

Review Article

Brand Authenticity Perspective: Strategic Approaches for Building Loyalty

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Abstract: This article examines the loyalty derived from the use of a brand by customers, spanning from the continuous use and utilization of authentic brands on account of the associated value derived from a brand use. The willingness to purchase or recommend a brand is a function continuity, credibility, integrity and symbolism backed by cognitive, affective, conative and behavioral loyalty dimensions. The study concludes that brand authenticity possesses significant direct effect on brand loyalty. Summarily, the need for a brand to stand out from competition, such brand should be capable of offering more reliable promises and stay loyal to them.

Keywords: Brand Authenticity, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Behavior, Brand Credibility, Relationship Marketing.

Introduction

The increased quantity of researches on brand authenticity spanning the early 2000s draws its instinctive linings from the cultural, clientele as well as marketing perspective (Campagna et al., 2023). Further to this, the attention on authenticity is tightly associated with the rise in popularity web-online review as well as the social media platforms like Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat as well as, TikTok. With associated inventions, clients could in real time initiate communication with available brands. The very nature of these platforms makes possible, quick review, distribution as well as crowd-source their brand interactions with friends and other counterparts, potentially inducing aspects of brand identity and future product inaugurations (Appel et al., 2020), thereby bringing out customer brand loyalty.

Resultantly, clients could quickly examine brands as well as reviews on such brands (Campagna et al., 2023). The related in-depth connectivity these platforms introduced caught the eyes of administrator and companies, who swiftly had access to a lot of client

comments as well as data to influence. This paved the way for marketer to quickly analyze together with review customer feedback and extract significant, resurfacing themes to assist in driving more effective marketing crusades. Hence, one of such brands-associated communication crusades that came up was brand authenticity (Schmidt & Iyer, 2015).

Brand authenticity as identified by marketing researchers as a cornerstone is significantly important for consumer brand loyalty (Holt, 1998; Audrezet et al., 2020). Brand authenticity has assisted brands to grow above the huge uncertainty, unease and noise during the pandemic in forging powerful, emotional loyalty with clients, thereby encouraging brand loyalty (Hatvey, 2020). Authenticity is increasingly identified as an attracting brand attribute irrespective of the truth that it necessitates cogent speculations therein the promotion of brand values as well as steady brand conduct over time (Morhart et al., 2015). It is posited that issues of authenticity remain to be indistinguishably associated to the market in several ways. Hence, there exists a gap for a clear need for future research with emphasis on the associated socio-political as well as cultural processes through which consumption experiences are authenticated (Sodergren, 2021). In line with Brown et al., (2003), “the search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing”.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The researcher emphasizes the explanations of brand authenticity, brand loyalty and the associated dimensions of each variable.

1.2.1 Brand Authenticity (BA)

Brand authenticity is taking the stance of a huge marketing debate for firms, serenaded in a world characterized where a thousand products could assess a similar reach (El-Naghi et al., 2023), capable of giving more appeal, wealth or singularity to a product or a firm. With regards to the foregoing, for a firm, authenticity requires to be reached, and target to avail worth to a product, irrespective of whether globalization acts against that. It is premised that markets must constantly work on their brand and product so as to get a hold of the nature of authenticity in their branded products or services together with the related drivers and effects.

Brand authenticity is pivotal in enhancing brand trust which is a function of loyalty, leveraging both iconic as well as existential features (Srivastava et al., 2020; Huang & Guo, 2021). Accordingly, brand authenticity is known to attract a consistent attention of investigation in consumer behavior research as well as management practices (Carsana & Jolibert, 2018).

Several investigations allude that brand authenticity is a multidimensional construct devoid of a unified definition (Beverland et al., 2010; Charmley et al., 2013). Chhabra & Kim (2018) explain authenticity as “the value attached to the concept of objectivity, meaning true and original.” Further to this, Fritz et al., (2017) posited that brand authenticity in the marketing field explains “the consistency of brand behavior that reflects brand values and norms and is faithful to itself without damaging the essence of essential character of the brand.”

BA is thus described as the level of authenticity of an object (the brand), where brand object refers to “the entity that is the target of brand identification” (Wymer, 2013). It is also the extent to which a brand is perceived to be the ideal exemplar of its type (Wymer & Akbar, 2017). Relatedly, Morhart et al., (2015) defined BA as “the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and loyal toward itself (continuity), true to her customers (credibility), motivated by caring and responsibility (integrity), and able to support consumers in being true to themselves (symbolism).”

1.2.1.2 Dimensions of Brand Authenticity

BA is founded upon several dimensions. Morhart et al., (2015) observe authenticity as a client-associated construct, which in its importance, is founded on identity-related consumption, supported by four BA dimensions known as continuity, credibility, integrity as well as symbolism, which is adopted in this study.

- A. **Continuity:** this is defined as “core brand attributes remaining stable over a longer period” (Morhart et al., 2015). Hence, the client judges’ continuity to be high if the present brand promise reflects past brand behavior. It explains “a brand’s stability, endurance and consistency” (Bruhn et al., 2012). Schallehn et al (2014) refer to continuity as the stability of a brand’s core features. To this, Beverland (2006) associated continuity dimension to the concept of pedigree.
- B. **Credibility:** authentic brands are linked with an increased level of credibility by consumer with an associated willingness and capability to deliver on their promises, thereby ushering loyalty. Credibility is thus explained as the ability to believe a firm’s intentions at a particular time as well as poised to possess two fundamental components of trustworthiness and expertise. Brand credibility is described as the believability of the product information resident in a brand, which necessitates that customers perceive that the brand has the ability (expertise) and willingness (trustworthiness) to regularly deliver what as been promised. The expertise as well as the trustworthiness of a brand is a reflection of the total impacts of related past and present marketing strategies and activities (Swait & Erden, 2004).
- C. **Integrity:** The perception of Authenticity additionally comprises a sense of integrity predicated on virtue reflected in the brand’s intentions and in the values it communicates. The integrity dimension portrays “the moral purity and responsibility of the brand (i.e., its adherence to good values and sincere care concerning the consumer)” (Morhart et al., 2015). This dimension matches the commercial disinterestedness of authentic brands as enshrined by Holt (2002) and the virtuousness explained by Beverland & Farrelly (2010). Brands are intricately required to be devoid of instrumental economic agenda and be disseminated by individuals who are intrinsically inspired by deeply possessed values to be authentic (Holt, 2002). Hence, virtuousness is a function of staying true to one’s morals (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010).
- D. **Symbolism:** symbolism is conceptualized as “a brand’s potential to serve as a resource for identity construction by providing self-referential cues representing values, roles and relationships” (Morhart et al., 2015). Symbolism is known to

capture the symbolic quality of the brand that consumers are able to utilize in defining who they are or who they are not.

1.2.2 Brand Loyalty (BL)

BL is defined as the willingness of consumers to purchase as well as recommend a brand (Sun et al., 2024). BL is basically a customer's desire to purchase a distinct brand in a product category (Singh, 2021). It takes place when customers believe that the brand makes available the requisite product attributes, images or extent of quality at the right price. This impression reserves the ability to convert such purchase into repeat purchase culminating into loyalty. Hence, brand loyalty is associated to a customer's choice and connection to a brand. Accordingly, Singh (2021) indicates the possibility of customer to switch brands in the event that the brand modifies her product, captured in pricing or product features. Hence, BL is associated to the proportion of purchase channeled to the most purchased brand, number of several brand bought over the past two years, amounts of times the new favorite brand was purchased of the last five purchases, three purchases owing from the five purchases and the actual number of successive purchases of favorite brand owing from the last five purchases (Back & Parks, 2003).

1.2.2.1 Dimensions in Brand Loyalty

The heightened contemporary attention associated with brand loyalty investigation appears to have echoed the emergence of the relationship marketing perspective (Morais et al., 2005), which places importance of establishing associations linking customers and businesses (Gronroos, 1994; Sheth & Parvatlyar, 1995). The construct of loyalty has been a fundamental research topic among scholars (Rundle-Thiele, 2005). Until contemporarily, the conceptualization of loyalty has been adopted from three major viewpoints (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Morais, 2000; Rundle-Thiele, 2005), with suggestion of loyalty to refer to customer's behavioral consistency, attitudinal predisposition aimed at a brand or both. This paper adopts the four-dimensional construct put together by Harris & Goode, (2004); McMullan & Gilmore, (2003) & Oliver (1999) to include: cognitive, affective, conative and behavioral components.

- A. **Cognitive Loyalty:** this is the existence of beliefs that (typically) a brand is more preferable to others (Harris & Goode, 2004).
- B. **Affective Loyalty:** here, the customer's favorable attitude or liking channeled at the service brand/provider founded on utility usage (Harris & Goode, 2004).
- C. **Conative Loyalty:** this describes the behavioral intention to repurchase the service brand attributed by an engraved brand-specific commitment (Harris & Goode, 2004).
- D. **Behavioral Loyalty:** this is the frequency of repeat or relative volume of the purchase of the same brand (Tellis, 1988).

Morhart et al., (2015) discovered that, in research on customer brands and customer authenticity, the effect on customer brand attachment reserves the potential to considerable vary spanning different scenarios. Additionally, brand authenticity which comprises

corporate authenticity, product authenticity as well as sales source authenticity can affect customers significantly in relation to brand attachment together with brand loyalty (Arya et al., 2019).

1.3 Hypotheses Formulation

The relationships existing between the study variable are classified as reflected in the figure below.

1.3.1 The Relationship between BA and BL

Consumers are naturally known to seek for authenticity in acts of consumption (Arnold & Price, 2000; Holt, 2002; Boyle, 2004; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010) and possibly react positively to brands that they distinguish as authentic (Rose & Wood, 2005). Brands that are authentic make available apt meaning together with identity-associated benefits that bring about good customer responses. Hence, consumers are more possibly to make a public commitment to an authentic brand by engaging in good repeat purchases, additional to such a seclusively possessed response to the brand (Brand loyalty) (Morhart et al., 2015).

After the identification of a particular brand by a customer, a psychological association is developed with the brand and therefore elicit such display of preference towards it (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2008). Customers are known to possess a positive connection to a brand and engage in three levels of brand loyalty behaviors: brand purchase intention (Gladden & Funk, 2002), positive brand referral and oppositional brand referral (Underwood et al., 2001).

In Ajzen & Fishbein (1977) theory of reasoned action, it was proposed that the beliefs of individuals concerning an object influences his/her attitudes channeled towards the object, and that behavioral intention also influences the behavior of the individual. “A person’s belief as a whole, serves as the informational foundation that ultimately defines his attitudes, intents and acts” (Feldman & Lynch, 1988).

It is based on the foregoing that this research hypothesizes that brand authenticity (continuity, credibility, integrity and symbolism) has a significant direct effect on brand loyalty. This hypothesis raises the following sub-hypotheses:

H_{1.1}: Continuity has a significant direct effect on cognitive loyalty.

H_{1.2}: Credibility has a significant direct effect on cognitive loyalty

H_{1.3}: Integrity has a significant direct effect on cognitive loyalty

H_{1.4}: Symbolism has a significant direct effect on affective loyalty

H_{1.5}: Continuity has a significant direct effect on conative loyalty

H_{1.6}: Credibility has a significant direct effect on cognitive loyalty

H_{1.7}: Integrity has a significant direct effect on cognitive loyalty

H_{1.8}: Symbolism has a significant direct effect on affective loyalty

H_{1.9}: continuity has a significant direct effect on behavioral loyalty

- H_{1,10}: *Credibility has a significant direct effect on affective loyalty*
- H_{1,11}: *Integrity has a significant direct effect on behavioral loyalty*
- H_{1,12}: *Symbolism has a significant direct effect on affective loyalty*
- H_{1,13}: *Credibility has a significant direct effect on behavioral loyalty*

This is better captured in the conceptual framework below:

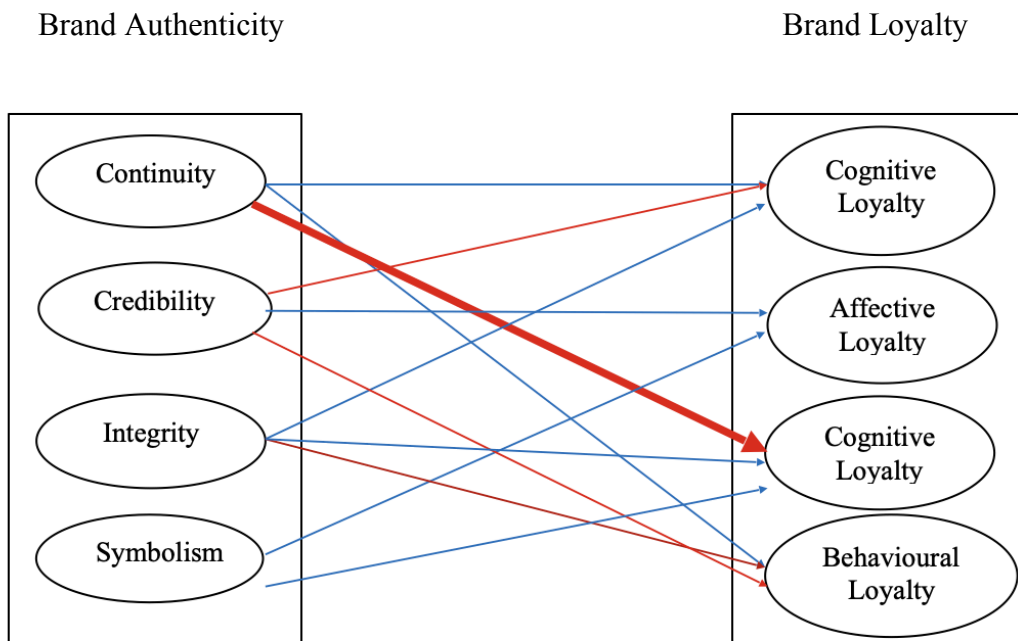


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: (Researcher, 2026, based on literature review)

1.4 Research Methods

The method utilized in this research is review of literature

1.5 Discussion and Conclusion

Findings from the review of literature postulates that brand authenticity possess a significant positive effect on brand loyalty. Findings from Al-Meshal et al., (2020) showed that brand authenticity has a positive effect on purchase intention which is a connection to cognitive loyalty.

It can be summarized that brands that are known to stand out from competitors can offer more reliable promises and stay faithful (loyalty) to them and at the same time, those perceived as authentic by consumers considerably form the consumers purchasing preferences.

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