



BRAND EQUITY, BRAND LOYALTY AND CONSUMER SATISFACTION

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the mediating effects of consumer satisfaction on the relationship between consumer-based brand equity and brand loyalty in the hotel and restaurant industry. Based on a sample of 378 customers and using structural equation modelling approach, the five dimensions of brand equity—physical quality, staff behaviour, ideal self-congruence, brand identification and lifestyle-congruence—are found to have positive effects on consumer satisfaction. The findings of the study suggest that consumer satisfaction partially mediates the effects of staff behaviour, ideal self-congruence and brand identification on brand loyalty. The effects of physical quality and lifestyle-congruence on brand loyalty are fully mediated by consumer satisfaction. **Keywords:** brand equity, customer satisfaction, brand loyalty. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer satisfaction is essential to long-term business success, and one of the most frequently researched topics in marketing (e.g., Jones & Suh, 2000; Pappu & Quester, 2006). Because consumer satisfaction has been regarded a fundamental determinant of long-term business success, much of the research on consumer satisfaction investigates its impact on consumers' post consumption evaluations such as behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Cooil, Keiningham, Aksoy, & Hsu, 2007). It is widely accepted that satisfied consumers are less price sensitive, less influenced by competitors' attack and loyal to the firm longer than dissatisfied customers (Dimitriadis, 2006).

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Although previous research has examined the relationship between consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty, there has been only limited investigation into the impact of consumer satisfaction on the relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty. [Ekinici, Dawes, and Massey \(2008\)](#) developed and tested a conceptual model of the antecedents and consequences of consumer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. They show that consumer satisfaction mediates the relationship between the two components of service evaluation—service quality, self-congruence—and intentions to return. [Ekinici et al.'s \(2008\)](#) study is notable because it shows that service quality and ideal self-congruence are antecedents of consumer satisfaction, which they suggest is a key determinant of intention to return. However, by focusing on self-concept only, their research examines a narrow aspect of symbolic consumption within hospitality services. This study introduces a parsimonious measure of consumer-based brand equity which expands symbolic consumption of brand evaluation by incorporating brand identification and lifestyle-congruence into [Ekinici et al.'s \(2008\)](#) model of consumer satisfaction and [Aaker's \(1991\)](#) model of brand equity.

This study further contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the mediating role of consumer satisfaction on the relationship between consumer-based brand equity and brand loyalty. [Cai and Hobson \(2004\)](#) suggest an integrated approach to successful brand development and brand loyalty by taking into account brand experiences. Hence brand image and brand loyalty must be confirmed through positive customer experiences. Accordingly, the effect of brand equity on brand loyalty is examined when consumers have direct experiences with brands ([Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009](#)). Although past studies have proposed that brand equity has a direct influence on brand loyalty; to the best of our knowledge, no study has examined the influence of consumer satisfaction on the relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty in the hotel and restaurant industry.

RESEARCH MODEL

The purpose of this research is to investigate the mediating role of consumer satisfaction on the relationship between consumer-based brand equity and brand loyalty. [Figure 1](#) exhibits the research model that guides this research.

As [Figure 1](#) depicts, the important variables of this research include brand equity as the independent variable, consumer satisfaction as the mediating variable, and brand loyalty as the dependent variable. [Keller \(1993, p. 7\)](#) refers to brand equity as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on customers’ response to the marketing of a brand”. [Vazquez, Del Rio, and Iglesias \(2002\)](#) describe brand equity as the overall utility that the consumer associates with the use and consumption of the brand, including associations expressing both functional and symbolic attributes. More recently [Brady, Cronin, Fox, and Roehm](#) state that

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