

The Impact of Dimensions of Brand Association on Customers Satisfaction: an Empirical Study of the Opinions of Customers' Samples on Zain Iraq's Mobile Cell Phone Company

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Abstract

The present study aims to know the natural relation between the brand association and Customer Satisfaction on Zain Iraq's Mobile Cell Phone Company. The study was based on data which gathered from 90 respondents from a user of the Services, Company by using a questionnaire. The study used random sampling technique and statistical tool (SPSS), to know the result of this research the correlation and Regression analysis are used. This study contributes to present theories by adding value to the relationships that contribute to customer satisfaction and It provides results which may be useful to managers in business organizations. The research result indicates that the brand association's impact on the customer satisfaction.

Keywords: brand association; customer satisfaction.

1. Introduction

It is clear that customers are important stakeholders and their satisfaction is taking a great attention to organizations and researchers alike. In new business process, customer satisfaction has important attitude in participant objectives and managers know they're successful related to the larger objectives and the organizations seeking to build a strong brand for the product. This is to be clearly distinguished, in this way; the organizations will help the consumers in the choosing process and to meet their desires.

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As a result, the loyalty of the consumers will be gained, which is one of the strategic objectives of the organizations.

Keller has mentioned that brand association includes top-of-mind, brand knowledge, brand dominance, and brand opinion [1]. Brand knowledge is the complete set of brand associations related to the brand. The researchers studied Customer satisfaction in different directions, from measurement to its relationships with other business aspects. The researchers studied Customer satisfaction in different directions, from measurement to its relationships with other business aspects. To measuring customer satisfaction many possible means provide by some researchers [2,3]. At the same time, other authors like Wilson and his colleagues explain some determinants of customer satisfaction to be price, product and service quality, personal and situational factors [4]. This study, has focused on the perspective of the cognitive psychology. The researcher deals one of the dimensions, brand equity (brand association) and how it effects on customer satisfaction.

2. Objective of the study

The purpose of this study is to an understanding and to examine how brand association contributes to achieving an increase in Customer Satisfaction or is there any impact of brand association on Customer Satisfaction. Does the Customer Satisfaction increase due to a selection of new services and new products by Zain Iraq's Mobile Cell Phone Company? The aims of this study are to know the impact of brand association on the Customer Satisfaction.

3. Research question

The research questions as follows:

- Is there a significant relationship between Brand Association and customer satisfaction?
- Is there an impact of brand association on customer satisfaction?

To answer this above question, in this study which aims at contributing to the study of the relationship between the variables and whereby it will be able to confirm if actual customer satisfaction is related with brand association.

4. Theoretical Background

4.1. Brand Association

The Brand association representing a foundation for customer purchasing decision about the brand purchase and the customer has a lot of things about knowledge the brand [5]. Furthermore, the relationship between the brand association and brand remembered by the customer was very important. In this method customer again buy and use the brand [6].

The individuals who are in charge of creating a brand image inside the customer minds are concerning to find the different points, these are the benefits that distinguish the brand form the other ones[7] . Moreover, Aaker

mentions that brand associations must follow the brand awareness [8]. Because a consumer must first be aware of the brand so he can develop a set of associations[8] (Washburn and Plank 2002). Keller's definition of brand image as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory [1].

Moreover, associations of Product contain functional and non-functional attributes, associations [9]. Function attributes are the tangible features of a product [1]. While assessing a brand, customer link the performance of the attributes of functionality of the brand [10, 11]. If a brand does not perform the functions for which it is designed, the brand will have a low level of brand equity. Non-functional attributes include symbolic attributes[12,1] which are the intangible features which meet consumers' needs for social approval, expression of personal[1,10]. Customers linked social image of a brand, differentiation, trustworthiness, perceived value and country of origin to a brand.

On another side, Organisational associations include company ability associations, which related to the expertise of company in producing and delivering its outputs and company social responsibility associations, which include activities of the company with respect the perceived societal obligations[9]. And regarding with Company social responsibility must be mentioned as another concept that affects the development of brands, for the time being, especially company brands as the public wants to know what, where, and how much brands are giving back to society. Both branding and company social responsibility have become very important now after that the companies have recognised how these strategies can add value of the company[13].

The Companies invest much of resources so as to build and maintain their brands. Companies must therefore manage by metrics and balance short and long-term among Point of views and performance [14]. As well, most of the conceptualization of brand equity is an agree with upon the phenomena which include the value of the consumer to a product, also the association and the realization of a brand name [15]. The brand equity will strengthen and increase its value when the customers have a positive perception.

High perceived quality happens When customer recognized one brand of the others which cause influence on their buying, this means the high perceived quality has an effect on customers chosen and then will because of brand quality [16]. On the other hand, the part is more accepted of brand equity is a brand association [17]. Which represent the foundation for brand loyalty and for purchase decision [12]. It is the consumers' perception of the superiority of a product carrying that brand name compared with other brands.

Brand equity indicates to this perception rather than any objective indicators [11]. Also, the strength of a brand is laying in what the consumer has felt, seen, heard, and learned about the brand as the result of the customers' experiences which they have all the time about the brand [18]. As well the brand has an effective role in the prescribed marketing policy that the organization follows whether to promote itself or its services. It contributes to the impact on the customer's motivation for purchasing.

The organization will enhance the brand through making marketing programs and promotional and advertising campaigns [19]. Davis and his colleagues has mentioned that there are two types of the perceptual image [20]:

- Positive: when the quality of the product or the service lived up to the consumer expectations. It reaches a high level of satisfaction and pleasure
- Negative: when the quality of the product or the service does not live up to the consumer expectations nor satisfy the consumer.

Aaker has indicated that the brand image may be more accepting of the brand equity [21]. Actually, everything in the customer's mind is linked to the memory of the customers for the brand. The brand association includes the features of the product, the customer benefits, the services and lifestyles, the competitors and the countries.

When the associations help the customers, and feedback the information, this will principle of extinguish the brand, make a reason the purchaser will more easily and creating positive feelings. The customers can organize and retrieve the information through the associations; this will enable them to take purchasing decisions [12,17].

Since the intensive competition, the markers have to link the brand to the mind customer, to places, things, or other brands as a mean of building and backing the target brand, since it is difficult to enhance this knowledge through marketing programs [22]. The customer behavior studies regard the brand image as key success of the product since the brand image can make the customers recognize the quality of the product and minimize the purchase risks.

The brand image is an important marketing strategy element. In addition, the customers would judge the quality of the product throughout the brand image, in its turn, it may affect the purchasing process [23]. There are factors that might affect the image of the brand [24]. They are as follows:

- The determinants that come from internal brand product identity which affected by the management of the brand.
- Personal determinants: such as the motivations and experiences of the consumers who aware about the brand.
- External determinants: they affect the brand form the outside.

So, they could not be directly affected by the brand administration, such as the industry image. Thus, it is clear that when the customers believe in a certain product that has a distinguishing quality, they will insist to demand such a product.

Whether the customer impression is positive or negative, the marketing strategy must be directed to either to strengthen the positive impression or to change the negative impression of the brand. The emerging companies that have the capacity, efficiency has found the successful promotion, sales for the purpose of achieving the best results depends on the planning of the policy for distinguishing in general and policy for the branding in particular.

4.2. Customer Satisfaction

The customers usually face a wide range of product and services from market offering that might satisfy a given need. But how do they choose among these many offering? expectations of a customer about the satisfaction that

various offerings will deliver and buy accordingly. Therefore marketers have to be careful to set the right level of this customers expectations.

The customers are those who buying the products and services provided by the companies. In other words, a stockholder of an organization is a customer who payment in return for the offer provided to him by the organization with the aim of achieving need and satisfaction to the customer [25]. Oliver mentions about satisfaction that it is “the summary, psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with prior feelings about the consumer experience” [26].

Satisfaction describes the customers, which contented with the product or services which the organization was provided to him. The Satisfaction can also be feelings of the person of pleasure or anticlimax that results from comparing the performance of the product with customer's expectations [27].

Levy in his studies, mentioned three ways of measuring customer satisfaction [2].

- A survey where customer feedback can be transformed into measurable quantitative data.
- Focus group or informal where discussions orchestrated by a trained moderator reveal what customers think.
- Informal measures like reading blocs, talking directly to customers.

The Customers have at all times aimed to get a higher level of satisfaction with the products or services that they purchase. Winning in today's marketplace not requires the need to build the product only, but need to build customer relationship; that means delivering superior value to the customer compare with competitors [28].

Because satisfaction of the customer is also based on the level of service quality supply by the service supplier [29] and service quality acts represent as a determinant of satisfaction of customers [4]. Some authors addressed in their researches customer satisfaction and service quality [30]. Measured the quality of service in China's mobile phone market and focus on the nature of the dynamic relationship between customer value, service quality, customer satisfaction and their influence on future behaviors of customer [29].

Most organizations which aim at improving the quality of their products or services, and marketing processes adopt quality management programs. Because it is proven that “quality has a direct impact on product performance, and thus on customer satisfaction” [28]. The purpose for this is to satisfy the customers. But, are the customers satisfied because of the quality of products or service? I.e. are the companies providing the true qualities perceived by the customers?

5. Hypothesis and study model

Depending on the objectives The study model was developed (Figer 1) which refers to the variables of the study, which is the independent variable (Brand Association) and dependent variable (Customer Satisfaction) and was formulated the following hypotheses:

H1. There is a correlation between brand association and customer satisfaction.

H1-1. There is a correlation between function service Attributes and customer satisfaction.

H1-2. There is a correlation between Nonfunction service Attributes and customer satisfaction.

H1-3. There is a correlation between company ability and customer satisfaction.

H1- 4. There is a correlation between company social responsibility and customer satisfaction.

- H2-There is an impact of brand association on Customer satisfaction.

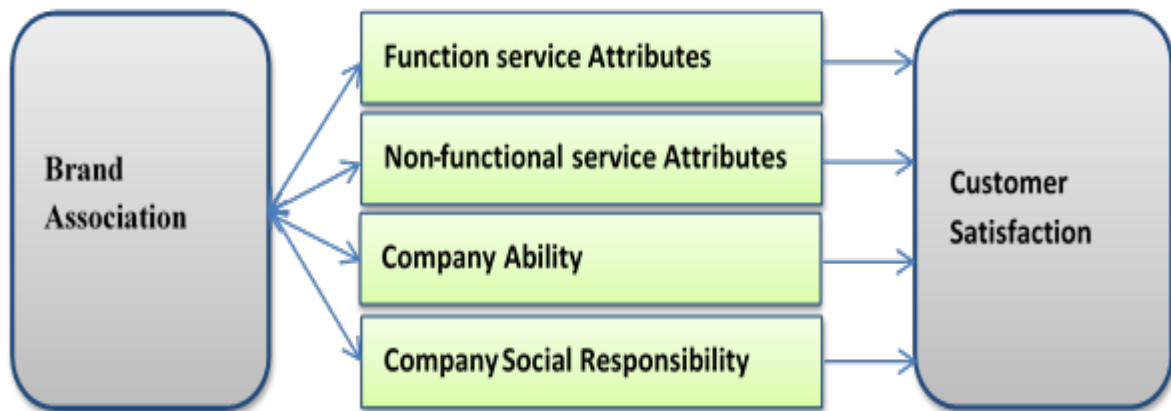


Figure 1: Model of Study

6. Research methodology

This study used a questionnaire to collect information on the brand association and customer satisfaction of the customers who deal with products and services for Zain Iraq's Mobile Cell Phone Company.

7. Data analysis and results

The research is depending on the data that collected through questionnaire form. In this questionnaire was used (Likert) Scale with choices of (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree).

8. Sample of research

The samples were taken from a user of the Services, Company. The questionnaire was included 95 of respondents of both sexes. The final sample was composed of 90 useable responses. The researcher was used method simple random sampling in order to ensure that equal opportunity among all respondents.

8.1. Gender analysis

Table 1: Gender distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	70	77%
Female	20	23%
Total	90	100%

Measuring the stability of the questionnaire

To determine the stability of the questionnaire, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Noting through the values set forth in the table 2 below that there is a stable and credible to the paragraphs of the questionnaire and this is what leads us to the acceptance and use of its paragraphs for the purpose of research.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha

Variables	No. Item	Cronbach- Alfa
Function service Attributes (FUN)	4	.75
Nonfunctional service Attributes (NON-FUN)	4	.80
X	16	.90
Company Ability (CA)	4	.73
Company Social Responsibility (CSR)	4	.80
Y	6	.78
Customer Satisfaction (CU.ST)	6	.91

8.2. Analysis of the study variables

Table 3 represents some of the statistics such as Mathematical mean, standard deviations, and the dimensions of the two axes.

8.3. Correlation analysis

Table 4 shows the correlation between the brand association and customer satisfaction variables. There is a strong significance correlation with the values of (0.881*, P=0.000) under level (5%) between brand association and customer satisfaction. While the correlation of sub hypotheses as follows (H1-1=0.761, H1-2= 0.670, H1-3= 0.885, H1-4 = 0.611) which refer there are significant correlation between the variables with values of (p= 0.000) under level (5%). This means that brand association is correlated as significant relationship to customer satisfaction through strategies, that are used by the company in order to satisfy the desires of customers.

Table 3: Mathematical mean and standard deviations

Variable (X)	MEAN	S.D	Variable (Y)	MEN	S.D
FUN.1	4.27	.740	CU.ST.1	4.27	.490
FUN.2	4.53	.507	CU.ST.2	4.43	.466
FUN.3	4.27	.691	CU.ST.3	4.37	.868
FUN.4	4.37	.669	CU.ST.4	4.33	.728
FUN	4.36	0.651	CU.ST.5	4.02	.682
N0N-FUN.1	3.63	.765	CU.ST.6	4.27	.420
N0N-FUN.2	4.27	.868	CU.ST./(Y)	4.28	0.609
N0N-FUN.3	4.57	.504			
N0N-FUN.4	4.53	.571			
N0N- FUN	4.25	0.677			
CA.1	4.17	.747			
CA.2	4.50	.630			
CA.3	4.37	.718			
CA.4	4.17	.747			
CA	4.30	0.715			
SR.1	4.63	.747			
SR.2	4.70	.630			
SR.3	4.07	.718			
SR.4	4.23	.747			
SR	4.40	0.710			
X	4.33				

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

Variables		Dependent variable (customer satisfaction)	P Value	Conclusion
Independent variable (brand association)		.8810	0.000	Significant
Function service Attributes		0.761	0.000	Significant
Non-functional service Attributes		.6700	0.000	Significant
Company Ability		.8850	0.000	Significant
Company Social Responsibility		.6110	0.000	Significant

*Correlation is significant at the level (0.05)

8.4. Regression Analysis

We used the regression analysis to test the impact hypothesis. We found that the impact of the brand association on customer satisfaction at the level of (5%) and the value of Coefficient Determination ($R^2=0.770$). This means that brand association leads to increase the customer satisfaction for products and services company, which refers to the significant influence to achieve that. The value of the regression coefficient of the influence of the brand association to achieve customer satisfaction which reached (0.787), at the significant level (5%). Table 5 shows the result of Regression Analysis.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta Coefficient (β)	Sig	Conclusion
H2	Brand Association → Customer Satisfaction	0.485	0.000	Significant

9. Discussions

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the brand association and customer satisfaction. The research question was “Is there a significant relationship between the brand association and customer satisfaction? Thus, whether the research question was answered or the objective was met depending on the outcomes of the study? From the results, it could be seen that the research question was answered there had a significant relationship between brand association and customer satisfaction. This indicates that the company and through various strategies achieved great success in customer satisfaction.

10. Limitations and further research

This research has been conducted at the small level and data collected only from capital Bucharest. In this research, an only brand association is studied, there are many other factors that can affect customer satisfaction they are not discussed. Also, I focused on this topic on the customers. Although this subject concerns both the customers and employees, because I am interested in a how this topic from the point of view customer and customers who consume services. However, these cases, open several directions for future research. Future research might focus on other variables which effect on the customer satisfaction. Possible might include external and internal factors such as organizational culture and its size.

11. Conclusions

- 1- The brand Association is an important element of the brand equity. Studying consumer behaviour shows that the brand image is the product key to success. It reflects the consumer sentiment and attitude towards the brand. So the organisation should reinforce this image through its marketing activities.
- 2- The brands must be association with the mind of the customer, to places, things, or other brands as a mean of building and backing the target brand.

- 3- Brand association is an important indicator of consumer knowledge about the brand and as well as the brand presence strength in the minds of consumers.
- 4- The sample of the research showed a positive role to dimensions of the brand association to achieving consumer satisfaction.
- 5- There is a significant correlation (H1) between the dimensions of brand association and customers Satisfaction at level (0.05).
- 6- There is a significant impact (H2) for the dimensions of brand association on customers satisfaction at level (0.05).

12. Recommendations

In order to increase the role and effectiveness of the company in achieving customer satisfaction by deepening on the brand associations. The researcher recommends the following:-

- 1- The company must be enhance the brand association for the customers through marketing programs and promotional and advertising.
- 2- The company must be improving the functional and non-functional attributes of the product to purpose to achievement the customer satisfaction
- 3- The Companies must invest much of resources so as to build and maintain their brands.
- 4-The company must be interested in the branding and social responsibility have after that the companies have recognised how these strategies can add the value of the company
- 5-Increase company ability, which related to the expertise of company in producing and delivering its outputs and company social responsibility associations, which include activities of the company with respect the perceived societal obligations.

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