing literature the term loyalty has often been used interchangeably with its operational (measurement) definition to refer to: repeat purchase (Ehrenberg, 1988); preference (Guest, 1944); commitment (Hawkes, 1994). In addition, loyalty has been referred to in a variety of market-specific contexts, for example, service, store and vendor loyalty and contexts that reflect the nature of the measure used: customer and brand loyalty. In fact, the terms, brand loyalty and service loyalty have been used to refer to the same concept.

According to Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) the majority of brand loyalty measures can be categorized as either behavioral or attitudinal (Mellens et al., 1996). For instance, *Behavioral loyalty* measures define brand loyalty in terms of the actual purchases observed over a time period (Mellens et al., 1996). And *attitudinal loyalty* measures are based on stated preferences, commitment or purchase intentions (Mellens et al., 1996).

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

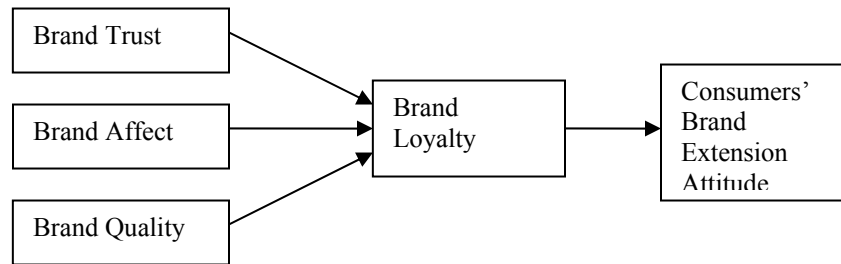


Figure 1. Theoretical figure of conceptual frame work.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Data has been collected from 100 consumers of a fruit juice brand which has extended its product line by introducing new products under the same brand name. One hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed. All of these questionnaires were returned. So, the response rate was 100%. Analysis of data presented in table- 1 showed

that 82% of total respondents were male and 18% were female. In terms of age 71% belonged to the group 20-25, 23% belonged to 26-30, and 6% belonged to 31-40.

Measures

Structured questionnaire was being used in this research to collect data. All the items were assessed on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 5 represents “strongly agree”.

Brand trust and brand affect were measured by using the questions provided by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). The authors have provided evidence of reliability of brand trust and brand affect 0.88 and 0.94 respectively.

As this study of brand extension attitude is concerned with the brand extension of consumer food products the researchers used the items which were able to measure the brand quality of food items. The items were taken from Botonaki et.al.(2006) and the reliability of this scale ranges from 0.60 to 0.88.

Brand loyalty was being measured through the questionnaires developed by Quester and Lim (2003). The items were taken from Botonaki et.al.(2006) and the reliability of this scale ranges from 0.85 to 0.88.

Consumers’ brand extension attitude was being measured through the questionnaires developed by Park *et al.* (1993). The authors have provided evidence of reliability of this scale as 0.96. The authors have provided evidence of reliability of consumers’ brand extension attitude ranging from 0.88 to 0.94.

Analysis

Goodness of measure

TABLE 1
Summery of Factor Analysis of Independent Variables

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Brand Affect		
This brand “coca-cola” makes me happy	0.809	--
This brand “coca-cola” gives me pleasure	0.799	0.121
I feel good when I drink this brand “coca-cola”	0.696	0.164
Brand Quality		
The brand “coca-cola” product is fresh	0.107	0.828
The brand “coca-cola” product is tasty	0.113	0.818
Eigenvalue	2.060	1.137
Percentage of Variance	41.205	22.733
KMO	0.621	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	71.378***	

Note. N= 100; p<.001

Factor analysis has been applied to evaluate the validity of measures (Nunnally, 1978). It was conducted to test the dimensionality and reliability of variables. 3 items of brand affect and 2 items of brand quality among 3 were subjected to principle

components of factor analysis with Varimax Rotation. The loading of the 3 items of brand trust and 1 item of brand quality were less than 0.6 and consequently, brand trust and 1 item of brand quality have been removed from the study. As Table- 1 shows, Eigenvalues of two distinct factors were greater than 1. 5 of the items were retained. The result showed that they cumulatively explained 63.938% of the total variance. KMO measures of sampling adequacy was 0.621 indicating sufficient intercorrelation. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 71.378$, $p < 0.001$).

TABLE 2
Summary of factor analysis of Brand loyalty

Items	Factor 1
Brand Loyalty	
I would always think of “coca-cola” over other brands when I consider buying soft drinks	0.843
I will feel good about “coca-cola” over other brand	0.824
I would feel very attached to “coca-cola” over other brands	0.816
Eigenvalue	2.056
Percentage of Variance	68.543
KMO	0.698
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	76.314*
	**

Note. N= 100; $p < .001$

Three items among four were shown to be greater than 0.6 as presented in Table – 3 where the item 2 had a value less than 0.6 and it was discarded. It also shows that the Eigenvalue was greater than 1 (2.056) and the total variance explained was 68.543. KMO measures of sampling adequacy was 0.698 indicating sufficient intercorrelation. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 76.314$, $p < 0.001$).

TABLE 3
Summary of factor analysis of Brand Extension Attitude

Items	Factor 1
Brand Extension Attitude	
How “pleased” would the extension make you	0.883
How “good” (or “bad”) an idea was the extension	0.834
How “acceptable” was the extension	0.812
Eigenvalue	2.135
Percentage of Variance	71.169
KMO	0.687
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	93.318***

Note. N= 100; $p < .001$

All the three items of brand extension attitude had been taken as all of them are greater than 0.6. Here the Eigenvalue was greater than 1 (2.135) and the percentage of variance was 71.169%. KMO value was 0.687 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant ($\chi^2 = 93.314$, $p < 0.001$).

Modified conceptual framework and hypotheses

Based upon the factor analysis, one variable, brand trust was deleted from the conceptual framework and the modified framework is shown below.

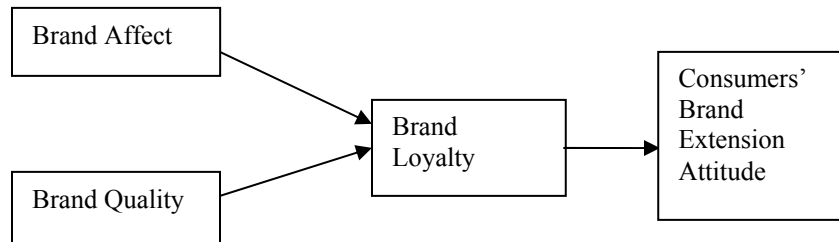


Figure 2. Modified theoretical figure of conceptual frame work

The hypotheses were being derived from this modified model.

H1: There is a relationship between brand affect and brand loyalty

H2: There is a relationship between brand quality and brand loyalty

H3: Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand affect and Consumers' brand extension attitude

H4: Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand quality and Consumers' brand extension attitude

TABLE 4
Reliability Coefficient and Descriptive Statistics of Brand Affect, Brand Quality, Brand Loyalty, and Brand Extension Attitude

Items	Number of items	Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
Brand Affect	3	0.669	4.1867	0.5131
Brand Quality	2	0.546	4.1900	0.5631
Brand Loyalty	3	0.768	4.1567	0.6240
Brand Extension Attitude	3	0.796	3.9800	0.5186

Note: n = 100

The reliability of measures was being tested by using the inter-item consistency measure of Cronbach alpha. The reliabilities of the studied variables were above the acceptable standard (at least .60) prescribed by Nunnally (1978).

Mean scores had been computed by equally weighting the mean scores of all the items. On a five-point scale, the mean score for brand affect was 4.1867 (SD= 0.51). The score depicted that this brand elicits a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use. The mean score of brand quality (4.1900; SD= 0.56) indicated that consumers' perception about the quality of that brand is high. Brand Loyalty had a mean score of 4.1567 (SD= 0.62) suggesting that these customers are very loyal to that particular brand and brand extension attitude had a mean score of 3.9800

(SD= 0.51) indicating that the consumers will have positive attitude toward any extension of that particular brand.

A correlation analysis was conducted on all the variables to explore the relationship between variables. The bivariate correlation procedure was subject to a two tailed of statistical significance at one level; highly significant ($p < .01$). The result of correlation among the variables is shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Correlation Matrix for Brand Affect, Brand Quality, Brand Loyalty, and Brand Extension Attitude

	Brand Affect	Brand Quality	Brand Loyalty	Brand Extension Attitude
Brand Affect	-	0.261**	0.409**	0.335**
Brand Quality		-	0.456**	0.267**
Brand Loyalty			-	0.579**
Brand Extension Attitude				-

Note: $n=100$; ** $p < .01$

It examines correlations among brand affect, brand quality, brand loyalty, and brand extension attitude. Both of the brand affect and brand quality were positively and significantly correlated with brand loyalty ($r = .40$, $p < .01$; $r = .45$, $p < .01$). On the other hand, brand extension attitude is also positively and significantly correlated with brand affect ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), brand quality ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), and brand loyalty ($r = .58$, $p < .01$).

TABLE 6
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on Brand Loyalty

Variables	Standard Beta
Brand Affect	0.342**
Brand Quality	0.414***
R^2	0.359
Adjusted R^2	0.346
F Value	26.366
Sig.	.000
Durbin Watson	1.920

Note ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Regression analysis was first carried out to access H1 and H2. As shown in the regression table, the coefficient of R^2 was 0.359, indicating that the two independent variables explained 35.9% of the variance. Durbin Watson of 1.920 indicated that there was no correlation problem (Standard auto-correlation value = 1.5 – 2.5). It was also explained by the variables that the model was significant ($F = 26.366$). Another examination revealed that brand affect ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < .01$) and brand quality ($\beta = 0.414$, $p < .001$) were respectively positively significant and highly significantly related with brand loyalty. So, H1 and H2 are supported.

Regression for brand loyalty on brand extension attitude shows that brand loyalty was positively and highly significantly related ($\beta = 0.552$, $p < .001$) with brand extension

attitude. R square value was 0.305. The F value and Durbin Watson were 41.638 and 1.777 respectively.

TABLE 7
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of Brand Loyalty on Brand Extension Attitude

Variables	Standard Beta
Brand Loyalty	0.552***
R ²	0.305
Adjusted R ²	0.297
F Value	41.638
Sig.	.000
Durbin Watson	1.777

Note **p<.01; ***p<.001

The next regression depicted that both of the variables were significantly related with brand extension attitude ($\beta = 0.328$, $p<.01$ & $\beta = 0.254$, $p<.01$). R² value was 0.213 and the F value was 12.755. Additionally, Durbin Watson value was 1.787.

TABLE 8
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of Brand Quality and Brand Affect on Brand Extension Attitude

Variables	Standard Beta
Brand Affect	0.328**
Brand Quality	0.254**
R ²	0.213
Adjusted R ²	0.197
F Value	12.755
Sig.	.000
Durbin Watson	1.787

Note **p<.01; ***p<.001

TABLE 9
Mediating effect of Brand Loyalty on the Relationship among Brand Affect and Brand Quality, and Brand Extension Attitude

Variables	Standard Beta (Step 1)	Standard Beta (Step 2)
Independent		
Brand Affect	0.328**	0.179
Brand Quality	0.254**	0.073
Mediating		
Brand Loyalty	-	0.436***
R ²	0.213	0.335
Change in R ²	-	0.122

Note **p<.01, ***p<.001

The results of hierarchical regression analysis for the mediating variable, brand loyalty were shown in table- 9. The result shows that before adding the mediating variable the R^2 value was 0.213. Now after adding the mediator the value increased to 0.335 and the change was 0.122 which suggested that brand loyalty acts as a mediator in the proposed model.

The result further showed that after introducing the mediator (brand loyalty) brand affect and brand quality became insignificant. This indicated that brand loyalty perfectly ($\beta = 0.436^{***}$; $p < .001$) mediated the relationship between brand affect and brand extension attitude. Thus H3 and H4 are supported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to identify the relationships between brand trust, brand affect, brand quality, and brand extension attitude mediated through brand loyalty. It was a single cross-sectional study. Data was collected from 100 respondents. Because of the low value (less than 0.6) of the loading factor of principle components analysis one of the independent variables, brand trust and one item from brand quality, and one item from brand loyalty were being discarded from the analysis. The loading factor and the eigenvalues of the other constructs and items were sufficient enough to conduct the study (loading items were greater than 0.6; eigenvalues were greater than 1.0).

On the basis of the principle components analysis the researchers needed to modify the proposed framework and the new framework analyzed the modified relationships between brand trust, brand affect, brand quality, and brand extension attitude mediated through brand loyalty.

The result of correlation analysis depicted that the independent variable, brand affect is positively and significantly related with brand loyalty ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). The result of regression analysis shows that brand affect is statistically significantly related with brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < .01$). Collectively the two variables explained 35.9% of the variance. The result of the regression analysis provided support for hypothesis 1.

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) formulated the concepts of brand trust and brand affect, showing the impact of these constructs on purchase and attitudinal loyalty with ultimate effects on such brand outcomes as market share. Authors proposed that brand trust and brand affect are each related to both purchase and attitudinal loyalty. The proposed hypothesis too reflects the idea which is supported.

The result of correlation shows that brand quality is positively and significantly related with brand loyalty ($r = .45$, $p < .01$). On the other hand the result of regression shows that brand quality is positively and highly significantly related with brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.414$, $p < .001$). Collectively the two variables explained 35.9% of the variance. The regression result provided support for hypothesis 2.

According to Fandos and Flavian (2006), it would seem reasonable to suppose that the level of quality associated with intrinsic attributes may rise in the process of consumption, thereby increasing the consumer's loyalty and possible repeat buying intention. Their thoughts indicate the proposed hypothesis as well.

Correlation result depicted that brand loyalty mediated the relationship between brand affect and brand extension attitude. The result of correlation analysis provided support for hypothesis 3.

Regression analysis shows that before adding the mediating variable the R^2 value was 0.213. After adding the mediator the value increases to 0.335 suggesting that brand loyalty is a mediator in the proposed model. The regression result provided the support for hypothesis 3.

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found that brand attitude can be measured via brand trust and brand affect. Brand attitude is the highest level of brand association and frequently forms the basis of consumer behavior (e.g., brand choice) (Keller, 1998). In that sense, when the mediator is added the relationship becomes strong.

Correlation result shows that brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand quality and consumers' brand extension attitude. The result of correlation analysis provided support for hypothesis 4.

Regression analysis shows that before adding the mediating variable the R^2 value was 0.213. After adding the mediator the value increases to 0.335 suggesting that brand loyalty is a mediator in the proposed model. The regression result provides support for hypothesis 4.

Martinez, Polo and Chernatony (2004) found that perceived brand quality before an extension influences consumers' attitudes towards the extensions. Additionally, when they are mediated they become of more importance.

Earlier lots of researches have been conducted to reveal factors that have an influence on consumers mind while consumers try to evaluate an extended product of the parent brand. Very few researches have been conducted taking brand loyalty (parent brand) factor into consideration to define brand loyalty as a cue for the consumer's positive attitude toward a brand extension while consumers try to evaluate an extended brand from parent brand. Lots of earlier brand extension studies worked on the fit factor (the perceived fit or attribute similarity between a parent brand and an extended product of that parent brand) and regarded this factor as one of the salient points which motivate consumers to attitude positively towards an extended brand. In this regard researchers suggested that if a parent brand and an extended category product of this parent brand both possess some similar salient attributes, consumer feel comfort while they evaluate the extended brand because at that time they too transfer their parent brand's salient attributes experience to similar attribute containing category of extended product. The researchers suggested when more dissimilar category of extended product comes, consumers' evaluation of these dissimilar extended products will be more critical for the consumers. Hence brand loyalty (parent brand) factor emerges to reduce consumers' critical cognitive evaluation process of brand extension. Earlier researchers concentrated on regarding firms exploiting of the parent brand's positive factors to draw positive attitude from consumers towards extended brand of that parent brand. On the other hand the current research intended to exploit the parent brand loyalty of consumers to achieve consumer's positive attitude towards an extended category product of that brand. The current researchers suggest that parent brand loyalty is a key driving force that will induce product trial of extended product from consumers. Loyal consumers have a strong association with the parent brand and they get the opportunity to be involved more with that brand name and company when that brand name evolves through the extension of various products. Hence, a company having broad loyal consumer base of a brand might think that extension of it's loyal brand will receive the success of extension while chance failure of that extension will be very narrow.

Brand extension decision should be in the brand managers' mind only when they realize that their brands receive a great positioning in consumers mind. Marketers make a relationship with consumers through this brand positioning. Consumer-brand relationship is an asset that marketers should capitalize upon. Therefore, brand extension strategy is the viable option for leveraging this brand strength i.e. brand-consumers relationship. Again, positive perception and attitude from consumers towards an extended product largely depends on the consumers' previous performance experience and relationship with the parent brand category product.

This research will contribute towards bridging the gap between the perception of marketers and the perception of consumers regarding attitude of consumers toward an extended brand category product.

The findings of this study have to be interpreted considering the limitations of the study in mind. First, this study was a single cross-sectional study but to determine the causal paths of studied variables multiple cross-sectional studies or a longitudinal study is more appropriate (Poon, 2004). Secondly, the current study not being an experimental one, extraneous variables from the study were not possible to eliminate or withhold. Therefore, the results may be somewhat handicapped in terms of internal validity and external validity to draw causal inferences. Thirdly, in this study the researchers used non probability sampling technique to collect the data. It was not possible to use the probability sampling technique because researchers did not have access to the sampling frame. Finally, there may be many other factors which influence consumers' brand extension attitude. It is not practically possible to incorporate all the variables in a single study but the research models could have been more robust if few more variables could have been added.

Oliver (1997) identified the nonrecursive and longitudinal nature of many of the constructs discussed in the current research. Future research should attempt to capture these relationships. Therefore, future research should consider experimental or longitudinal studies so that, the causal inferences could be made more confidently and safely. Perhaps, the broadest question that future research might consider is whether attitudinal/behavioral loyalty or value should form the basis for frameworks guiding brand-related research and strategy.

This research may encourage further study in this field where the future researchers should consider other variables such as – brand type, brand knowledge, brand personality etc. as additional variables to examine their relationships with brand extension attitude.

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