

Chapter 72

Cultivating Emotional Branding Through Customer Experience Management: From the Holistic Experience Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Emotional branding promotes customer's long-lasting psychological attachment to a brand. Customer experiences with products and services trigger emotional responses. Therefore, customer experience management is imperative for generating pleasant emotions. Yet the delivery of customer experiences is viewed in a holistic manner. Customer experience management can be effectively integrated into a brand strategy to drive customers' positive behavioural and attitudinal intentions. The customer experiences play a pivotal role in the generation of positive emotions. Adopting an appropriate combination and priority of experience elements is essential to create customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment in order to develop true loyalty. The traditional tactical approach of marketing-mix elements is purely marketing driven and does not fit well in the CEOs expectations. These experience-mix elements will help the organizations to become market driving, which is even beyond the market-driven approach and thus will generate sustainable competitive advantage.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, companies in all sectors have increasingly acknowledged the importance of emotional branding. The marketing literature suggests that the success of branding strategy lies in customer engagement at an emotional level (Gobe, 2001, Keller, 2003, Morrison & Crane, 2007). A key reason for the increasing emphasis on emotional branding is that the lifetime value of emotionally

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7116-2.ch072

connected customers is more in comparison to functionally satisfied customers (Zorfas & Lemoon, 2016). Emotions are crucial to improve the consumption experiences of customers (Fournier, 1998; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003). Customers' primary emotions such as happiness, joy, surprise, disgust, fear, anger, and sadness more prominently express their liking or disliking for a brand. Therefore, in their quest to nurture long-term positive relationships, it is necessary to develop positive emotions. While, a firm's performance on customer expectancy standards may subsidize occurrence of customers' negative emotions (Kotler, Armstrong, Agnihotri, & Haque, 2011).

Firms, therefore, should emphasize deeper concentration to execute marketing programmes with a focus on designing customers' experiences that drives powerful affective connections with customers (Zorfas & Lemoon, 2016, Singh & Saini, 2016b). Customers' emotional expressions like the feeling of connectedness with a brand, love towards a brand, to become a renowned member of the specific brand community, and/or symbolize the upper social status by purchasing a particular brand drives through positive emotional experiences (Fournier, 1998; Singh & Saini, 2016b). A brand's positive emotional experiences create and strengthen customers' cognitive and emotional commitment towards a brand that further motivates them to be loyal towards a brand. CEM develops an affective connection of customer to a brand which is much beyond the transactional benefits based satisfaction (Berry & Carbone, 2007; Mattila & Enz, 2002; Singh & Saini, 2016a; White & Yu, 2005). The concept of customer experience management (CEM) has attracted much attention in recent years. A key motivation for growing emphasis on the importance of CEM can be attributed to the fact that positive customer experience is the key factor for the firm to have a committed and loyal customer base (Singh & Saini, 2016b). A committed and loyal customer base helps a firm to maintain a strong competitive advantage that may further positively impact firm's profitability and market share (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Thus, it is likely that gaining more understanding about CEM would help the firms in cultivating emotional connections with customers. Although, there is a substantial amount of evidence available in the literature regarding role of emotions in building strong customer-firm relationships, while an emotion-based branding strategy with effect from CEM has not been considered widely. In order to fill the prevailing gap, this chapter aims to provide a detailed framework to design the emotional branding strategies with effect of CEM. The research intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the role of CEM in cultivating emotional branding.
2. To identify the experiential components of CEM to make successful emotional connections in order to execute emotional branding strategies.

The chapter is divided into four different sections. First, the prior literature of key constructs has been reviewed. Second, to fill the prevailing research gap, the proposed framework of cultivating emotional branding through CEM has been presented. Consistent with the importance of CEM in emotional building, the detailed understanding of different experience components have been discussed. Third section has been followed by a discussion and implications. In the last section, the study has been concluded with the limitations and directions for future research.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the literature review is to study the key constructs of interest.

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