FACTORS INFLUENCING VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS' BRAND LOYALTY
ON THE VIETNAMESE GARMENT BRANDS
IN THE PERIOD OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to evaluate the impact level and test the factors affecting brand loyalty of Vietnamese consumers to the garment products of Vietnamese garment brands. The qualitative research has removed 3 observed variables out of a total of 29 observed variables to suit the current real situation of factors affecting brand loyalty of customers. The quantitative research with 394 consumers currently using apparel products of the garment brands in Viet Nam. The results show that customers' garment brand loyalty is influenced by four factors including: (1) Perceived quality, (2) Brand identity, (3) Brand reputation, (4) Relationship quality.

Keywords: brand loyalty, garment brands

1. Introduction

In the era of development on human knowledge, people will pay more attention to consume high quality garment products as their social values and status are expressed through the use of costumes, therefore the perceived quality or brand trust affects customers' brand loyalty. Currently, the garment market in Vietnam is very diverse with many fashion brands such as Viet Tien, Ivymoda, Nem, Elise, May 10. They are the leading companies with many years of history and having high reputation. However, those companies have been focusing more than 80% of their capacity for exporting, not appreciate much on the domestic market, so their garment brands seem to be clustered and weak in comparison with foreign brands in the domestic market. This causes the brand loyalty of Vietnamese people to the Vietnamese garment brands has been evanescent. Therefore, the question are what factors affect the brand loyalty seem to be more important nowadays for answering for the demand of recovering and developing the local market for Vietnamese garment brands. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic has been occurred in a very serious and complicated for many years to date causing bad impact to export business activities of many enterprises, also to be a very urgent reason for detecting on building consumer loyalty for domestic customers.

In Vietnam, there are many researches on factors influencing consumers' brand loyalty, however, the research on brand loyalty on Vietnamese garment is very limited and there is no research on garment loyalty in regard to garment products of customers in the period of Covid-19 pandemic.

Building and maintaining brand loyalty is one of the major research topics for marketers from the pass to date.

Marketers have used a variety of ways to maintain customer loyalty. One of the recent way is to find factors that affect it and evaluate it. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of factors on brand loyalty. The scope of the study included shoppers in garment brands in Vietnam and data collected through the management of a questionnaire structures with a sample of 394 filled-in and tested by multi-step recovery using SPSS version 22.0. The result of this study shows that consumers' loyalty on garment products is positively influenced by: (1) perceived quality, (2) brand identity, (3) brand trust, (4) relationship quality.

2. Theoretical basis and model for researching

2.1. Concept on brand loyalty

In marketing, brand loyalty includes the consumers' commitment to re-buy or continue to use product or services of a specific brand. It can be proven by act of repeating on purchasing a specific product, service or other positive behavior such as oral propaganda. (Dick, Alan S; Basu, Kunal,1994). Brand experience occurs when consumers shop or look for, and sell products. Comprehensive experiences such as feelings, relations, actions and feelings occurred when people come into contact with the brand. More and more related to these senses for the individual, repeat buying behavior will be increasingly happened. Once the contact is made, the psychology will occur, decide whether to buy or not at the next time. This can lead to repeat purchase behavior, thus causing brand loyalty to begin to appear. Brand loyalty is not limited to repetitive behaviors, as there is a deeper psychological argument as to why an individual constantly buys products of a specific brand. Therefore, brand loyalty can be briefly defined as "willingness to maintain a relationship with a particular brand" (Kim & Ah Yu, 2016)

2.2. Perceived quality

Keller (2003) determined the perceived quality as a consumer perception of overall quality or assessed the superiority and specialty of a product or service based on its intended purpose in regard to other alternative choices. After all, perceived quality is a general and invisible feeling about the brand and the logo... In short, this concept expresses the customer's emotions and cognitive behavior toward a brand. The relationship between brand and loyalty has long been considered one of the basic structures in marketing.

According to Aaker (1991), customers will remain loyal to the brand when the brand has a high quality

product/service which persuade customers to buy such products having the brand regularly and ignore offers from other brands. This can even happen when branded products have higher prices. Customer value theory has argued that quality-loyalty relations are affected by perceptions of quality. Awareness of quality will in turn determine the customer's tendency to buy a product (Rao & Monroe, 1989) advocates empirical research on the concept of perceived quality as a subjective assessment of a brand and that cognitive quality has a key priority in influencing the brand loyalty.

2.3. Brand identity

Brand identity expressed through attitude of customers with some brand, customers actually develop a kind of relationship inside themselves, customers will identify their images which are reflected from goods and brand (Kapferer .J.N 2005, page 15, 16)

Brand identity is also known as self-connecting or self-expression in brand literature (Bruner 2009, Kressmann et al., 2006). Research has long examined the effect of self-congruence on brand loyalty (Malhotra 1988; Sirgy, 1982). Studies based on sociological perspectives have suggested that consumers purchase and consume products/brands that are consistent with their sense of self (Sirgy 1982).

The similarity between the consumer and the identity of a brand implies that a brand is considered by consumers to satisfy their need to maintain self-esteem or increased self-esteem (Kressmann et al., 2006; Sirgy 1982). The results of a survey by Kressmann et al. (2006) provide evidence that brand identity has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

2.4. Brand trust

"Expect confidence in the brand's credibility and intentions in situations that pose a risk to consumers" (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán 2005, page 574)

The concept of trust has been extensively studied in marketing as a key feature of any successful long-term relationship with exchange partners (Morgan & Hunt. 1994). A number of empirical studies have examined the impact of brand trust on brand commitment or brand loyalty. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) conducted a survey of commercial centers in three different time periods in the northeastern United States, with a valid sample of three phases of nearly 10,000 people and 41 types of products, including clothing, painkillers, candy, automobile tires, hotels. The results provide evidence that brand trust has a more positive impact on brand loyalty. When customers have a certain brand trust they will tend to be loyal to the brand (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001).

2.5. Relationship quality

Relationship quality is defined as "client-based index of strength and depth of relationship between people" (Fournier, 1994, p. 124).

Fournier (1994) argues that the relationship quality reflects the intensity and viability of long-term relationships between consumers and brands despite the presence of competing brands.

Based on the above discussion, the author proposes a model of consumer loyalty of the garment loyalty of customers as shown in Figure 1 with the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived quality positively affects garment brands loyalty; H2: Brand identity has a positive impact on garment brands loyalty; H3: Brand trust positively influences garment brands loyalty; H4: Relationship quality positively influences garment brands loyalty.

Figure 1:The proposed research model
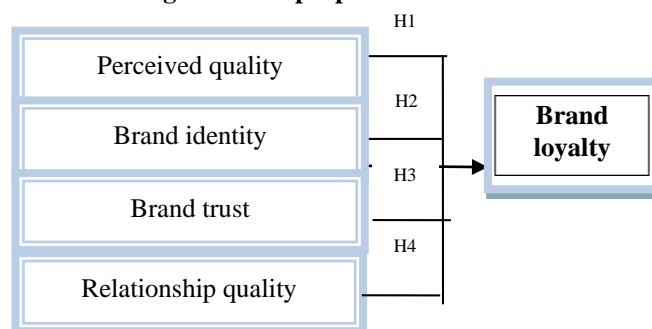
(Source: Synthesis of the author from theoretical and related studies)

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the author uses a mixture of qualitative research methods and quantitative methods.

3.1. Qualitative research method:

To understand the factors that affect the brand loyalty of consumers in Vietnam as well as the relationship between consumers and brands in the context of competition today. The author uses qualitative research methodology with semi-structured interview technique (n = 40 units). This method, also be known as probation sampling, is a technique in which interviewees are selected based on judgments about the appropriate characteristics they will present (Hair, Lukas & Miller, 2012; Zikmund et al., 2014). The use of this method is also the assessment of how consumers perceive the brand, whether the responses of Vietnamese consumers change or comment on the structure of the research.

3.2. Quantitative research method:

To test the scale, measure brands loyalty to Vietnamese garment brands of customers in the market of Hanoi. In the official quantitative study, scales were evaluated through three tools: (1) Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test; (2) Exploratory factor analysis (EFA); and (3) Descriptive statistics and regression analysis with a sample size of 394 units. The author collected data for the period from July 2017 to December 2017 for 420 consumers who are living in different districts in Hanoi: Long Bien District, Hai Ba Trung District, Dong Da District, Hoan Kiem District, Ba Dinh District, Tu Liem District. With 400 questionnaires returned and after screening, 394 questionnaires were sufficient for data analysis. The questions in the questionnaire were divided into five components: perceived quality, brand identity, relationship quality, brand trust, brand loyalty.

4. Research results

4.1. Results of qualitative research:

Based on the results of the review, the initial scale consisted of 40 statements representing the five dimensions of perceived quality (see the Dodds scale, Monroe & Grewal 1991; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000), brand identity (Mael & Ashforth 1992), quality of relationships (Fournier 2009), brand prestige (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-

Alemán 2005) and brand loyalty (Beatty & Kahle 1988; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman 1996).

In the interviews, the interviewee proposed to remove 03 observations and adjust the expression of some observational variables to suit the current situation for garment products of Vietnamese garment brands. Therefore, the total number of observable variables is 29 variables. Of these 23 variables observed represent four groups of factors: (1) perceived quality; (2) brand identity; (3) brand trust and (4) relationship quality; and 6 measuring variables (5) Brand loyalty.

4.2. Results of quantitative research:

Verbal scale independent and dependent variables:

Brand loyalty is assessed through 5 factors with 29 variables of observation. Cronbach Alpha Testing Criteria> 0.6 and a cumulative correlation coefficient> 0.4.

Thus, after being evaluated through the Cronbach coefficient, the coefficients are: Corrected Item-Total Correlation> 0.4 and Cronbach's Alpha> 0.6. The analysis results show that the independent and dependent variables of the study are highly reliable.

4.3. Accuracy testing of the model
Table 1: Evaluation results of the model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	0,756[a]	0,571	0,567	0,310	0,571	129,395	4	389	0,000	1,916
Initial Eigenvalues = 1, 681										
KMO = 0,843; Sig. = 0,000										

Source: Author's calculations

The results of Table 1 shows that 0.5≤KMO≤1, indicating that the results of the EFA analysis are reliable and that the analysis is appropriate, the Adjusted R Square = 0.567, 56.7% change in dependent variable. In addition, the ANOVA analysis showed that the value of F = 129,395, p value. = 0.000 less than 0.05 shows the correlation between independent variables (perceived quality, brand identity, relationship quality, brand trust) and dependent variable (loyalty consumer effect) is to guarantee more than 95% confidence.

Table 2: Regression results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	Constant	0,989	0,133		7,446	0,000	
	Perceived quality	0,244	0,024	0,363	10,378	0,000	1,107
	Brand identity	0,172	0,020	0,302	8,587	0,000	1,121
	Brand trust	0,261	0,025	0,369	10,394	0,000	1,145
	Relationship quality	0,086	0,028	0,112	3,122	0,002	1,174

Source: Author's calculator

The regression results in Table 2 show that p value of the perceived quality, brand identity, brand trust and relationship quality are equal to 0,000 (<0.05). It demonstrates that these variables affect brand loyalty on garment brands of customers in Vietnam.

In addition, all four variables have been found to have a positive impact to brand loyalty on garment brands of customers in Vietnam (Beta Standard Regression of Perceived Quality Variables, brand identity, brand trust and relationships quality are 0.363, 0.302, 0.369, 0.112, respectively, in which the impact of brand trust on consumers' brand loyalty on garment brands in Vietnam is greatest.

The research model is presented in the form of regression equation showing the level of impact of the factors as follows:

$$TT = 0,363*CL + 0,302*ND + 0,369*UT + 0,112*CLMQH + \varepsilon$$

(In which: CLMQH is relationship quality, ε is the random error)

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This research shows that consumers' brand loyalty on the garment brands in Vietnam is not really high. The four components of impact (perceived quality, brand identity, brand trust and relationship quality) account for 56.7% of customer' brand loyalty. With average loyalty, the average 6 month consumers shopping in garment brands in Vietnam from 3-5 times is 50.5%; 30% from over 5 times; remaining 19.5% less than 2 times (Source: Analyst from a survey of 394 consumers). Consumers evaluate perceived quality of garment brands in Vietnam is the highest level, while relationship quality was the lowest level.

In order to maintain and enhance the consumers' brand loyalty of the garment brands in Vietnam, I propose some recommendations as follows:

- Continue to improve the perceived quality: Strengthen communication activities on the richness in design, fabric quality, as well as diversity in the design and colour of the garment to help customers feel good in term of quality from the beginning as well as for their next purchases.

- Increase the level of brand identity to consumers: Expand the variety of sales channels (such as sell product on e-commerce sites, apply 3D technology in garment for online customers, expanding agents, chain stores ...), or promote advertising on social networking sites. Organizing programs to experience the new collections of the company, from which customers will connect with their friends and social networking to know about such products and its brand ...

- Improve brand trust: In addition to improve product quality and increasing the level of brand identification, commitments with customers (customer information security, punctual delivery, product warranty 3 days of return more and more improved ...) to help increase and improve brand trust.

- Tighten the quality of the relationship between consumers and brands: Constantly call; send sms messages, email to customers or contacting customers via Facebook for tightly caring customers (example: after 3-5 days from purchasing date, "May 10" need to call to such customers for asking whether they feel satisfied with its services or not and ask their comments in relation to products as well as introduce new design and model for each person in the customer's family) always support and special incentives for vip consumers, respond quickly to feedback

and consumers expectations (two-way communication), and always say "thank you" to the consumers.

By correctly identify key factors influencing brand loyalty, enterprises will have the appropriate measures under their capacity to secure and develop their business and to adapt, respond well with the fierce economic competition caused by the globalization process and the development of science and technology recently. This research has only been conducted in small scale in Hanoi so it is still necessary to study in a larger scale of other provinces to find differences between regions. Besides, brand loyalty has many other factors to influence, but this research result could be a reference for further research of the author in the future.

6. Contribution search:

-Having Criterized the factors affecting Consumers' Brand Loyalty based on inheritance from a number of domestic and international studies

- Having developed a research model to evaluate factors affecting Consumers' Brand Loyalty exclusively for the Vietnamese garment sector. The research has made some revision and supplement to suit the context of the Vietnamese business fashion business, due to economic conditions and shopping habits of Vietnamese consumers.

- Have proposed a method to solve problems according to a relatively new trend in order to maintain and develop consumers' loyalty to Vietnamese garment products. From there, it helps managers to have a more general perspective and have goals and decisions on business strategies for the stability, development and long-term of the business.

7 . Acknowlegement:

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