

Customers' Evaluation of Brand Extension: An Empirical Study of Skin Care Products

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Abstract

Brand extension can dilute the single mindedness and can create confusions in the mind of customers but on the other hand, its success can result in more profits and trustworthiness. Sometimes it is difficult for companies to decide whether to introduce a sub-brand or not. As business is a game of risk, companies try to play it well. At times their decision worth millions of dollars and at times it results in negative cash flows.

Different companies have launched number of skin care products under the Parent brand with an aim to capture the larger market share but some of them were successful and the rest taste failures. As the customers are the prime focus of any business, it is necessary the products that company launches should be acceptable by its customers. Expanding only the portfolio does not increase the revenue unless the company increases its customer base. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explain the effect of several independent variables on a brand extension towards the skin care products.

Past researches have studied the importance of brand extension to get more insight of it. Brand extension had been simultaneously studied in many aspects like its impact on parent brand image, variation in customer's interest after extension and brand Identity in predicting

extension's success or failure. Previous studies have emphasized more to find out the after effects of extension on various factors. Fewer researches have studied the factors that help in predicting the extension success but in other contexts and regions.

In Pakistan, particularly in Karachi no research have been yet conducted to identify the factors that have an effect on line extension in context of skin care products. Therefore, the aim of the study is to identify the factors that effects brand extension in Pakistan in the context of skin care products. To quantify the study correlational research design is used. The primary data was collected using survey questionnaire. The target audiences for the data collection were the skin care product users and the age limit were to be set as above 18 in order to generate rational opinions.

To analyze the results statistical techniques Factor analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis were used. The variables taken into the consideration were Parent Brand Experience, Perceived Quality, Parent Brand Credibility, Fit, Brand loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Awareness to examine their impact on to the dependent variable Brand Extension. The data was collected using convenience sampling from 500 respondents. Findings of the study suggest that parent brand experience, parent brand credibility, fit, brand association and perceived quality are the factors that can influence the brand extension. Furthermore, it suggests that creating brand association in the mind of customers will help brand managers to captivate strong place in customers' mind and as a result, it is more likely that a customer will accept the extended brand. Companies should also make an effort to enrich the customers' experience with the brand and to create and maintain the credibility in the market.

Keywords: *Brand extension, parent brand credibility, parent brand experience, brand association, perceived quality.*

1. Introduction:

Every business starts with an aim to grow and to capture larger market share. For this purpose some companies choose for mergers, acquisitions, alliances, ventures whereas most of the companies believe in brand extension. Brand Extension is pursued as a major tool to capture larger market share and to cater most of the customers' needs by means of introducing assortments in the form of extension (Buil, Chernatony, & Hem, 2009).

Brand is basically a single idea with a name, logo, distinctive colour or font that differentiates it from its competitor and holds a unique identity to the customers' mindset. The credibility of a brand and its frequent recalling results in strong brand equity (Sinapuelas & Sisodiya, 2010); (Reast, 2005). Once the brand is successful in creating strong equity and positive brand image, companies then aim to extend the brand by introducing new assortment. Assortments are simply products under the same brand name as of parent brand; to maintain the credibility which in turn helps the new line extension. This way company makes it easy for the customer to identify the brand easily and also wins in capturing a larger market share (Wu & Yen, 2007).

Perception inside consumer mind plays an important role. As more alternatives are available before the purchase decision is made, consumer without consciously reconciling their experiences with other products of the same brand. The product, whose parent brand has been established and is triggered with immediate perception and associations, is likely to have better chance for final selection rather choosing completely unfamiliar brand.

Although, on the other hand, brand extension could be a problem for some companies as sometimes the extended brand cannot satisfy the customers in comparison with the other brands in line extension. Customers have huge expectations with it due to their good experience with the parent brand (Chen and Chen, 2000). As a result, the experience with the sub brand can dilute the image of a parent brand and affects its credibility and image (Serrao and Botelho, 2008). But, on the other hand if the sub brand turns out as per the desired expectations of the customer it results in strong brand credibility, high equity and heavy sales turnover (Reddy, Holak, & Bhat, 1994).

As business is a game of risk and return many companies try to play it well. At times their decision worth millions of dollars and sometimes it may result in negative cash flows too. Brands serve as a tool for companies to compete against their competitors and to sustain their positions

in the market (Nijssen, 1999). But companies with an aim to grow keep their assets on risk by introducing successive brands or the generations. Brand extension is a good strategy to save cost of heavy promotions because the equity of the parent brand can generalize its strength on the extended brand (Viot, 2011). Besides studying the impact of extension it is more crucial to find out the factors that lead a brand extension towards success. Past researches have studied the importance of brand extension to get more insight of it. Brand extension had been simultaneously studied in many aspects like its impact on parent brand image, variation in customer's interest after extension and brand identity in predicting extension's success or failure. Some studies have identified the category fit, parent brand image, brand equity and others as the most important factors that have an effect on extension (Volckner & Sattler, 2006); (Viot, 2011); (Arslan & Altuna, 2010); (Hariri & Vazifehdust, 2011). Previous studies have put more emphasis on the after effects of extension on various factors (Kumar, 2005); (Chang, 2002); (Wu & Yen, 2007); (Chen & Liu, 2004). Few researches have studied the factors that help in predicting the extension success but in other contexts and regions. In Pakistan, no researches have been conducted yet to identify the factors that have an effect on brand line extension in context of skin care products. Therefore, this paper aims identify the factors that have an effect on brand line extension in Pakistan and in context of skin care products.

2. Literature Review

Brand Extension is one of the major sources to revitalize the brand and to make sure its visibility in the market (Munthre & Bick, 2006). The factors that influence the brand extension and plays a pivotal role in predicting its acceptance are already been established in previous theories.

2.1 Theoretical Evidence:

Brand extension is successful because it inherits the credibility, name and equity of an already established brand that was approved and accepted by the customers. In executing brand extension, high profile and well known brand image is more applicable than one with low image. That is the reason that the brand extension should be in line with the brand image and positioning so that original idea of the brand remains consistent. The target market, vision and point of difference or uniqueness should be same as of parent brand. If the extended brand has new target

market or new point of uniqueness it will confused the single mindedness of a parent brand and creates dual image in the mind of the customers. This original and grand perception of parent brand is critical and need to be transferred correctly to new products. There should be similarity between the parent brand and the extension.

Sometimes companies opt to change the brand positioning in the extension. This step is mostly taken by the companies that aim to enter into new market for the very first time and wants to establish their credibility based on the parent brand image. These sorts of extensions require great number of researches to be conducted before and have a good customer insight.

Brand extension is just like tagging the Parent brand name on every brand of the company that may results in destroying or diluting the separate identity of the new brand in the line extension. At times, companies make blunders by labelling a parent brand name even the current sales does not show any growth. This sort of decision or activity fails in capturing customers' attention and results in big loss.

Brand extensions can directly affect the brand image and equity, so it is difficult for companies to decide when to extend a brand. Brand extension successes totally rely on retaining the current customers, welcome new ones and serve their needs more then delighted (Ries & Ries, 2002).

2.2 Empirical Evidences:

Gurhan-Canli & Maheswaran (1998) investigated the brand extension strategies that were useful in building strong brand equity by collecting data from 347 respondents. Family brand name, motivation, congruency, typicality, evaluation and cognitive responses were the variables used in the model. ANOVA and regression Analysis was used to test the Model. Findings suggest that attribute can predict evaluations in high motivation. Typicality and category evaluation was significant in Low Motivation level. It was recommended that brand dilution or brand enhancement is highly depended upon the level of motivation.

Glynn & Brodie (1998) has examined the importance of brand associations influencing the brand extension evaluation by collecting responses fom 184 respondents. Orignal brand, brand specific associations, brand relevance and extension category relevance were the variables used in the model. Experimental study using BA and replication test were carried out to test the

model. Findings interpret that brand associations provides an advantage to extend the brand to distant categories.

Nijssen (1999) examine the impact of market related success factors of a brand extension by collecting data from 49 marketing and product managers in the FMCG industry. Level of competition, level of retailer power, level of variety seeking behavior, brand strenght, overall marketing budget, number of previous line extensions, extension specific advertising expenditure, fit and order of entry were the variables used in the study. Correlation analysis and Regression analysis were used to test the model. Overall model was significant. Findings suggest that advertsising expenditure, fit and order of entry has more significant impact on brand extension success.

Sheinin (2000) investigated the impact of brand extension on parent brand image by collecting data from 250 MBA students. Extension beliefs, initial brand belief, attitude towards parent brand, brand extension experience, parent brand familiarity, parent brand price and parent brand fit were the variables considered to build a model. Principal Component Analysis and Covariate Analysis techniques were applied to test the hypothesis. Findings suggest that unfamiliar parent brands have different beliefs whereas familiar parent brand has more power in predicting extension.

Volckner and Sattler (2006) has investigated the factors that are important in the brand extension success by collecting data from German households on 5 brand extensions and select the respondents through Quota Sampling. Variables like parent brand quality, parent brand history, parent brand conviction, parent brand experience, marketing support, retailer acceptance, Fit, utility of PB, perceived risk and innovativeness were considered. Structural Equation Modelling and the Test of association were the techniques applied. All variables were significant except parent brand experience and perceived risk. Future research can be done on consumer durables and services brand.

Wu & Lo (2009) has analyzed the impact of core-brand attitude on consumers' intention to purchase extended products by collecting data from 677 respondents. brand awareness, brand preference, core-brand image, use experience, core-brand attitude, brand association, product connection, consumer perception fit, purchase intention and other demographic variables were used in the model. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was used to test the

hypothesis. Finding suggests that model is significant at 0.001 confidence interval. The parent brand image and consumer perceived fit plays an important role in influencing consumers decision to purchase extended product.

Montaner and Pina (2009) has investigated the influence of brand extension on brand image by collecting data from 599 respondents. Awareness, brand image, credibility, perceived fit and extension attitude were the variables take into consideration. ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis. The results suggest that brand extension has a negative influence on overall brand image. However, through advertisement of new extensions may improves the brand image. It was also suggested that future studies can be carried out to investigate the influence of real advertisements and brand equity may also considered.

Jahangir, Parvez, Bhattacharjee, and Ahamed (2009) has analyzed the impact of brand affect and brand quality on customers attitude towards extension while considering customer loyalty as a mediating factor. Total data 100 respondents were collected. Brand trust, brand affect, brand loyalty, Brand Quality and consumers' brand extension attitude were the variables used in the model. Correlation analysis and regression analysis techniques were used to test the model. The overall model was significant but customer loyalty added more weight to the model. The results suggests that the two variables brand affect and loyalty can shape consumers attitude towards a brand but customer loyalty plays a significant role in it.

Arslan and Altuna (2010) have analyzed the effects of brand extension on a brand image by collecting data from 474 respondents. Fit, familiarity, perceived quality, general brand image, product brand image, quality and demographic characteristics were used as variables. Independent sample t-test and multiple regression were the techniques carried out to test the hypothesis. Result suggests that brand extension has a negative impact on parent brand image if the perceived quality of a parent brand is higher than its extension.

Martinez and Pina (2010) has analyzed the effects of brand extension and its influence on overall brand image by collecting data from 699 respondents. Brand familiarity, category fit, consumer innovativeness, brand image, extension attitude, brand image variation, perceived difficulty and image fit were the variables used. Structural Equation Modelling technique was carried out to test the hypothesis. Results suggesting consumers attitude toward brand extension will influence

the perception of parent brand image. It was suggested that future research may consider evaluating the application of line or a mix extension.

Boisvert & Burton (2011) has investigated the importance of parent brand salience, brand strategy and innovativeness of extension in shift the associations from parent brand to its extension. Data was collected from 808 respondents. Parent brand, quality, innovativeness, branding and salience were the variables used for the study. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The test was overall significant. Findings suggest that parent brand salience, innovativeness and positioning of the extension plays a pivotal role in transferring the associations but the transfer of association is more high when direct brand strategy was used.

Hariri and Vazifehdust (2011), investigate the impact of brand extension on current image of a brand by collecting 391 responses through random categorical sampling. Brand image, perceived fit and extension attitude are the variables used in the study. Path Analysis and linear regression were the techniques used to test the hypothesis. The findings of the research suggested that the better the perceived fit; more enhanced would be the extension attitude. The study put forwarded that companies need to improve current brand image if it aims to extend the brand.

Viot (2011) investigates the significance of brand identity in predicting the success or failure of brand extension by collecting responses on 10 well-known brands of France. Brand personality, brand values, relationships and user image were the factors considered to conduct the study. Cluster Analysis and ANCOVA were used to test the hypothesis. Findings suggest that brand identity is considered as a better fit to understand the acceptance of brand extension. It was suggested that brand identity fit may also be helpful in predicting co-branding.

3. Methodology

The survey questionnaire developed on Likert scale of 5 where 1=strongly agreed and 5=strongly disagree. The target audiences for the research were the skin care product consumers. 550 questionnaires were distributed among students of private universities and institutions using convenience sampling. 500 respondents have replied back with a response rate of 90%.

The research design was correlational which helped in determining the relationship between brand extension and impact of other factors. The statistical technique used in the study were

factor analysis and multiple regression analysis. factor analysis was used to group the variables based on their correlation while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

4. Variable Description and Hypothesis Development

The past literatures were reviewed to develop the conceptual framework of the research. As the aim of the study is to identify the factors that influences the brand extension of skin care products in Pakistan. The regression model developed for the research is:

$$BE = \alpha + \beta_1 PBC + \beta_2 BA + \beta_3 PBE + \beta_4 F + \beta_5 PQ + \beta_6 BL + \beta_7 BAS + \varepsilon$$

Where BE is Brand Extension which is a dependent variable, PBC is Parent Brand Credibility, BA is Brand Awareness, PBE is Parent Brand Experience, F is Fit, PQ is Perceived Quality, BL is Brand Loyalty and BAS is Brand Association.

The following Hypothesis were formed to identify the factors that affects brand line extension.

H₀₁ : Parent Brand Credibility has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

H₀₂ : Brand Awareness has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

H₀₃ : Parent Brand Experience has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

H₀₄ : Fit has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

H₀₅ : Perceived Quality has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

H₀₆ : Brand Loyalty has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

H₀₇ : Brand Association has insignificant effect on Brand Extension

4. Estimation and Results:

Reliability analysis was used to test the consistency of scores. As 26 items were considered, reliability of the data has been assured by testing Reliability Statistics with help of SPSS Software 15.0. The ideal level of reliability is 0.7 which means 70% of the data is consistent. The data used in the study is parametric so the Cronbach Alpha is the most appropriate measure to assure the reliability of the data. The value of Cronbach Alpha for the multiple items considered in the study are as follows:

Table I: Reliability Statistics

Variable Name	Cronbach Alpha	No. of Items
Overall Reliability	0.92	26

Parent Brand Experience	0.88	5
Perceived Quality	0.79	4
Parent Brand Credibility	0.76	4
Brand Association	0.77	3
Brand Extension	0.74	4
Brand Loyalty	0.72	2
Fit	0.66	2
Brand Awareness	0.59	2

Source: Author's Estimation

The above table shows, the value of Cronbach alpha for the overall data is 0.92 that means 92% reliability is assured. The reliability statistic for parent brand experience is 0.88 which depicts 88% consistency in the data. The value of Cronbach Alpha for perceived quality is 0.79 which assured 79% reliability of the data. Parent brand credibility assures the 76% reliability whereas Cronbach Alpha values of brand association and brand extension are 0.77 and 0.74 respectively which means brand extension assures the 74% reliability whereas brand association assures the 77% reliability. The Cronbach α value of brand loyalty is 0.72 The reliability statistic for Fit and Brand awareness is 0.66 and 0.59 respectively which depicts that both the variables have approx 60% reliability.

Factor Analysis was used to group 26 items into 8 well defined factors based on their correlation. As the ideal value of KMO is 0.7 which means sample size is good enough to grouped variables into factors, the sample size used in the test is adequate as the value of KMO is 0.779. The Barlett test of sphericity is significant at 95% confidence interval. As factor analysis is used as a data reduction technique for a parametric data it has grouped 26 items into 8 adequate factors having 70.169% value of cumulative variance.

Table II: Rotated Component Matrix

	Factors							
Items	Parent Brand Experience	Perceived Quality	Parent Brand Credibility	Brand Association	Brand Extension	Brand Loyalty	Fit	Brand awareness
PBE 1	0.804							

PBE 2	0.797							
PBE 3	0.701							
PBE 4	0.675							
PBE 5	0.628							
PQ 1		0.825						
PQ 2		0.751						
PQ 3		0.745						
PQ 4		0.701						
PBC 1			0.785					
PBC 3			0.737					
PBC 2			0.705					
PBC 4			0.541					
BAS 4				0.821				
BAS 3				0.655				
BAS 5				0.628				
BE 3					0.786			
BE 1					0.746			
BE 5					0.486			
BE 2					0.478			
BL 4						0.809		
BL 3						0.761		
F 5							0.817	
F 4							0.728	
BA 5								0.707
BA 4								0.651

Source: Author's Estimation

The table II shows that 26 items grouped into 8 well define factors. The factor Parent brand experience is comprising of 5 items, perceived quality, parent brand credibility and brand extension contains four items each. There are three items in brand association. brand loyalty, fit and brand awareness each contains two items.

The multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis which aims to explain the relationship between parent brand credibility and other six variables.

Table III: Regression Output

Model	B	T	Sig	VIF
Constant	.229	1.674	.095	
Parent Brand Experience	.107	2.287	.023	1.916
Perceived Quality	.150	2.507	.013	2.010
Parent Brand Credibility	.154	2.512	.012	1.861
Brand Association	.187	4.324	.000	1.385
Brand Loyalty	.026	.677	.499	1.564
Fit	.239	5.406	.000	1.135
Brand Awareness	.065	1.370	.172	1.228
Adj. R Square = 0.431			F- Statistics = 35.582	
			Sig = 0.000	

Source: Author's Estimation

In the above table, the value of Adjusted R-Square is 0.431 which interprets that overall model can explain 43.1% variance in a dependent variable. The F-value is 35.582 which is significant at 99% confidence interval and it depicts that overall model is good at explaining the variance in a dependent variable. The Rho-value for the model is 0.666 which means there is 66.6% correlation between the model and the dependent variable. All the variables are significant at 95% confidence interval except brand loyalty and brand awareness. The beta value shows the positive or negative relationship between dependent and independent variables. The t-value is used to test the hypothesis that whether beta is 0 or not. The significance of t-value at 95% Confidence Interval shows that beta value is helpful in explaining the variance in a dependent

variable. The value of VIF for all the independent variables are less than 5 which means there is no issue of multi collinearity between the independent variables.

In the above regression output table, parent brand credibility, parent brand experience and perceived quality is significant at 95% confidence interval having significance value of less than 0.05 whereas brand association and fit is significant at 99% confidence interval having p-value less than 0.01.

The Beta value of Fit is 0.239 with a significant value of 0.000 means that Fit is the highest contributing factor in explaining the brand extension. The output suggests that the extension of the brand is showing high congruency with the variable Fit, if there would be a unit increase in brand extension acceptance in terms of attitude there would an increase of 0.239 times in the variable Fit. The beta value of Brand Association is 0.187 with a significant value of 0.000 which means that every effort in increasing brand associations between the parent brand and extension will effect brand extension attitude to increase 0.187 times. The beta value for Parent Brand Credibility is 0.154 with a significant value of 0.012 which means that more the customers have trust in brand, the more positive attitude they they will carry with the extension as well. The value of Perceieved quality is 0.150 with a significant value of 0.013 which means that the customer's perception about the quality of a brand would shape their attitude towards the extension. The beta value of Parent Brand Experience is 0.107 with a significant value of 0.023 which means that customers' experience with the parent brand will shape their attitude and the acceptance of the extended brand in their minds. If the customer's experience with the parent brand is up to the mark, it is more likeable that their attitude towards the extension will be positive too.

The brand loyalty and brand awareness shows insignificant results.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation:

It is concluded that out of six variables two variables shows insignificant results that are brand loyalty and brand awareness. In this study brand loyalty's insignificant behavior suggests that it does not contribute in explaining the acceptance of brand extension. If a customer is loyal with a parent brand it doesn't mean that he will accept the extension by that brand too. This insignificant behavior can be justified by two reasoning. Firstly, as the study is conducted in the

context of skin care products, the consumer innovativeness in accepting new products is likely more low and he or she would prefer to remain loyal with the current brand because it is the matter of skin which is more sensitive and customer avoids the risk and tends to stay loyal to their current brand. Secondly, the price of the extended brand also matters in taking a decision. It may be possible that the extended brand is not affordable by the current users or the target market is totally different. Like, POND'S has a long list of skin care products but the target market for the POND'S age miracle cream could not influence the younger users of POND'S brand.

Also, the insignificance of brand awareness depicts that customer does not accept any brand or its extension based on the awareness and knowledge of the brand only. Customers are more savvy and they make decisions based on the credibility and the past experience with the brand.

It is recommended that brand managers while taking the decision for extension should keep in mind that the extended brand should be aligned with the parent brand. There should be congruence between the brand categories and image.

Secondly, creating brand awareness is not sufficient; brand managers and marketers should make an effort to create strong brand associations in order to take up a strong place in customer's mind. Creating brand association in the minds of customers will help brand managers to capture a strong place in customers' mindset and as a result, it is more likely that customer will accept the extended brand.

Lastly, companies should make an effort to enrich the customers' experience with the brand and to create credibility in the market. Once the customer trusts the brand it would be more likely that customer will have positive attitude towards different products under same brand. If a customer is loyal with a parent brand doesn't mean it will accept every extension under the same brand because customer might not be the user of that product. Also, before launching any extension, it is crucial to identify the target market and the needs of the existing customers. Because the target market of the brand could differ with existing customer needs.

6. Suggestion for Future Studies

As the study was conducted in the context of skin care products and does only consider line extensions, future researches may consider FMCG industry and can explore the attitude of a customer towards mix extension.

Due to time and resources limitations, the research has been conducted in Karachi zone using convenience sampling. Future studies could be conducted in other cities of Pakistan and can be done using probability sampling for generalization of the findings.

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