

Brand experience and brand implications in a multi-channel setting

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Branding scholars have been deeply engaged in the identification of different interactions between brand and consumer. Additionally with the evolution of the internet, increasing research has focused on which brand relationships translate to the on-line environment. The current research advances the examination of these relationship constructs in particular brand experience, brand identification, brand community, and behavioral loyalty through the simultaneous examination of the relationships in the off and on-line channels. To add clarity, the context of the study utilizes single-brand retailers to explore relationship dynamics, providing less brand noise than a multi-brand retailer. Our results demonstrate the effect of channel as a moderator among these brand and consumer relationships providing valuable insight into brand management in multi-channel settings. Additionally the benefits from the single-brand retailer setting are highlighted.

Keywords: brand experience; single-brand retailers; multi-channel; brand identity; brand community

Introduction

Branding scholars have developed a rich body of literature, especially over the past two decades, exploring the impact of brand with consumers. Examples include brand personality (Aaker 1997), love (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006), attachment (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005), community (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009), experience (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009), and service (Grace and O’Cass 2005; Brodie, Whittome, and Brush 2009; Thorbjornsen and Supphellen 2011), among others. The bulk of this literature is focused on the traditional marketing channels, including brick-and-mortar retail stores. Recently more attention has been given to brand concepts and the on-line channel, such as brand image (Carlson and O’Cass 2010; O’Cass and Grace 2008; Kwon and Lennon 2009b, 2009a). However, what is lacking in the literature is an understanding of the relationships between on-line and brick and mortar stores (which we refer to as off-line from here on) branding constructs. In terms of multi-channel retailers (i.e., those with off-line as well as on-line stores), consumers expect brand attributes in the off-line environment to extend to the on-line environment (Kwon and Lennon 2009a; Mitra and Fay 2010) and success depends on this consistency (Yoo 2011; Berman and Thelen 2004).

Since Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) operationalized brand experience, there has been widespread interest in the construct from marketing scholars (e.g., their

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