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## **Analyzing the Relationship between Advertising and Sales Promotion with Brand Equity**

**Haim Hilman**

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

**Jalal R. M. Hanaysha**

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

**Noor Hasmini Abd. Ghani**

Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

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## **Abstract**

In today's competitive business environment, customers are considered to be the source of brand success. Customers have numerous choices to form among alternative products, and they apply a high level of effect in the market with regard to several aspects such as quality, product size, services, and price. Hence, it is very important for manufacturers to meet customers' needs in order to stay competitive. Advertising and sales promotion are considered as the main tools of marketing communication which is influential in attracting the attention of the customer and building brand equity. Advertising and sales promotions are highly effective in affecting consumer purchase decisions of a particular brand. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the link between advertising and sales promotion with brand equity. It reviews the past studies on the above-mentioned variables and provides some clarification to the nature of relationship existing between them.

Keywords: Advertising, brand equity, sales promotion

## **Introduction**

In increasingly competitive markets, companies recognize that they have to monitor, improve and strengthen their brands regularly in order to communicate consumer value for a long period of time (Yang, 2010). Nowadays, high equity brands play a vital role in the formation of marketing strategy, and are viewed as the main sources of differentiation that enhance firms' competitiveness (Harun, Kassim, Igau, Tahajuddin, & Al-Swidi, 2010). In this concern, the need for strategic brand management is of significant importance (Keller, 2008). Consumers assess a brand according to their past experience with regard to its ability to meet and fulfil their needs and whether it delivers products and services beyond their expectations (Aaker, 1996; Siddiqi, 2011).

Certainly, brands that can effectively manage to position themselves successfully in consumers' minds can enjoy multiple advantages. The most important advantage is the creation of brand equity. In particular, brand equity measures the ability of a brand to attract customers and maintain them profitably and expressively in financial terms (Haefner, DeliGray,

& Rosenbloom, 2011). The increasing interests in branding nowadays while taking into consideration the high competition in markets, it has become very important to understand how brand equity can be established and enhanced. Previously, it was demonstrated that the creation of brand equity is the responsibility of the whole firm (Aaker, 1991; Schreuer, 1998), and thus strategic brand management plays a vital role in the creation of brand equity (Keller, 2008).

Previous research demonstrated that advertising and sales promotions are they factors that influence the creation of brand equity (Yoo et al., 2000; Buil et al., 2011). However, despite the importance of these variables, the individual contributions of advertising and sales promotions to brand equity still unclear and some scholars suggested the need to additional explanation of the effect of these variables (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Chu and Keh, 2006). Hence, this paper aims to analyze the past literature on advertising and sales promotion and their relationships with brand equity. The outcomes of this paper will provide some guidelines and suggestion for future researchers as well as business practitioners. In the next sections, a discussion on these variables with brand equity is provided.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Brand Equity***

Brand equity is one of the principal concepts in the field of brand management and it has obtained significant attention in previous researches wit particular to different contexts (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009). Certainly, the basic foundation of brand equity is largely associated with the firm's success, because when it is created, more profits and fewer expenses will be engendered (Myers, 2003; Keller, 2003). In the last few years, brand equity has gained large attention from several scholars demonstrating that it plays a vital strategic role in developing competitive advantage throughout strategic management of the brand (Moradi & Zarei, 2011).

A number of definitions were suggested to brand equity in the existing literature. Brand equity was initially defined by Farquhar (1989), as “the ‘added value’ with which a given brand endows a product” (p. 24). Brand equity was also defined as “the enhancement in the perceived utility and desirability a brand name confers on a product” (Lassar et al., 1995, p. 13). Brands that have high equity can establish their competitive advantage, charge a price premium on their products; and exploit customer demand (Bendixen, Bukasa, & Abratt, 2003).

Furthermore, Aaker (1991) stated that brand equity is a multidimensional construct which contains several dimensions namely brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other proprietary assets. On the other hand, Keller (1993) viewed brand equity as a concept that includes brand image and brand association. Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) revealed that brand equity can be establishing by reinforcing those dimensions. All of the said brand equity dimensions build up the credibility and value of brands and consequently encourage the customers to establish favourable attitude towards strong brands during the process of decision making. However, previous researches have used different set of dimensions for measuring this variable with particular to different contexts. The majority of these studied followed the pattern of Aaker (1991) to measure brand equity because they comprehensively measure this variable.

### ***Advertising***

Advertising is one of the main marketing communication tools that affect consumer tastes and preferences and creates the differentiation of products (Shah & Akbar, 2008). Advertising refers to “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor” (Kotler et al., 2005, p.761). Business practitioners as well as academics (Aaker 1991, Keller, 1993) verified that advertising has a considerable role in the formation of powerful brands. Ha (2011) suggested that advertising can strongly influence the development of brand awareness, and can affect consumer decisions during the purchase of products and services. Moreover, Kirmani (1990) supported this view that

advertising has a strong effect on improving brand performance, at the same time it encourages practical experience of a particular brand, and plays a critical role in the creation of brand equity (Buil, de Chernatony & Martínez, 2011).

As mentioned by Hilman (2009), effective business plan demands firms to look for appropriate strategies that meet up the needs of customers. Advertising is one the marketing communication strategies that can be used to inspire or persuade customers to purchase a certain product or service (Buil et al., 2011). Generally, the key function of advertising is to influence the behaviour of customers according to a particular offering (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003). Advertising messages are normally paid for communicating a brand by the firm and can visualized through various traditional media, such as mass media including outdoor advertising, direct mail, radio advertisements, or newspaper; and new media for example, blogs, text messages, and websites (Iranzadeh, Norouzi, & Heravi, 2012). Sedaghat, Sedaghat, and Moakher (2012) indicated t several advertising media that can be used to communicate the brand, such as magazines, television (satellite, terrestrial, local, and national) cinema, journals, outdoor advertising (bus sides and posters,), newspapers (free, local, trade, and national). On the other hand, Chattopadhyay, Dutta, and Sivani (2010), suggest several types of advertising, such as: television advertisement, event sponsorship, print advertisement, mobile phone advertisement, and internet advertisement.

### ***Advertising and Brand Equity***

Advertising has gained significant interest in latest years assuming it as a valuable strategy for firms seeking to gain competitive advantage and exploit their brand equity (Doraszelski & Markovich, 2007; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010; Gill et al., 2007). Tilley (1999) verified that advertising plays a critical role in creating a leadership brand. Moreover, a brand that spends more on advertising to communicate its messages for customers, can develop its image, increase customer trust, and obtain new ones to purchase its products; this is because customers usually trust the product quality of the well-known brands (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Balaji, 2011).

Past research have examined the relationship between advertising and brand equity, and showed inconsistent findings. For instance, several studies revealed significant positive influence from advertising on brand equity (Sedaghat et al., 2012; Gill et al., 2007; Chen and Green, 2012; So and King, 2010; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010; Smith 2007; Sriram et al., 2007). However, other studies conducted by Buil et al. (2011) Huang and Sarigöllü, (2011), and Chen and Green (2012) indicated that advertising spending has insignificant effect on brand equity.

For instance, Gill et al. (2007) conducted a study to examine the influence of advertising on the formation of brand equity in context of Spain. This study has focused on various brands from three different product categories namely milk, olive oil, and toothpaste. Generally, the results revealed a significant positive influence of advertising on brand equity assets (brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations). The main limitation in this study lies in the small sample size which may not allow for analyzing differences between the selected product categories. Hence, it would be distrustful to generalize the findings to other contexts without additional investigation.

Likewise, Chen and Green (2012) examined the perceptions of age groups towards retailers' marketing mix strategies and their effect on customer-based brand equity. This study indicated a negative and insignificant relationship between advertising and brand equity. The result is in line with that of Buil et al. (2011) who indicated that advertising spending had an insignificant effect on brand equity dimensions: perceived quality, brand association, and brand awareness.

Hence, this review reveals that advertising is a very important variable for enhancing brand equity. Companies with higher advertising are likely to have higher equity than those which pay less emphasis to this variable. In order to make advertising more effective, it is essential to ensure the creativity and originality of advertising campaigns and develop them in a manner that can attract customers and build their confidence toward the brand. This would

enhance the image of the brand in long run and provides a basic for creating sustainable competitive advantage.

### ***Sales Promotion***

The importance of sales promotion in shaping brands has been documented in the literature. For instance, sales promotions influence the process of establishing strong brands and facilitate the creation competitive advantage; this is because sales promotions improve brand awareness for the whole product category and the promoted brands (Blattberg & Neslin, 1990). Though, in contemporary management practices, customers may think that firms develop promotional programmes in order to differentiate and modernise their brand image and enhance brand awareness (Palazón-Vidal & Delgado-Ballester, 2005).

According to past researches of Kwok and Uncles, (2005); Palazón-Vidal and DelgadoBallester, (2005), sales promotions can be valuable for customers and positively influence their behavioural decisions, because they endow them with experiential benefits that may not be engendered in the product itself. In this way, sales promotions may possibly improve customers' experiences such as fun, delight and distraction, and influence their attitude toward the brand (Palazón-Vidal & Delgado-Ballester). A part from sales promotion, product-gift fit also significantly affect consumers' evaluation particularly for high equity brands (Montaner de Chernatony & Buil, 2011).

Sales promotion can differentiate a brand from its potential rivals and also it helps brand managers to communicate distinctive brand attributes, leading to improved brand equity (Mela, Gupta, & Jedidi, 1998; Chu & Keh, 2006). Sales promotions are well-known for their strong capability to attain business objectives and develop brand image or strengthen brand awareness (Chattopadhyay et al., 2010). They add stimulation and hence value to the brands (Aaker, 1991).

### ***Sales Promotion and Brand Equity***

Brand equity has been shown to be the central issue in research by which the focus has been cantered on the examination of its antecedents and consequences (Chattopadhyay et al., 2009). Earlier researches verified that the level of brand equity plays an important role in

determining whether or not a brand is well focused on the offering sales promotions to influence consumer behaviour positively over competitive brands from the same product category (Raju et al., 1990). Sales promotions are expected to have the ability to create strong brand equity because they influence brand image and brand association which in turn play an key role in shaping brand equity (Keller 1998; Krishnan 1996).

In reviewing the past literature on sales promotions and brand equity, it can be noticed that most of the studies revealed insignificant relationship between sales promotions and brand equity (Gil et al., 2007; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010; Hosseini and Zareebaf, 2011; Buil et al., 2011). Moreover, Valette-Florence et al. (2011); Yoo et al. (2000) demonstrated that sales promotions have significant but negative effect on building brand equity. They added that sales promotions minimize brand equity even though they have a short-term benefit for potential consumer (Villarejo-Ramos et al., 2005. Hosseini and Zareebaf (2011) investigated the influence of sales promotions on brand equity in context of banking industry in Iran. This study found insignificant relationship between sales promotion and brand equity dimensions namely brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness). Similarly, Chattopadhyay et al., (2010) studied the effect of sales promotion for different media vehicles on building brand equity in context of Indian passenger car market. Generally, the results revealed that sales promotion has insignificant relationship with two dimensions of brand equity namely perceived quality and brand awareness. However, certain studies indicated that sales promotions have significant positive effects on brand equity (Sriram et al., 2007; So and King, 2010; Chen and Green, 2012). For example, So and King, (2010) conducted a study in Australia to examine the impact of sales promotions and advertising on brand equity, and their study results demonstrated that sales promotion has a significant positive effect on brand equity.

The above discussion on sales promotion and brand equity demonstrates that high emphasis on sales promotion negatively influence brand equity. The majority of previous studies support this argument by indicating that customers think of sales promotions as they usually provided by brands having low quality products, and the purpose is just to get out of that

products. In particular, this paper suggests that in the future, other researches should be conducted to clearly establish the actual relationship between sales promotions and brand equity with regard to different cultures and country contexts.

## **Conclusion and Future Research Directions**

In highly competitive global markets, it has become necessary for brands to sustain their positions and build up their competitive advantages through enhanced brand equity. In particular, creating brand equity has recently become a strategic initiative for firms, mainly because brand value is usually evaluated according to the positive image created in consumers' mind and their repeat purchases. Two marketing communication tools include advertising and sales promotions have received significant attention over the last years as important elements in influencing brand equity. One of the main objectives of advertising and sales promotion is to improve the short-term sales of a product or service and influence consumer behaviour. However, Long-term effects are under an academic debate and diverse research shows conflicting results.

This paper has discussed past studies that examined the influence of advertising and sales promotions on building brand equity. In general, the majority of the scholars have declared that advertising has significant positive impact on brand equity development. The more advertising a brand spends, the higher brand equity will be. However, investments in this variable are not sufficient to influence the image of a brand. In this concern, firms should pay high attention to the design of creative advertising campaigns and ensuring their originality. Moreover, this paper concludes that a review of the past literature demonstrated that sales promotions are insignificant in developing brand equity. They have further stated that sales promotion negatively affect brand equity, and customers usually think of sales promotions as an indicator of low quality products.

This paper opens an opportunity for some future research directions. For example, future studies can focus on examining the effect of advertising and sales promotions on brand equity

with particular to different contexts and make a comparison between different product categories. In addition, the theme of this research can also be conducted by different research methods. A mixture of both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be used to depict a direct impact on the consumers purchasing behavior. Future research also can conduct a cross-case analysis whereby the implementation of advertising and sales promotion used can be compared between various companies in the same consumer market. Finally, this paper contributes to better understanding of the role of advertising and sales promotion in developing brand equity, and offers some insights into how business managers can manage the significance of these assets.

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