Conceptual Framework of Brand Image: A Case Study of a Developing Country

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Abstract: The conceptual framework of brand image is a combination of antecedents and outcomes that create differential effects on customer response to the marketing of the brand. By constructing a conceptual framework of brand image, organizations will build a competitive advantage in the marketplace that will increase their overall image with long-term sustainability. Indeed, recent trends in modern marketing have changed tremendously and study of conceptual framework of brand image is increasingly becoming considerable to keep pace with this change. In this conceptual study, researchers have summarized the literatures on currently prevailing concepts and approaches on brand image that will allow us to identify the conceptual framework of brand image and therefore will facilitate organizations to enhance their marketing efficiency and effectiveness. In this research, researchers discussed a case study in Bangladesh and in light of the findings of this case study, researchers put forward the notion that the conceptual framework of brand image need to be associated with organizational activities. Researchers suggest that these activities could play a major role in creating brand image among customers.

Key words: Brand, conceptual framework, outcomes of brand image, marketing conceptual, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Conceptual framework of brand image is a combination of antecedents and outcomes that create differential effects on customer response to the marketing of a brand. Considering the importance of brand image, since last decade organizations are engaged to construct the conceptual framework of brand image and enhance sweet blow into customers mind. The conceptual framework indicates a combination of antecedents and outcomes of brand image. Actually, antecedents and outcomes are latent variables of brand image whose task to build and hold brand image into customers mind for a long period of time. In this regard, the conceptual framework of brand image bears great significance into today's modern marketing environment. Moreover, the conceptual framework of brand image is one of the essential blocks of customer-based brand equity that underlies, as perceptions about a brand which reflected by the brand associations apprehended in customer's memory (Keller, 1998). Hence, it is acknowledged that the conceptual framework of brand image plays an important role, as antecedents and outcomes of brand image that assists organizations and their brands to keep touch within customers' memory for a long period of time.

With this background, in this study researchers attempt to present a conceptual framework of brand image. Researchers have discussed a conceptual framework that includes brand awareness, association, superiority, affection and brand resonance, corporate social responsibility, brand familiarity, customer satisfaction, brand trust and attitudinal loyalty that is based on a comprehensive review of the existing literatures and a case study of very prominent hotel brand in Bangladesh. In an attempt to discuss, the managerial implications of the conceptual framework, a scenario based on a case study is presented in this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

What is brand image: Keller (1998) underlies that brand image has long been recognised as an important concept in marketing and although marketers have not always agreed about how to measure it, one generally accepted view is that brand image is consumers' perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory. Keller (2008) mentions in that creating a positive brand image takes marketing programmes that link strong, favourable and unique associations to the brand in memory. Customers are able to form brand

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associations in a variety of ways other than marketing activities: From direct experience, through information from other commercial or nonpartisan sources. As such, the brand image can be considered as the key concept between the brand and the brand equity based on customer. Moreover, in developing strong brand image through organizations that assist customers to build strong mindset about brand (Katke, 2007).

In this perspective, it can be suggested that by establishing brand image the effect of brand image will build, as well as sustain for a long period of time in customers mind. As a result, brand image makes essential impact to explore the effect of conceptual framework of brand image including; brand awareness, association, superiority, affection and resonance, corporate social responsibility, brand familiarity, customer satisfaction, brand trust and attitudinal loyalty.

A conceptual framework of brand image: Based on literature review, the conceptual framework that explain the antecedents and outcomes of brand image in a competitive market, known as conceptual framework of brand image.

The 10 elements of this framework that includes brand awareness, association, superiority, affection and resonance, corporate social responsibility, brand familiarity, customer satisfaction, brand trust and attitudinal loyalty of the brand are discussed here.

Brand awareness: According to Keller (1998, 2008), brand awareness underlies brand recognition and recall performance. Both components are playing active role to build brand image. Moreover, brand awareness creates pressure to increase brand image. So, brand awareness is the 1st step by which customers aware about a brand, as well as organization builds strong associations in the mind of customers. Indeed, brand awareness is the 1st antecedent of proposed conceptual framework of brand image.

Brand association: Brand associations are helpful tool for marketers. By using brand associations, marketers differentiate their brands and make a strong position not only customers mind but also into competitive marketplace.

According to Aaker (1991), brand associations build and create positive attitudes and feelings towards brands in the mind of customers that enhance brand image. Moreover, brand association is the 2nd antecedent of proposed conceptual framework of brand image.

Brand superiority: According to Keller (2009), brand superiority directly communicates with customer evaluation process. With the help of evaluation process, customers generate perceptions in their mind towards brands. In this regard, brand superiority can play an important role to generate positive perceptions about brands in the mind of customers. Moreover, brand superiority along with positive perceptions about brands enhance brand image. Indeed, brand superiority is the 3rd antecedent of proposed conceptual framework of brand image.

Brand affection: For affection, emotions can play a vital role and create great impact into customer behavior. On the other hand in a modern consumer attitude model, emotions make relationship between cognitive evaluations and behavioral intentions (Bagozzi, 1992). Within emotional perspective, customers will increase their affection level about brands. Moreover, the affection level positively contributes in perception level. In this regard, affection along with perception enhances brand image and brand affection is the 4th antecedent of proposed conceptual framework of brand image.

Brand resonance: Brand resonance underlies final relationship with those customers who are affected by affection (Keller, 2003). With the help of brand resonance, organizations create strong brand loyalty. Moreover, brand resonance describes how to build strong loyal relationships with customers. In this regard, along with the loyalty, brand resonance which is the 5th antecedent enhances brand image for organizations as well as brands.

Corporate social responsibility: Now-a-days, modern marketing realizes the significance of corporate social responsibility and its impact on brand image. The contribution of corporate social responsibility not only impact on brand image but also encompasses societal well-being (Raman *et al.*, 2012). Indeed to win brand resonance in today's markets, corporate social responsibility has become a useful tool that enhance brand image. Meanwhile, corporate social responsibility is the 6th, as well as final antecedent of the proposed conceptual framework of brand image. Figure 1 shows the plausible antecedents and outcomes of brand image.

Brand familiarity: In Fig. 1, brand familiarity is the 1st outcome of the proposed conceptual framework of brand image. Brand familiarity defined as a customer's degree of knowledge connecting a brand through his or her direct and indirect experiences with the brand. Familiarity is being identical with knowledge and reflects
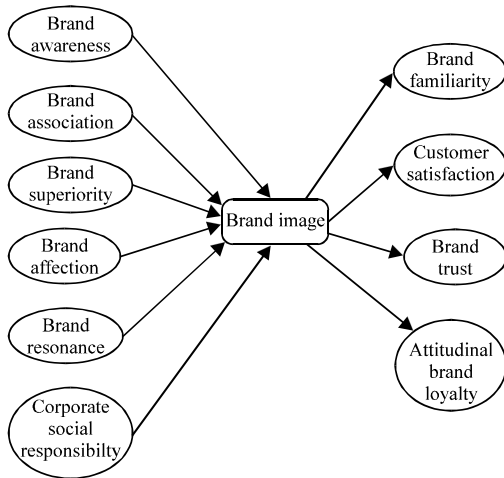
Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of brand image

on experiences to be the key contributor of brand (Cerjak *et al.*, 2010). In this regard for sustaining brand image, brand familiarity can play an essential role and enhance positive knowledge with experiences in customers mind.

Customer satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is the 2nd outcome of the proposed conceptual framework of brand image. Rai (2013) defined customer satisfaction as a buyer's emotional or cognitive response post subjective assessment and comparison of pre-purchase expectations and actual performance subsequent to the consumption of the product or service, meanwhile evaluating the costs incurred and benefits reaped in a specific purchase even or over time in course of transacting with an organization. Therefore, customer satisfaction can be defined by an overall satisfaction towards a certain brand based on total cumulative experiences in the mind of customers.

Brand trust: Brand trust is the 3rd outcome of the proposed conceptual framework of brand image. Trust is like a tie that occurs with customers. With the help of trust, customers bond those who are trustable. In this regard, organizations build a strong emotional bond where trust can play an active role (Mckinney and Benson, 2013). According to Mckinney and Benson (2013), trust is a combination of credibility, care and congruency. All 3 components of trust can help to sustain brand image for a long period of time in the mind of customers.

Attitudinal loyalty: Attitudinal loyalty is the 4th, as well as last outcome of the proposed conceptual framework of brand image. Rai and Srivastava (2012) illustrated that a customer can express his degree of loyalty towards a

service provider by either displaying a positive attitude or indulging in favourable actions or making conscious evaluations and finding a particular service worth sticking to. Indeed, attitudinal loyalty depends on customer's preference of emotional commitment towards a brand.

Case study: A case study of one Bangladeshi brand hotel was undertaken to explain the approach of conceptual framework of brand image (antecedents and outcomes). It should be noted that researchers have used this very similar case study in discussing conceptual framework of brand image in regards to the role of antecedents and outcomes in the earlier studies. The action points suggested through this case study reinforced the proposed conceptual framework of brand image that act as combination of antecedents and outcomes of brand image where all elements of suggested framework play as brand image antecedents and outcomes of brands of hotels.

ABCD residence and boutique hotel: ABCD residence, the truly, international standard, boutique style, small, luxury hotel in capital City Dhaka at Bangladesh which has a very high degree of personalized service is owned and managed by a Sri Lanka based BOI (Board of Investment) company in Dhaka. ABCD is the only hotel in Bangladesh to be certified with ISO 2000 and HACCP. ABCD hotel started their activities from January, 2000 and since, then it has been running with good reputation, as well as customer satisfaction. At starting, it was managed by Confifi hotel Chain and now it is operated by owner STS (Shanta, Tropica and Sepal) group. The STS group, also running several business enterprises including Apollo Hospital Dhaka, ISD School, DPS School, Shanta Garments, LonkaBangla Finance, etc. ABCD hotel is conveniently located beside airport road, as well as the diplomatic zone at Banani leading to the main city and adjacent to the diplomatic enclave and upcoming blue chip commercial hub of Baridhara, Gulshan and Banani, only 7 km from the main international airport. The hotel is comprising 66 rooms and suites including all rooms feature king, queen or twin size beds, large research areas with High-Speed Internet, 24 h air-conditioning service, in-room safe, mini bar, tea/coffee making facilities and ironing facilities. ABCD hotel is doing regular sales visit to the different organizations (RMG, FMCG, media, medical college, hospitals, NGO, different AID organizations, such as UNAID, German AID, USAID, etc). The hotel management maintaining a very good relation with the media sectors, especially the print media. They are using the integrated marketing tools in their marketing strategy and business expansion. They distribute Eid

festival greetings card, new year and Christmas greetings card. They also distribute their special cake and gift hampers to their most valuable and big clients time to time. ABCD hotel provides different services for the consumers. In general, inside each room they provide air condition, DVD player, television with cable, mini bar, free newspaper, hairdryer, outlet adapters, turndown service, iron with ironing board, smoke detectors and sprinklers in rooms. As room service, they also provide elevators, executive level corridor, ice machine, 24 h security, phone service, etc. Outside the rooms, they provide outdoor pool, fitness center, gym, jacuzzi, sauna, steam bath, business center, laundry service, shoe polishing service, concierge desk, wake-up service, meeting/banquet facilities, car rental desk, boutiques, conference facilities, currency exchange, outside catering, accessible facilities for wheel chair access, etc. Overall, the ABCD hotel is a 3 star and international standard boutique hotel. The main concept of boutique hotel is personalized service. In this regard, the hotel is providing their best support to make their consumers happy and satisfied. For example, if 1 consumer wants to eat less spicy food their kitchen people make a note and try to make the food according the consumer choice. The location of ABCD hotel is in a good diplomatic area and the environment is very calm and quiet. The hotel cost is reasonable according to the services. The hotel, also does outside catering which is one of their specialties. Adding another feather in their cap, ABCD hotel was awarded with the certificate of excellence for year 2013 by trip advisor. This prestigious award which places organizations in the top-performing 10% of all businesses worldwide on trip advisor is given to businesses that consistently earn high ratings from trip advisor travelers. Couple of months ago, trip advisor placed ABCD, the best hotel in terms of guest reviews in Bangladesh and now has been recognized amongst the best globally which amply proves beyond doubt ABCD has earned the top slot amongst the best in the world from its own patrons. In fact, consumers are fall in love to ABCD hotel because they maintain a good relationship between their hotel customers and their patrons those are providing or try to provide the link that assist their business operations. They are highly concern about customer satisfaction. They maintain a customer comments sheet and if any complaint is there they will try to remove with top priority basis. ABCD has suggestion box where customers as well as employees can drop their suggestions with written format. After a time being ABCD hotel will organize corporate dinner party, cocktails party, BBQ party where most of the hosts are invited from different organizations. ABCD hotel practices good relations with diplomats, embassy and high commission.

Moreover, ABCD hotel tries to provide extra services which are out of customer's expectation. For example, 1 customer he or she is staying with them for 4 days during that time his/her birthday may be occurred. Suddenly they will arrange a surprise birthday party only honor of his or her honorary. Furthermore, ABCD has adopted corporate social responsibility as a part of their mission. They have made corporate social responsibility one of the important principles of their business. In the context of corporate social responsibility, ABCD hotel provides good food like chicken briany every Saturday of a week for 150 persons to missionary of charity at Islampur. They also provide chicken briany every 18th day for 175 persons, 20th day for 100 persons, 27th day for 100 persons and 31st day for 100 persons of a month at different places those are Botomoly orphanage at Farmget, missionary of charity at Tejgaon, Jagoroni Jute Holicross at Tejgaon, road side people at several areas of Dhaka City and Ashkona orphanage centre. ABCD hotel is associated with the popular name of STS (Shanta, Tropica and Sepal) group. The name itself has earned a lot of reputation from the market with their several business enterprises including Apollo Hospital Dhaka, ISD School, DPS School, Shanta Garments, LonkaBangla Finance, etc. ABCD hotel serves not only staff training and medical awareness programs twice a month for its staff members but also arranges awareness programs for ABCD's customers and tries to educate them on several areas that are concerning issue to the development of hospitality industry. On the other hand, STS group is associated with several services, such as hospitality, heath care, education and garments those are well-known to customers and simultaneously customers are highly experienced about STS group at Bangladesh. The top priority of ABCD hotel is quality and service. The hotel never compromise with quality at any cost and they strive to provide their guests and clients with the best service at their level best. Additionally, customer satisfaction is their main goal. They strictly maintain a standard for which customers always keep with them. They arrange surveys and monitor a track on customer feedback forms and also take initiatives where is needed for better performance and keep touch with customers. ABCD hotel wants their customers feel a hotel like a home both in the comfort and safety perspective. ABCD hotel is fully secured with CC cameras on all floors with emergency support and they maintain a good level of trust with their customers based on commitment and co-operation. In this regard, customers are faithful to ABCD hotel. Due to quality services within hospitality industry, ABCD hotel becomes a trustworthy brand within hotel sector. In these circumstances, they create a

Table 1: The antecedents and outcomes of brand image

Antecedents	ABCD residence and boutique hotel
Awareness	ABCD residence and boutique hotel is doing regular sales visit to the different organizations (RMG, FMCG, media, medical, college, hospitals, NGO, different AID organizations such as UNAID, German AID, USAID, etc.)
Association	ABCD residence and boutique hotel provides different services for consumers. In general, inside the rooms they provide air condition, DVD player, television with cable, mini bar, free newspaper, hairdryer, outlet adapters, turndown service, iron with ironing board, smoke detectors, sprinklers, elevators, executive level corridor, ice machine, 24 h security, phone service, etc. Outside the rooms they provide outdoor pool, fitness center, gym, jacuzzi, sauna, steam bath, business center, laundry service, shoe polishing service, concierge desk, wake-up service, multilingual, meeting/banquet facilities, car rental desk, boutiques, conference facilities, etc. In dinning, they provide several buffet menus
Superiority	ABCD hotel is a 3 star and international standard boutique hotel. The main concept of boutique hotel is personalized services. They are providing their best support to make their consumers happy and satisfied. For example, if one consumer wants to eat less spicy food their kitchen people make a note and try to make a food according a consumer choice. The location of ABCD hotel is in a good diplomatic area and the environment is very calm and quiet. The hotel cost is reasonable according to the services. They also do outside catering which is one of their specialties. Adding another feather in their cap, ABCD hotel was awarded with the certificate of excellence for year 2013 by trip advisor
Affection	In fact, consumers are fall in love to ABCD hotel because they are highly concern about customer satisfaction. They maintain a customer comments sheet and if any complaint is there, they will try to remove with top priority basis. ABCD hotel tries to provide extra services which are out of customer's expectation. For example, 1 customer he or she is staying with them for 4 days during that time his/her birthday may be occurred. Suddenly, they will arrange a surprise birthday party only honor of his or her honorary
Resonance	ABCD hotel practices good relations with diplomats, embassy and high commission. They maintain a good relationship between their hotel customers and their patrons those are providing or try to provide the link that assist their business operations. Moreover, ABCD hotel will organize corporate dinner party, cocktails party, BBQ party where most of the hosts are invited from different organizations
Corporate social	ABCD has adopted corporate social responsibility as a part of their mission. In the context of corporate social responsibility, ABCD hotel responsibility provides chicken briany every 18th day for 175 persons, 20th day for 100 persons, 27th day for 100 persons and 31st day for 100 persons of a month at different places those are Botomoly orphanage at Farmget, missionary of charity at Tejgaon, Jagoroni Jute Holicross at Tejgaon and road side people at several areas of Dhaka City
Outcomes	ABCD residence and boutique hotel
Familiarity	ABCD hotel is associated with the popular name of the STS (Shanta, Tropica and Sepal) group. The name itself has earned a lot of reputation from the market with their several business enterprises including Apollo Hospital Dhaka, ISD School, DPS School, Shanta Garments, LonkaBangla Finance, etc. ABCD hotel serves not only staff training and medical awareness programs twice a month for its staff members but also arranges awareness programs for ABCD's customers and tries to educate them on several areas that are concerning issue to the development of hospitality industry. On the other hand, STS group is associated with several services, such as hospitality, heath care, education and garments those are well-known to customers and simultaneously customers are highly experienced about STS group at Bangladesh
Satisfaction	The top priority of ABCD hotel is quality and service. The hotel never compromise with quality at any cost and they strive to provide their guests and clients with the best service at their level best. Additionally, they provide discount card, Eid festival greetings card, new year and Christmas greetings card. They also distribute their special cake and gift hampers to their most valuable and big clients time to time and maintain customer relationship. Customer satisfaction is their main goal. They strictly maintain a standard for which customers always keep with them. They arrange surveys and monitor a track on customer feedback forms and also take initiatives where is needed for better performance and keep touch with customers
Trust	ABCD hotel wants that their customers feel a hotel like a home both in the comfort and safety perspective. ABCD hotel is fully secured with CC cameras on all floors with emergency support and they maintain a good level of trust with their customers based on commitment and co-operation. In this regard, customers are faithful to ABCD hotel
Attitudinal loyalty	Due to quality services within hospitality industry, ABCD hotel becomes a trustworthy brand within hotel sector. In these circumstances, they create a space into customers' mind and customers become a loyal not only behavioral perspective but also attitudinal perspective. All are incurred by their actives regarding quality services, commitment and enthusiastic co-operation towards customers and also positive performances within hospitality industry at service sector of Bangladesh

space into customers' mind and customers become a loyal not only behavioral perspective but also attitudinal perspective. All are incurred by their actives regarding quality services, commitment and enthusiastic co-operation towards customers and also positive performances within hospitality industry at service sector of Bangladesh. Table 1 represents the conceptual framework of brand image of ABCD residence and boutique hotel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The suggested conceptual framework of brand image provides possible antecedents and outcomes of brand image to marketers. Along with possible antecedents and outcomes marketers make a strong brand image, as well as customer relationship for a long period of time. Regarding a strong brand image and customer relationship, marketers take competitive advantages from target markets. Indeed, now-a-days modern marketing and market is challenging for marketers to build brand image and sustain customer relationship for a long period of time. In this regard, this proposed framework should assist marketers to build brand image and sustain, as well as maintain customer relationship for a long period of time. On the other hand, marketers also want to create strong resonance along with corporate social responsibility and loyalty with customers. In this perspective, this suggested framework will assist marketers to create strong resonance along with corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty. The

marketers will be able to do it from customer familiarity to a brand along with customer satisfaction, trust and attitudinal loyalty. Thus, this suggested framework should influence marketers to construct strong brand resonance along with corporate social responsibility and loyalty, as well as sustainable brand image with the help of possible conceptual framework of brand image. Researchers assume that with the help of this proposed framework, marketers will increase brand image and customers' knowledge level about an organization and its brands. Researchers further assume that this framework will be highly acknowledged by customer-based brand equity. This is so as framework awareness, associations, superiority, affection, resonance, corporate social responsibility, familiarity, satisfaction, trust and attitudinal loyalty always knock to customer's engagement about a brand.

Finally, this proposed framework should not only provide theoretical authentication that supports the significance of antecedents and outcomes of brand image but also will present an accomplishment process which will show how the antecedents and outcomes of brand image can affect an organization's market performance in the marketplace. Therefore, researchers believe this proposed framework provides the much needed indication that high level of brand awareness, association, superiority, affection and resonance, corporate social responsibility, brand familiarity, customer satisfaction, brand trust and attitudinal loyalty increase the probability of the effect of brand image.

CONCLUSION

This study discusses the conceptual framework of brand image that represents the antecedents and outcomes of brand image. This study, also presents a case study and discussed it based on the review of pertinent literatures. As discussed in this conceptual study, brand image creates competitive advantage of product in the marketplace and enhance overall organizational goodwill, trust and credibility.

SUGGESTIONS

Researchers suggest that the antecedents and outcomes of brand image dimensions in the context of suggested conceptual framework of brand image would be a potential for building a strong brand in the modern marketing environment because the antecedents and outcomes of brand image can offer valuable managerial implications that will help the brand managers. Many of the ideas expressed in this proposed conceptual framework will provide a more comprehensive picture of how organizations can create brand image and sustain

brand image for a brand. Moreover, researchers believe that with the help of this proposed conceptual framework, organizations will be able to build brand image and make customer relationship into a competitive marketplace. Overall, researchers suggest that the ten variables proposed in conceptual framework of brand image, namely; brand awareness, association, superiority, affection and resonance, corporate social responsibility, familiarity of the brand, customer satisfaction of the brand, trust on the brand and attitudinal loyalty of the brand can enable organizations to create brand image and sustain brand image for a long period of time in a competitive market.

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