

Emotional Brand Attachment in Gen Y Consumers: Analysis of Brand Loyalty, Price Premiums & Brand Self Congruence in Metropolitan Markets

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Emotional bonds and identification with the brand is an essential way marketer focus on creating more deep, long-lasting, and strong brand attachments with the consumers. In spite of the fact that the literature throws light on the importance of emotions in building strong connections between consumers and brands using a branding strategy based on emotions, significant efforts have not been made to enrich our understanding of emotional branding. Also, prior research has found that inner need fulfilment leads to brand attachment however, the process to convert them into affective ties has not been explored. This research draws from self- congruence and looks to create a deeper understanding of how emotions could potentially create strong brand attachments between consumers and the respective brands. Also, it is trying to identify the relationship between need fulfilment & brand attachment which creates brand loyalty thereby creating the willingness to pay more by the customers. **Methodology:** A literature review has been conducted on related constructs i.e. need fulfilment, brand attachment, brand loyalty and brand self – congruence. Subsequently a conceptual empirical testing has been conducted. Finally, suggestions have been made for future studies and final remarks are presented. **Findings:** A conceptual framework has been developed revolving around the antecedents and consequences which transmits into Brand Loyalty thereby willingness of the customers to pay more. **Implications:** - This research brought forth various constructs that lead to brand self-congruence thereby leading to brand loyalty. It leads to development of marketing tool that can be used for the Gen Y consumers. **Originality:** The concepts of loyalty through the lens of brand self-congruence has rarely been discussed. This paper attempts to outline the same.

Keywords: Marketing, Brand Loyalty, Price Premiums, Brand Self Congruence, Emotional Branding, Branding, Brand love.

INTRODUCTION:

In a highly competitive environment, building strong brands is an essential strategy and has been stressed upon greatly in the marketing literature dealing with the field of brand management (Morrison and Crane, 2007). The focus is currently on the role of emotions in creating the attachment of the consumers to the brands (Yoo and MacInnis, 2005). Hence, there has to be a detailed understanding of the emotional bonding between the brands and the consumers which acts as a relationship building tool. The literature suggests that the bonds or relationship of the consumers with the brand is formed in the same way they form relations in the social context (Fournier, 1998). Several studies from the literature (Ahuvia, Batra, and Bagozzi 2008; Carroll and Ahuvia 2006) explicitly studied brand love. Related work spans self–brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003),

consumers' attachments to brands (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005), the construction of self-identity (Belk 1988), consumer-object bonds (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995), and brand communities and reference groups (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002).

A review of literature on self-determination support the fact that the consumers do form strong attachment with the brand if brands respond to their requirement of self-determination (i.e., autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Thomson, 2006). However, there is very little understanding of the process by which self-determination affects brand attachments. Also, most of the study has focus on the western literature and its relevance from the Asian context remains unknown. Therefore, this study aims to create a deeper understanding and attach meaning to this intermediating mechanism. Here, the author draws from Deci and Ryan's (2000) internalisation perspective to understand the brand-self-connection perspective to throw light on how the self-determination needs are satisfied and intense brand attachments are created. The same is studied keeping the Gen Y consumers from India.

Emotional Branding today has become the new marketing mantra. There has been an evolution in the consumer behaviour from the more rational approach based on satisfaction from product features to developing an emotional connect or a bond with the brand. Consumers are no longer interested in the commodity that satisfies their need, but in the brand, that depicts their personal image and know how the brand makes them feel thereby creating an attachment. Marc Gobe (2001) coined the term emotional branding. Emotions as defined by Descartes (1989 trans. Stephen H. Voss) are 'Series of automatisms and human behaviour different than the cognitive process'. According to Darwin (1913), 'Emotions are adaptive and help in communication'. It is a mental state that arise when exposed to a certain event, thought or process and can be synonymous to feelings. Emotions are utilised today to influence the consumer's response to a product (Consoli, 2010). Most successful organisations today seem to engage with the consumers by having a dialogue with them at an emotional level that resonates with their intrinsic needs. Emotional brands are intense psychological bonds with the brands. These emotional brands lead to higher levels of firm performance and competitive advantage (Malar et al., 2011). High level of commitment is a result of these emotional linkages between consumers and the brand (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Also, it results in customer satisfaction (Bagozzi et al., 1999)

Brands too have transitioned from using traditional benefit-based advertising strategy to an emotional appeal-based advertising for developing a long term connect with the consumers. In an era where product differentiation is difficult to achieve, marketers have to rely on differentiation that can be created imbuing the brand with a personality. Many top companies nationally & internationally have adopted the emotional advertising route. Through their advertising these companies reflect upon local culture, traditions or personalities integral to the individual which can be depicted through the brand. Numerous examples of the same can be cited which are in Indian context like the Google Search reunion campaign where Google is an international company focuses the campaign on the emotions set amidst the friendship of two senior citizens, one based in India and the other in Pakistan. It clearly shows how the search engine helps bring together the two lost friends. Thus, it focuses on the emotions of love, longing and friendship. Another example is of Khul ke khelo campaign by Parachute. This ad hardly talks about the hair oil or its benefits. It is based in an old age home. The ad depicts the inmates of the old age home playing "Khulke" with the colours. This ad encourages people to strengthen the bonds of relationship and love, another emotional aspect. There are multiple such examples and their numbers are growing by the day. These ad campaigns become the driving force for the brands to put across the various emotional aspects to the consumers. They create an emotional bond with the client which is strengthened when the consumer experiences the brand. This creates trust and loyalty thereby engaging the consumers.

Consumers today make decisions emotionally and rationalise them logically, which was supported by Morrison & Crane (2007) mentioning that emotions do facilitate decision making when logic and information is unavailable. Dewitt et. al (2008) suggested that emotional branding is a facilitator of brand loyalty. Both, the marketing practitioners and the academic fraternity is keen to understand the mechanism of how the consumers' emotional attachment to the brand gives the firms its competitive advantage and results in high level of performance (Malar et. al, 2011). Consumers develop strong emotional connections with the brand. This attachment theory helps predict the way in which an individual interacts with the brand, Bowlby (1979). Also, the consumers feel the impulse to make financial sacrifices to maintain the proximity with the brands because of these emotional connection or bond that are created between the consumer and the brand. Thompson et al (2005) coined the term emotional brand attachment which is conceptually similar to brand love elaborated by Roberts (2004) in his book Lovemarks. Batra et. al (2012) suggested that consumers do form emotional relationship with the brand which are very strong. They find the brand irreplaceable and experience anxiety on their withdrawal. Thus, emotional brand attachment is an important variable in the process of customer – brand

relationship creation. Today younger consumers are an emerging segment of buyers for multiple brands. They have clear preferences in brands and a notably high purchasing power. This segment has been neglected in the branding literature and hence this study intends to test emotional branding aspect in youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Self- Congruence exerts a relatively strong effect on the emotional brand attachment (Malar et. al, 2011). This study does not extend the said attachment between the brand and the consumer any further. A study by Hung (2014) put forward that there are two mediating mechanisms that expound about the internalization and socialization dynamics relating to: need fulfillment with brand attachment, and supporting values with community identification, respectively. The outcome of the research depicts that in the process of brand attachment, brand self-congruence acts as an internalizing mechanism. "Brand attachment" and their interpretation of attitude was examined by Park et. all (2010). This proposes that the emotional branding creates better relationship with the consumer. Park et. al (2006) focuses on the extent to which attitudes affect brand relationship and the behaviours consumers share with the brands. The results show that extreme brand attitudes form strong relationships with consumers thereby creating commitment from the consumer side. Therefore, the consumers manifest acceptance to high attachment brands. In his research, Loureiro et. al (2012) maintained that brand attachment is an antecedent of brand love and both, commitment and brand trust are mediators between brand trust and loyalty. Trust, the interest in continuing the relationship and faith in the future regarding the brand can be reinforced when there is a feeling of love towards the brand.

Brand love as a construct was tested by (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Brand love is a meaningful mode of consumer satisfaction is advocated by this research. It is linked to desirable post-consumption behaviour. The feeling of love is higher towards the self-expressive brands. On the other hand, Patwardhan and Balasubramanian (2011) seek to understand the construct brand romance which is connected to brand loyalty and provide complementary perspective on emotional attachment to the brand. The authors brought forth that that emotional attachment from attraction generates the three dimensions of brand romance construct, which are pleasure, arousal and dominance. The results state that brand romance creates brand attraction and is different from the construct brand attitude. The roles of three emotional factors which include self-concept connection, emotional attachment and brand love with respect to young consumer- luxury brand relationship was studied by Hwang and Kandampully (2012). The results of this research show that younger consumers' emotional aspects (self-concept connection, emotional attachment, and brand love) help to improve their brand loyalty. Emotional attachment has the strongest impact on brand loyalty. Also, the relationship between brand attachment and community identification is fully mediated by similarity of perceptions among brand, community, and other members.

A scale was proposed by Thomson et. al (2005) to measure the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. The scale's predictive validity, showing that it is positively associated with indicators of both commitment and investment was examined by this research. Pandey (2006), mentions that consumers selectively acquire information. The extent of emotions of the consumer diversifies the emotional purchases of the consumers. The tool used by the marketers in order to deliberately touch the emotions of the consumers is the emotional advertisements. These advertisements acquire a favourable response of the consumers towards the product. Therefore, it has been concluded that, the emotional advertisement technique is used by the marketers of a particular product or brand in changing or forming the attitude of the potential consumers. According to Jamwal and Soodan (2014) individuals are claimed to have a general propensity to shift between psychological states or emotions and the marketers make use of this human tendency to make their consumers actually get shifted to a particular brand. The frontline tool used by most of the marketers is the emotional branding and it naturally touches the emotional chords of the consumers, creating a connection between their purchase decisions and a particular brand. This widely used strategy is claimed to chiefly focus not on the product but only on the consumers. Chamberlain and Broderick (2007), in their research examined the emotions of the consumers and social science measures which can be used to incarcerate the emotional experience of the consumers. The analyses inferred that, the marketers probably place emotional signs in brand designs, advertisements and packages designed to generate emotional responses from the consumers. Two aspects of brand loyalty, purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty, as connecting variables in the chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance (market share and relative price) was examined by Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001). The outcome determined that when there is a control on the product- and brand level variables, brand trust and brand affect combine to determine purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Thus, greater market share is garnered because of loyalty, and attitudinal loyalty leads to a higher relative price for the brand. The research by Thomson et. al (2005) maintained that consumers who have a strong attachment with the

brand are willing to pay more to attain the product and be strongly committed and loyal. The customers anticipate separation distress in case of loss a loved brand and hence were price insensitive (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Brand loyalty and brand equity as constructs have been closely associated with Price Premiums (Aaker, 1996; Park & Srinivasan, 1994). The notion of strong emotional attachment is associated with the perception that the brand is irreplaceable.

Yoo & McInnis (2005) mentions that the leveraging force between the consumers and the brands are emotions. Emotions leads to brand attitude formation. The emotions help consumers garner the required experience thereby integrating the brands in their lives. The above studies discuss emotions with the brands with reference to different antecedents and consequences. Also, Bowlby (1979) and Hazan & Shaver (1987) has maintained in the Attachment theory that dynamic long term or short-term attachments are established with the caregiver. The study is adapted to brands to state that attachments with the brands give rise to loyalty, commitment which in-turn increases the brand profitability. Also, another theory by Deci & Ryan (2000) called the Self-determination theory states that satisfaction of the autonomy, relatedness and competence (ARC) need plays a critical role in predicting feelings and fostering attachments. Taking a cue from the mentioned theories and the literature review, we gather that a lot has been explored about emotional branding thereby creating brand attachment, brand loyalty and trust. However, there is a need to study the impact of emotional branding in creating an engaging relationship with the consumer using a qualitative methodology that will bring forth new variables.

ANALYSIS & DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The analysis of the multiple constructs through the literature helped in drawing a conceptual framework and also identifying the obstacles in the process of customer engagement.

Need Fulfilment:

The target of Needs (i.e., physiological or psychological) and the definition of needs (i.e., nutrients necessary for growth versus any motivating force) distinguish the Need theories. (Hull, 1943) advocated the drive theory which substantiates the physiological need theory where people have certain inherent physiological needs including food, water, and sex. These kinds of physiological needs focus upon tissue deficits, result in drive states, and must be fulfilled for the individual to stay physically healthy. The perspective outlined by (Murray, 1938) shared a perspective which is contrast to the Hullian tradition. The perspective suggested by Murray on psychological maintains that needs are acquired. The need here is anything that motivates an individual to take action. Thus, the list of needs posited by Murray is quite extensive and incorporates drives toward positive psychological development (e.g., self-actualization) as well as drives toward less adaptive functioning (e.g., greed). However, (Deci & Ryan, 2000) self-determination theory (SDT) shares a perspective on needs that lies somewhere between these two traditions. SDT defines psychological needs as “nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being” (Deci & Ryan, 2000). On the basis of this definition, the overall functioning and well-being is the result of the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Competence, relatedness, and autonomy are the three important need for ideal psychological growth and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT states that competence essentially is the need to feel effective in one’s efforts and being capable of achieving the desired outcomes. Relatedness incorporates the need to feel connected to as well as being understood by others and the need to feel volitional in one’s actions, to fully and authentically endorse one’s behaviours, and to act as the originator of one’s own behaviour is represented by autonomy. There has been a scientific debate basis these definitions of psychological needs and their specification

Brand Attachment:

Attachment theory was given by Bowlby (1980) which gave relationship between an infant and its caregiver. Humans tend to also form these emotional bonds with the companies and brands (Carol & Ahuvia., 2006; Park & MacInnis 2006). Simple definition of brand attachment can be an emotional-laden bond or an emotional link that is created between a person and a brand. (Thomson et al., 2005). Connection, passion, and affection towards the brands are displayed by the Consumers when they get emotionally attached to a few brands (Thomson et al., 2005). Park et al., (2006) defined brand attachment as “the strength of the cognitive and emotional bond connecting the brand with the self”.

H1 – The higher youth perceive that any brand fulfils his/her need for autonomy, relatedness and competence, the higher the attachment to that brand.

Brand Self Congruence:

The extent to which brand personality and self-concept are compatible is called self-congruity. It is the combination between the product’s value-expressive attributes (product-user image) and the audience’s self-concept” (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Basis the self-congruity theory consumer behaviour is influenced in a particular way which causes the purchase of a product according to the self- concept of the individual (Johar & Sirgy, 1989). Hence, behaviour is also focused toward the protection and augmentation of self-concept. There is a symbolic meaning communicated to the individuals regarding the purchase, display, and use of goods. Self-concept is enhanced by the consuming behaviour of the individual through the consumption of goods as symbol.

H2 – Brand Self Congruence will mediate the relationship between need fulfilment in young consumers and forming emotional brands

Brand Loyalty:

When the attachment is strong consumers tend to display loyalty behaviours because consumers hold salient thoughts and feelings about the brand since it is integral part of their self (Park et. al, 2006). It can be defined as the customer’s preference for a particular brand over the others in a product category. It occurs over a period of time when there is a long attachment or bond created between the product and the customer. It may result in repeat purchase. Brand loyalty is a measure of attachment that a consumer has towards a brand (Aaker, 1991). According to him brand loyalty is how likely the consumer will shift brands because of price or product features. Thus, the core of brand’s equity is integral to the customer loyalty.

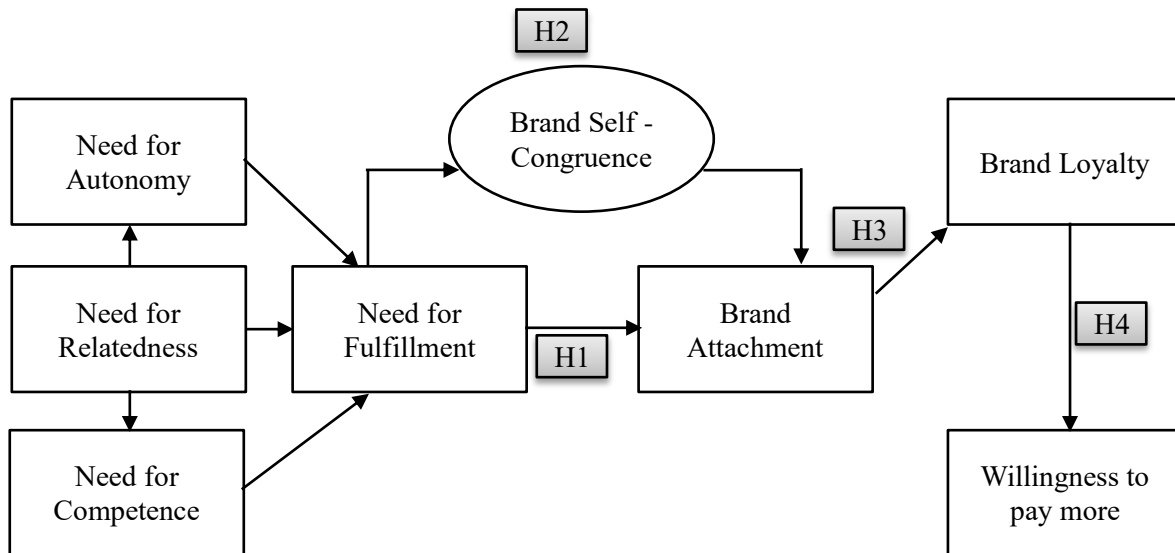
H3 – Stronger Brand attachment leads to higher brand loyalty amongst young consumers

Willingness to pay more:

It denotes the possibility of the individual to purchase the same brand in the future at a higher price. It has been observed by the previous researchers that consumers who are emotionally attached to the brand are more likely to continue purchasing the same brand even if it is priced higher (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Batra et al., 2012).

H4 – Higher Brand loyalty leads to greater willingness to pay more by the young consumers.

Proposed Conceptual Framework:



RESEARCH DESIGN:

To tackle the research question, quantitative research design was utilised, since it helps in understanding if the proposed conceptual framework holds true. Items from previous research were adapted to form a questionnaire which was administered to 51 young individuals between the age group of 18 – 35 years both male and female. Of the 51 respondents, 29 were females and 22 were male. A youthful category of respondents was considered more appropriate for this topic based on brand – consumer attachment. But this also led to the representation of certain category of brands as compared to the others. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire and the same was analysed.

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT:

Items from the previous research have been adapted for this research (Table 1). During the preparation of the questionnaire, measures of need fulfilment to fit the brand context were adapted from Thomson (2006). To assess consumers’ brand attachment, items related to emotional component from Malar et. al (2011) and Thomson et. al (2005) were adapted. Regarding consumer loyalty behaviours, the items from Shen et. al (2014) were adapted. To evaluate referral and positive word of mouth regarding the brand, items from Dick & Basu (1994) and Fornell et. al (1996) were adapted. The items regarding price premiums were adapted from Algesheimer et al (2005) were adapted. Also, demographic data regarding their age, educational qualification, gender, etc was elicited. A questionnaire was prepared based on the same and was administered to 51 young consumers between the age group 18-35 years. All questionnaires were measured on a 7 point Likert Scale focused on Strongly Disagree and Strongly Agree.

Table: 1

Variable	Tool Item	Cronbach Alpha
Need Fulfilment	1. This brand makes me feel free to be who I am	0.878
	2. I feel very close relatedness with this brand	
	3. This brand makes me feel more capable	
	4. This brand makes me feel more effective	
Brand Self Congruence	1. This brand is consistent with how I see myself	0.894
	2. This brand is a mirror image of me	
	3. This brand symbolises the person I really want to be	
	4. This brand reflects my personality	
	5. The brand has a positive impact on what others think of me.	
	6. This brand helps me present to others the way I want to be	
Brand Attachment	1. No other brand can replace this brand	0.908
	2. This brand makes me feel happy & delighted	
	3. I feel missing if I do not have this brand	
	4. This brand feels like an old friend to me	
	5. Affection, Connection & Passion characterise my feeling towards the brand	
	6. This brand evokes positive thoughts about past, present & future	
Brand Loyalty	1. I always use positive words to describe my experience of using this brand	0.885
	2. This brand is always my first consideration when buying	
	3. When I go shopping, I do not even notice competing brands	
	4. If my regular store is out of this brand, I will postpone buying or go to another brand	
	5. Next time I will definitely buy this brand or it’s successors	
	6. Even if I get any other brand for free, I will buy my brand	
Price Premiums	1. I am willing to buy the product at a higher price	0.809
	2. If there are other products in the same category at a lower price, I will still buy the same brand	

Table 1 gives the tool items along with their Cronbach Alpha values. Cronbach’s alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. The alpha coefficient of the four items in the Need Fulfilment is 0.878 suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the six items in Brand Self Congruence is 0.894

suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the six items in Brand Attachment is 0.908 suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the six items in Brand Loyalty is 0.885 suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. Lastly, the alpha coefficient for the two items in Price Premiums is 0.809 suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The value of Cronbach alpha shows that the scale is highly reliable

SAMPLE & DATA COLLECTION:

Samples were chosen from among young consumers of the age group of 18 – 35 years of age. Questionnaire was administered to 51 respondents of which 29 were females and 22 were male respondents. The samples were administered an online survey questionnaire and the samples were chosen from different locations across Mumbai area.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION:

This research has 5 major variables which include Need Fulfilment, Brand Self Congruence, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty and Price Premiums. Need Fulfilment is the independent variable and remaining are dependant variable. We have drawn a conceptual framework which identifies relationship between these variables. Brand Self Congruence is also considered to have a mediating role between need fulfilment and brand attachment. Hypotheses are drawn to check the same. Data is analysed. First, correlation is performed for the variables. The results have been enlisted in Table 2. It shows a strong positive correlation between the variables.

Table: 2

Report of Need Fulfilment, Brand Self Congruence, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty and Price Premiums Descriptive Statistics (N = 51)

Variable	Mean	SD	Need Fulfilment	Brand Self Congruence	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty
Need Fulfilment	5.6471	1.20642	-			
Brand Self Congruence	5.7582	1.04367	0.873	-		
Brand Attachment	5.6863	1.20492	0.842	0.891	-	-
Brand Loyalty	5.7876	1.11209	0.821	0.914	0.883	
Price Premiums	5.7745	1.32028	0.76	0.791	0.829	0.762

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (two tailed) for all the figures indicated in the box The above table 2 shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the variables. The correlation coefficient between Need fulfilment and Brand Self Congruence (M=5.64 and SD =1.20) for N-51 is 0.873. It shows a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The correlation coefficient between Need fulfilment and Brand Attachment (M=5.68 and SD =1.20) for N-51 is 0.842. It shows a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The correlation coefficient between Need fulfilment and Brand Loyalty (M=5.78 and SD =1.11) for N-51 is 0.821. It shows a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The correlation coefficient between Brand Loyalty and Price Premiums (M=5.77 and SD =1.32) for N-51 is 0.762. It shows a strong positive correlation between the two variables. In all the cases the p is less than 0.0001. Hence, we can reject the null hypotheses and accept the proposed hypotheses.

To study the relationship between two variables, i.e. the dependent and the independent variable simple linear regression was performed. Regression analysis is a statistical technique that attempts to explore and model the relationship between two or more variables. Table 3 shows the statistical details of the same. To confirm the mediating role of brand self-congruence between need fulfilment and brand attachment [Baron & Kenny \(1986\)](#) method was used. Baron and Kenny have given steps for conducting mediational hypotheses. A variable plays a role on the mediator variable under some specific conditions. In general, the mediation model examines the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable, the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator variable and the relationship between the dependent variable and the mediator variable.

Table: 3

Variable	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig	Adjusted R square	Std Error	F
	B	Std Error	Beta					
Brand Self Congruence	.755	0.06	0.873	12.5	0.000	0.757	0.514	156.496
Brand Attachment	0.841	0.077	0.842	10.944	0.000	0.704	0.655	119.766
Brand Loyalty	.815	0.062	0.883	13.19	0.000	0.776	0.526	174.06
Price Premiums	.905	0.110	0.762	8.248	0.000	0.573	0.862	68.035

Table giving results from the regression analysis with Need Fulfilment being the Independent Variable

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the brand attachment (Dependant variable) based on need fulfilment (independent variable). The model is significant ($F(1,49) = 119.766, p = 0.000$) with an adjusted R square of 0.704. This means that 70.4% of variance in brand attachment can be explained by need fulfilment. A simple linear regression was further calculated to predict the brand loyalty because of brand attachment. The model is significant ($F(1,49) = 174.06, p = 0.000$) with an adjusted R square of 0.776. This shows that 77.6% of variance in brand loyalty is because of brand attachment. Further a simple linear regression was performed to explain price premiums with reference to brand loyalty. The model is significant with ($F(1,49) = 68.03, p = 0.000$) with an adjusted R square of 0.573. This shows that 57.3% of the total variance in price premiums is because of brand loyalty.

To study the mediating effect of brand self-congruence on brand attachment (Baron & Kenny 1986) method was used. Initially the simple linear regression was done to check effect of need fulfilment on brand self-congruence. The result showed that the model is significant ($F(1,49) = 156.49, p = 0.000$). Also, the adjusted R square is 0.757. Next again a simple linear regression was calculated to study the effect of brand self-congruence on brand attachment. The result showed that the model is significant ($F(1,49) = 187.710, p = 0.000$). The adjusted R square is 0.789. To complete the analysis the multiple regression with two independent variables brand self-congruence and need fulfilment and one dependant variable brand attachment was carried out. The result shows that the standardised beta coefficient of the original predictor variable ie need fulfilment has reduced to 0.274 and the $p = 0.038$. The mediator variable has ($F(2,48) = 102.901, p = 0.000$). Also, the adjusted R square is high i.e. 0.803). This shows that 80.3% variance in brand attachment is because of brand self-congruence. Thus, our data analysis supports our hypotheses H1, H2, H3 & H4.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:

The objective of this study was to address whether variables like brand attachment, need fulfilment, brand loyalty, price premium, etc. add value which has a great managerial implication. This study contributes to brand – consumer-based relationship in many important ways. It has found evidence to the fact that need fulfilment creates brand attachment which in the long run creates an opportunity to charge higher prices or willingness by the consumers to pay more. This results in greater profitability for the organisation. Also, by suggesting that brand self-congruence acts as an internalising mechanism in brand attachment process it contributes to the brand relationship literature. Finding of these mechanisms contributes in an important way over the previous research. The literature related to brands and brand communities has been supported by these findings based on a solid research framework.

The present-day theories of branding identify with emotional attachment as a critical factor in forming brand–consumer relationships. Researchers studying the concept of self-determination have identified emotional attachment to a brand is driven by satisfying consumers’ basic psychological need. The present study further improves upon these studies by maintaining that brand self-congruence mediates emotional attachment through fulfilling consumer needs. Brand self-congruence acts as an internalization process (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Consumers can transform their different motivations for brand consumption into inner values through the brand self-internalization mechanism. Consumers feel one with the brand and integrate it with their self-concept and

fully accept it as their own when this internalization process functions well (Deci and Ryan, 2000). The outcomes offer understanding of the attachment building process within the branding paradigm and identify that the internalization mechanism mediates the conversion of need fulfilment into emotional attachment for the brand. Also, the understanding that self-congruence wields a dominant effect on emotional attachment and mediates the brand consumer relationship. This paves way for the efforts to fulfill consumer's inner needs. The present study also lays impetus on the effect of brand attachment on brand loyalty. Since, brand loyalty extends beyond the products to the brands, it creates a consumer lifetime value for the organisation. This lifetime value transcends all other bonds to earn larger profits for the organisation in the long run.

Thus, overall, the result tries to identify the most important variables from both the brand and the consumer point of view. If the brand tries to internalise with consumer, it is ideal since it is beneficial because of creation of brand loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

The current research findings maintain that brand managers and researchers should adjust their efforts to consider the role of the internalization mechanism in the relational exchange process that helps form brand attachment. Brand managers can now incorporate consumers' actual selves into branding considerations. Managers should emphasize aspirational branding tactics to target consumers' ideal images and desired selves.

This study is aimed at understanding the drivers of emotional brand attachment and thereby the overall profitability of the organisation because of the willingness of the consumers to pay more. Brand attachment has a positive impact on customer loyalty. Various constructs that give rise to customer engagement and thereby brand loyalty have been identified by this research. Indian context is taken into consideration when discussing the brands. The fact that more and more brands today are engaging themselves with the customers at the emotional level is supported by this study and clearly elicits that brand attachment at an emotional level gives rise to engagement which creates a sustainable value proposition for the future of the brand. The study proposes that when consumers are attached to the brand, they will have great willingness to pay more. They go to any extent to maintain the proximity with the brand. Further research can be conducted regarding the obstacles in the process of customer engagement and identify its implications on overall brand image and brand loyalty. Also, this research is based in urban settings in Indian scenario. It can also be extended to rural context as well as customer engagement for international brands in Indian settings. Both qualitative and quantitative studies can be utilised to study the same.

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