

Exploring The Influence of Brand Stories: the Role of Brand Biography, Brand Authenticity, And Brand Love In Shaping Customer Perceptions

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Abstract

The brand biographies which narrate the journey of founder and their company plays a crucial role in shaping the customer brand perception and ultimately on shaping their attitude towards the brand. To understand what role brand biographies play in shaping brand authenticity and brand love and eventually on customer perception and attitude formation we conducted an experimental study with the help of respondents who were asked the closed ended questions after reading the fictitious biography of the company which was manipulated for underdog and topdog orientations. The findings indicates that the brand biographies having underdog orientations are well believed by the customers in terms of being authentic Although no significant difference was found in brand love between underdog and topdog biographies while both brand love and brand authenticity significantly influence brand attitude.

Keywords: Brand biography, Underdog Brands, Topdog Brands, Brand Love ,Authenticity , Brand attitude

INTRODUCTION

India is a competitive market where the brands either new or established one face severe competition and thereby brand building activities plays a vital role in developing connect with the target customers and to stand out from the competition who might be serving the similar needs . Brand stories has been used as a strategic tool of communication by the companies these days to build a connection of the brand with customers in a cost efficient way rather than simply sharing company facts with the customers as it encourages discussion and is also helpful in changing customer behaviour .

BRAND BIOGRAPHY

With time the concept of brand storytelling has evolved to encompass a better understanding of company background ,the values and the purpose Brand biography which highlights brand's story and its historical development emphasizes on communicating the brand development process in encapsulating the company's journey ,the key milestones ,the success stories and the challenges encountered and how the company overcame .

A brand biography aims to introduce a company's identity, mission, and values to its target audience and foster a feeling of familiarity and connection with the brand. Brands while narrating their stories share their company journey of how and when they started and what happened during their life which they publish on their website or social media pages as brand biography. Most prominent description was done by Paharia et al (2011) who created a two-dimensional scale to categorise various brand stories in order to investigate it in greater detail: i.e. "external disadvantage and "passion and determination" According to their study underdog brands are the ones which are characterised by a large external adversities but tremendous enthusiasm along with the desire of the founders to attain difficult goals while the topdog brands comparatively do not face that very external adversities and is not totally dedicated to attain its goals .Herein they defined that an underdog story garnered more likeability by consumers as they perceived it to be their own style of life. It describes their own struggle to overcome an external environment in order to succeed or achieve a goal.

A similar statement was put forth by Nguyen TT. & Grohmann, B (2020) they studied how the narratives and post message engagement impact the customer purchase intention . Their study provides valuable insights on the how brand biographies which emphasizes passion and determination of the founders and how they overcame external disadvantages can help the brands to develop greater trust ,authenticity and emotional engagement with consumers Although use of external disadvantage in the brand story impacts the brand related perception positively but does not directly impact the customer purchase decision . The way a company displays its features online to gather more consumer attention explains how positive or negative an attitude it wants to project. The emphasis of a brand biography is to highlight key aspects

in common connection with good brand narration. Important two influencers are passion and external disadvantage that impacts a brand in market growth. A brand is projected as a human with distinct qualities that make its image in the locality under its biography. An effective mode of transporting this relation is achieved by good storytelling.

There are many such examples from diverse industry using the biography by media channels to make a connect with their audiences for their shows popular examples are the way a contestant is projected on Talent shows. There are many aspects upon which they shall be tested on. In order to do so channels create a bio for each selected individual highlighting his strengths as well as struggles which the contestant has faced during their lifetime. Many times, this theory of less fortunate economically poor contestants with decent talent has gathered more public votes, outvoting higher talented contestants for many rounds. This is also a point of criticism around the tv channels format of generating high TRP. These contestants dominated the show as people's perceived talent was ignored due to many factors and wanted them to succeed as they saw their own struggle in his/her story. Underdog theory often is maligned by such intent to cash on the emotions of the public. We thus intend to derive key factors of two-wheeler purchase based solely on their bio itself.

In our study we like to find out which story influences consumer to make a choice of a particular brand. Is the brand story significant for a consumer's choice of the brand?

Brand biography an effective way of describing the brand's journey mission and vision to their consumers. It depicts the trials, struggles and conviction used by the brand to finally put forth an idea into real form that would satisfy needs and wants for transportation to general public. Nagar. K (2017) further in their study found that when the customers go through stories of the existing well-known brand where it is portrayed as a underdog they tend to support them more rather than supporting a new brand if all the conditions remain same According to another study was done by Kao (2015) among graduate students who were working, found out that an underdog disposition was more likely to have stronger preference for established companies who had underdog biography than the new company that also had an explicit underdog biography. In contrast to that, when provided with the subtle use of underdog brand biography, the consumers whose self-disposition is more of underdog they did not show any significant difference in preference for already established and for the upcoming brands. Also, it was found that the customers who had weak disposition of underdog were found to be preferring the established brands in comparison to the emerging ones despite both brands were using underdog brand biographies.

BRAND PERCEPTION

Brand related perception is considered as one of the important concept of marketing which consists of how much the customer is aware about the brand and what image comes to their mind after they hear anything about it (Keller, K.L., 1998). Brand awareness is one of the important but not the sufficient reason that leads to the purchase of the product. While brand image is formed and reflected through the different brand related links held by the customers in their memory (Keller, 2013). In other words we can describe it as a perception of the brand based on previous interactions of the customers with the brand and what was their experience related to it. (Wijaya, B. S., 2013).

For consumers while making the purchase decisions how the brand performs in terms of its competence or perceived ability it does matter but also the customers do care of the relational aspect (Aaker, J. L. et.al, 2004) and emotional aspect (Ahuvia, A.C., 2005; Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P., 2010) of the brand perception rather than focusing only on features and benefits that the brand can offer. A brand perception survey allows a business to seek out how customers feel about their brand, how much they are satisfied with the offerings of the company and their chances of recommending it to their acquaintances.

It's a vital tool in brand management. Many businesses seek the assistance of a brand management agency in conducting a survey and within the overall management of a corporation brand. Brand perception also helps in product positioning and furthers creating an effective advertising and marketing communications.

Moreover, brand perception plays an important role in making effective advertising and marketing communications. Effective campaigns that are created using the insights of the target audience based on how they view the brand while ensuring that the brand communication resonate and strengthen the desired brand image. The brand perception and communication ones in line with each other enhances the consistent brand narrative which eventually enhances the overall brand equity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BRAND AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity which means to represent one's true being self and unique identity (Guthey & Jackson, 2005). Brands that shows their dedication in delivering their promises are considered authentic. The extend to which the consumers perceive a brand to be true to itself, loyal to its customers and is driven by care and responsibility the more they consider it to be more believable.

The perceived brand authenticity has four key elements i.e. continuity (brand being true to itself by maintaining consistency), credibility (being honest to its consumers), integrity (driven by sense of responsibility and compassion), symbolism (helping consumers for self-expression). These four elements help in capturing the key concept of authenticity which is far more than the objective attribute and includes other important aspects like psychological, subjective and symbolic values too. Authentic brands help customers to be true to themselves and help to hold what they value.

In study by Oh, H. et.al (2019) it is observed that authenticity is a basic factor to position a product in order to promote it. Purchase is cognition based and hence we must incorporate a better authentic strategy. As we move ahead, influence of authentic products is characterized by their heritage, nostalgia, commercialization, clarity, commitment, legitimate approach, self-congruent analysis and passion in perception of the buyer. (Fritz, K. et.al, 2017)

Further exploration by Sergio A et al leads us to determine the correlation amongst consumer's commitment and selection of a brand. It fully takes into consideration segments of consumers in market and strategy involved in advertising campaigns to particular segments. To understand how a particular brand is connected to its purchase segments and their buying patterns, a prominent aspect is self-reinforcement of the asset as derived by Oh, H. et.al (2019). Lude, M. et.al (2023) in their study found underdog brand stories leads to favourable customer response on brand authenticity and developing trust for family owned brands more than the non-family run businesses.

Brand Love

Ahuvia, A. C. (1993) proposes that consumers experiences love for the brand when the brand helps in achieving both their actual and ideal self. Carroll, B.A. & Ahuvia, A. (2006) proposes that the brand love consists of favourable evaluation of the brand and the customers are having positive opinion about the brand. Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012) in their study investigated the dimensions of brand love and observed that the consumers integrate the brand into their self-concept and see it as a reflection of their own identity. The consumers show a strong emotional and behavioural engagement with the brand that they love.

The concept of self-brand integration appears to be more appropriate with regards to brand biographies as it refers to the ability of a brand to help customers to express themselves as who they actually are and also how they wanted to see themselves Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Hence if the consumer sees their own identity reflected in brand through the brand biography they should fall in high level of brand love.

Andini, A., & Tuti, M. (2024) in their study elaborated that brands that focus on fulfilling customer needs and delivering customer values and provide an overall satisfactory experience to the customers win the heart of the customer as they started loving these brands but that does not necessarily lead to brand loyalty. Singh. A suggested three key elements which shapes brand love i.e. intimacy, passion, and commitment which can help to measure the potential of the brand and can lead to consumers switching from one brand to another brands.

Carroll, B.A. & Ahuvia, A. (2006) stated that consumers love those brands which are considered to be hedonic and which offers meaningful benefits, this can further lead to brand loyalty and customer tend to talk good things about the company. Bergkvist, L., & Bech-Larsen, T (2010) described that a sense of community and brand identity can impact brand love which eventually can lead to brand loyalty and active brand engagement. Rossiter, J.R (2012) in their study examined various aspects of brand love and how it differs from brand liking utilising the C-OAR-SE method wherein they found that the brand purchase and subsequently their likelihood of getting recommendation increases for the brands that they love rather than the ones they only like.

Huber, F., Meyer, F., & Schmid, D. A. (2015) in their study found the impact of inner-self to be more profound than the social-self for creating brand love. Roy, P. et.al (2016) found that in case of counterfeit products the consumers who show the brand love are engaged in spreading positive word of mouth as it matches social self.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- 1) To study the role of brand biography and its effect on customers perception formation
- 2) To study the effect of brand authenticity and brand love on customer brand attitude formation

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this research we have studied the role of brand biography on customer perception formation. We have conducted experimental research whereby we have developed two fictitious biographies of the company which were manipulated for Underdog and Topdog orientations. The biographies were framed considering two approaches of Paharia et al (2011) i.e. external disadvantage for the founder with respect to its competitors and passion and determination of the founder. Also we took inspiration from the research work of Porth.R (2016) and Nguyen, T.T. (2017) for the biographies content development.

After reading biographies of the company a short manipulation check was done about the stimulus whereby the respondents were asked if they have any knowledge of the company whose details they had read as a brand story and in case the respondent shows familiarity with the company story such cases were removed from the final analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was created consisting close ended questions on 7 point Likert scale measures ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) to measure the impact of brand biography on perception formation. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify the respondents. We collected responses from 325 respondents from reputed university of North India. As 25 respondents were found to be undergraduates and diploma holders hence those have been removed from the final analysis as the respondents should be having enough experience in purchase decision making. Also as the respondents were shown biography of the fictitious brand even though 73 respondents have shown familiarity to the fictitious company biographies indicating that they were aware about the brand before going through the questionnaire which actually should not be occurring as respondents were exposed to fictitious brand stories hence such cases were excluded from the study and finally the analysis was done for 227 responses.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Reliability Statistics

To measure the internal consistency of a scale Lee Cronbach in 1951 developed Cronbach's alpha which is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. Internal consistency which is related to the interrelatedness of the items describes the extent to which all the items are able to measure the construct. Internal consistency should be determined before a test is applied for research or for examination purpose to ensure validity.

Reliability Statisticsa

Cronbach's Alphaa	N of Itemsa
.979	33

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha

From the above table 1 we can see that the Cronbach's Alpha is .979 which means the research is 97.9% reliable. In the overall quantities based data and output are relevant and reliable. Hence we can proceed for further analysis.

Demographic Details of Respondents

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	68	30.0
	Male	159	70.0
	Prefer not to say	0	0

Age	15-30 years	205	90.3
	31-40 years	13	5.7
	41-60 years	8	3.5
	61 years & above	1	0.4
Education qualification	Graduate	121	53.3
	Post Graduate and above	106	46.7

Table 2 Demographic Details

From the above table 2 we can see that out of the total respondents, the majority are male i.e. 70% while 30 % are female respondents . Also majority of the respondents i.e. 90.3 % are of 15-30 years age while 5.7 % of 31-40 age and 3.5% has age between 41-60 years and 0.4% has age 61 years and above. Also, as per the educational qualification most of the respondents i.e. 53.3% were while 46.70 % were having post-graduation and above as their education.

Brand perception variables and biographies

To study the effect of brand biographies and their impact on the perception formation on customers we firstly asked the respondents to study the stories of the fictitious brands prior to responding to questionnaire .The perception of the brand was studied through the variables i.e. brand love and brand authenticity .

The below table compare the descriptive statistics for the respondents who studied the underdog vs topdog biographies and their responses related to brand love and brand authenticity.

	Brand Love	Brand Authenticity
Underdog		
Mean	3.93	3.95
SD	1.58	1.54
N	227	227
Topdog		
Mean	3.63	3.89
SD	1.50	1.58
N	227	227

Table 3 :Means, SD and N

The above table 3 shows that mean for both the brand love and brand authenticity are higher i.e. (3.93)and (3.95) respectively for underdog brand while for topdog brand, brand authenticity (3.89) is perceived more than the brand love (3.63) .

One way ANOVA was conducted for both brand love and brand authenticity where the brand biography which was manipulated as underdog and topdog were coded as 1=underdog biography and 2= Topdog biography

Brand Authenticity

One way ANOVA test where Brand Authenticity was considered as dependent variable and brand biography as independent variable was applied. The results shows a significant difference in brand authenticity between the groups ($p < .05$) who studied the underdog biography and the ones who studied topdog biography

ANOVA

BBType

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17.198	30	.573	2.518	.000
Within Groups	96.302	423	.228		
Total	113.500	453			

Table 4 The One-Way ANOVA result shows that's the responses are significantly different for brand authenticity between the groups ($p < 0.05$), $F=2.518$, $p < .000$ which clearly indicates that when the brands were portrayed as underdog in the brand stories the respondents considered them to be more authentic ($MUD=3.95$, $SD=1.54$) in comparison to the brand biographies which have topdog elements ($MTD=3.89$, $SD=1.58$)

Brand Love

One way ANOVA test where Brand Love was considered as dependent variable and brand biography as independent variable was applied. The results indicates (table 5) that there is no significant difference is observed for brand love between the two groups as the p-value (.448) is greater than 0.05

ANOVA

BBType

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.615	30	.254	1.014	.448
Within Groups	105.885	423	.250		
Total	113.500	453			

Table 5

Brand Attitude

Further we performed the regression analysis to study the impact of brand love and brand authenticity on brand attitude formation

From the table below (table 6) we can see $R=.766$ and the value of Adjusted R Square is .765 both are greater than .5. In totality, the found that the model was able to explain 76.5% of the variation of the brand attitude (adjusted $R^2 = .765$). Hence, this model is fit.

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.875 ^a	.766	.765	.53204	1.952

a. Predictors: (Constant), brandauthenticity, brandlove

b. Dependent Variable: brandattitude

Table 6

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.550	.069		22.549	.000
	brandlove	.305	.033	.432	9.311	.000
	brandauthenticity	.332	.033	.473	10.198	.000

a. Dependent Variable: brandattitude

Table 7

From the above table (table 7) we can find that p value is less than .05 for both brand love and brand authenticity hence both the brand love and brand authenticity have significant effect on shaping the brand attitude.

Managerial Implications:

The takeaways for the company and managers who wants to excel in their business. are:

1) Use of Underdog Narratives to ensure Authenticity:

Brand managers should consider putting more emphasis on narrating underdog stories as a part of their branding strategies so as to enhance the perceived authenticity of their brands as underdog brand biographies are perceived more authentic than the topdog brand biographies. The results are in tandem with the findings of earlier studies done by (Paharia et.al, 2011) where they observed that the consumers

prefer brands that demonstrate resilience and authenticity through underdog narratives

2) Strengthen Brand Love:

Based on the regression analysis where brand love was found to have substantial impact on brand attitude hence, we suggest managers to put more initiatives to foster brand love which can be done by creating emotionally engaging marketing campaigns, maintaining regular and positive interactions with customers or by offering personalized customer experiences .

3) Diligent approach for shaping brand attitude :

Brand attitude which is significantly influenced both by brand love and brand authenticity hence brand managers should both diligently and carefully work on both the dimensions .To ascertain that brand managers can use emotional storytelling to build emotional connections ,engage with customers actively and provide exceptional customer service .Also with transparent and regular communication with customers ,authentic storytelling and following ethical practices can help the brand to perceive as more authentic .With that the brand should continuously monitor consumer perception and foster deeper consumer engagement and loyalty which ultimately leads to stronger brand attitude.

4) Leveraging brand authenticity to achieve Competitive Advantage:

As brand authenticity is perceived more favorably in underdog brands, companies should strategize it as an important tool to attain competitive advantage which can be done by focusing on transparent communication ,communicating and abiding to the promises made by the company to its customers and talking about the company vast history.

5) Continuous Monitoring and Adjustment:

Brand perception being dynamic in nature needs continuous monitoring .Hence, we suggest company and brand managers to use tools like customer feedback surveys, social media handles to check their brand health and can further adjust strategies in real-time.

CONCLUSION:

From this study, we can conclude that the brand biographies have an impact on the perception formation of the customers. The brands that were using underdog brand biographies i.e. highlighting their passion inspite of having limitations of resources were perceived to be more authentic , which can act as a strategic asset for brands aiming to enhance authenticity .Also both brand love and brand authenticity significantly influence brand attitude hence brands that focus on building strong emotional connections and maintain genuine and transparent practices are likely to develop better connect with consumers.

In nutshell we can say that communicating the underdog narratives with the elements of brand love and authenticity can significantly impact consumer perceptions and attitudes. These strategies can be used while making brand's marketing and overall business strategy to make strong positive customer relationships which eventually will help in achieving long term success.

Limitations of the study and future scope of work

The current study is done on fictitious brands with the brand biographies having underdog and topdog orientations which may not capture the full spectrum of brand stories such as founder led narratives ,socially responsible branding or technological innovation stories which might also differently impact consumer perception so in future we can conduct study by building different brand narratives .Also in our study we have captured consumer perceptions at a single point of time while longitudinal studies can be conducted which could provide further insights into how perceptions of brand trust ,authenticity ,love and attitude might evolve over time and long term impact of brand biographies on them can be further studied.

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