Development of the Brand Experience Scale

Lia Zarantonello, IULM University
Bernd Schmitt, Columbia School of Business, Columbia University
J. Josko Brakus, William E. Simon Graduate School of Business, University of Rochester

Although the topic of “experiential branding” has attracted a lot of attention in marketing practice, little conceptual and empirical work has been conducted in consumer research. Drawing on the theory of mind modularity, we present a conceptual framework of brand experience that is used to construct a Brand Experience Scale. We distinguish five facets of experiences (sensory, affective, social, bodily, and intellectual) and use standard scale development procedures (item generation, scale purification, and factor analyses etc.) to design a scale that measures the brand experience and its facets in a reliable and valid way.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12575/volumes/v34/NA-34

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The topic of “experiential branding” has attracted great attention from marketing practitioners, and several trade books have appeared in the market (Andersson and Andersson 2006; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999, 2003; Shaw and Ivens 2002; Smith and Wheeler 2002). However, little conceptual and empirical work has been done on that topic. One major reason may be the lack of a brand experience scale, compared to other brand related areas where scales exist, e.g., the Brand Personality Scale (Aaker 1997) or the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics Scale (Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003).

Here we present our research to develop a theory-based reliable and valid brand experience scale. Drawing on the theory of mind modularity (Fodor 1983; Pinker 1997; Plotkin 1998; Tooby and Cosmides 2000) and an experience categorization by Dewey (Dewey 1922; 1925; see also Dubé and LeBel 2003), we propose that consumer experiences with a brand arise when consumers are exposed to brands and pay attention to the experiential aspects of brands executions. Experiential cues appear as colors, typefaces, emoticons, smiley faces, word games and the like, on brand communications such as print and TV advertising, packaging, in events and stores, on web sites and mobile electronic communications and, at times, on the product as such. We propose that brand experiences consist of five types: sensory, affective, social, bodily, and intellectual. Empirically, we develop a scale that measures each facet of experience and show that different brands can be differentiated on these experience factors.

Item Generation

We first generated items that cover the five facets of experience. An extensive literature review and search for concepts was undertaken. For sensory items we examined research related to aesthetics (Arnheim 1974; Berlyne 1974; Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold 2003; Feibeleman 1945; Postrel 2003; Schmitt and Simonson 1997). For affective items we reviewed the literature on affect and emotions in consumer behavior (Cohen and Areni 1998; Edell and Burke 1987; Holbrook and Batra 1987; Richins 1997) and on the psychology of emotions (e.g. Izard 1978; Plutchik and Kellerman 1989). We covered intellectual experiences using Guilford’s (1956) intelligence research, and we also looked at creative thinking and applications of creative thinking in advertising (Smith and Yang 2004; Torrance 1987). For consumer bodily experiences, we reviewed the literature on physical/behavioral and lifestyles aspects (e.g. Brehm and Kassin 1990; Helman and De Chernatony 1999; Richins 1983; Solomon 2004). Finally, for consumers’ social experiences, we reviewed the literature on brand communities (Cova and Cova 2002; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

After initial face-validity screening and empirical screening by an expert panel of consumer researchers and experience consultants, who rated on a Likert scale the degree to which the items referred to brand experiences, a set of 125 applicable items was retained: 24 sensory, 29 affective, 26 intellectual, 23 bodily, and 23 social items. Of these items, about one third were presented as negatively worded.

Next, a sample of 30 university students participated in a study on brand experiences. After explaining the concept of brand experience to the students, we asked them to evaluate to which extent the 125 items were descriptive of their experiences with brands, using a 7-point scale (1=“not at all descriptive,” 7=“extremely descriptive”). Additional open ended questions were asked to assess the quality of the items. We retained items with a mean value greater than 4.0 and with a standard deviation smaller than 2.00. A total of 83 items was left: 23 (7 negative) for sensory, 13 (7 negative) for affective, 10 (8 negative) for intellectual, 18 (7 negative) for bodily and 19 (7 negative) for social experiences.

Brand Selection

Next, 68 university students were asked to think of three distinct product categories. They were also asked to pick one brand for each product category that they believed was marketed in an experiential fashion and one that they believed was not marketed in an experiential fashion.

Brands with the highest rating were ranked for a total of 21 brands: 16 experiential (Abercrombie & Fitch, Apple, Barnes & Noble, BMW, Coca Cola, Jet Blue, McDonald’s, Nike, Reebok, Sony, Starbucks, Target, Tiffany, Virgin, W Hotels, Whole Foods) and 5 non-experiential (Dell, Gristedes, IBM, Poland Spring, Wal-Mart).

The 21 brands were then randomly split into five groups, and to assess internal consistency, one brand (Apple) was included in each of them.

Factor Analysis

293 students from three universities completed a questionnaire on brand experiences, by judging to which extent the 83 items described their experiences with the 5 brands listed. To reduce primacy and recency effects, five different versions of questionnaire were prepared. After excluding 4 items which were not properly understood by more than 10% of participants, a factor analysis using Varimax rotation resulted in a nine factor solution using the eigenvalues>1 criterion, but only the first five factors were significant based on scree plot. The first factor contained mostly intellectual items, the second included affective and social items, the third included sensory items, the fourth comprised bodily items, and the fifth included sensory items again. We also conducted another exploratory factor analysis by restricting the number of factors to 4. Results showed that sensory items grouped together, and that the other three factors contained respectively intellectual, bodily, and a combination of affective and social items. The total variance explained was 62.06%. For each factor, those items with a loading greater than .7 were retained, for a total of 19 items (6 sense, 5 feel/relate, 6 think, 2 act). Each factor (i.e., subscale of the Brand Experience Scale) had a high or acceptable coefficient alpha (think: .93, sense: .92, feel/relate: .92, act: .78).

The mean values of the 83 items for each of the 21 brands were then calculated. All the “experiential brands” had higher mean values (Abercrombie & Fitch: 3.70; Apple: 4.96; Barnes & Noble: 4.19; BMW: 4.92; Coca Cola: 3.93; Jet Blue: 4.20; McDonald’s: 4.06; Nike: 4.61; Reebok: 3.52; Sony: 4.18; Starbucks: 4.32; Target: 3.73; Tiffany: 4.44; Virgin: 3.95; W Hotels: 3.74; Whole Foods: 4.74) than all the “non-experiential brands” (Dell: 3.48; Gristedes: 3.10; IBM: 3.25; Poland Spring: 3.47; Wal-Mart: 3.22). Moreover, the Apple means were highly consistent (all means ranged from 4.81 to 5.03).
Confirmative Factor Analyses

We then worked on a shorter version of the scale, which consisted of 12 items. As sensory items we had “I find this brand interesting in a sensory way,” “This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses,” and “This brand does not appeal to my senses.” Emotions were addressed with items such as “This brand induces feelings and sentiments,” “I do not have strong emotions for this brand,” and “This brand is an emotional brand”. The intellectual sphere was investigated with the items “This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving,” “I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand,” and “This brand does not make me think”. Finally, as behavioral items we had “I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand,” “This brand results in bodily experiences,” and “This brand is not action oriented”.

We also prepared another series of brands and we divided them randomly in 6 groups of five brands each (Adidas, American Express, Ben & Jerry, Blackberry, Calvin Klein, Clinique, Crate & Barrel, Dannon, Disney, Ferrari, Gatorade, Gillette Mach3, Hallmark, Harley Davidson, Hershey’s, iPod, L’Oreal, La Prairie, Lego, Motorola, Nokia, Prada, Puma, Samsung, Starbucks, Sudoku, Toys”r”us, Tropicana, Viagra, Victoria’s Secret).

Then, we asked 193 students from Columbia University to evaluate to what extent they agreed the items were descriptive of their experience with the brands listed, by using a 7-point Likert scale (1=“strongly disagree,” 7=“strongly agree”). Exploratory factor analysis revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The three factors explained 67.17% of variance. After the Varimax rotation was applied, a clean factor structure emerged. Three “sense” and three “feel/relate” items loaded on one factor (with one loading equal to .59, another equal to .63, and the rest greater than .72); three “act” items loaded on the second factor (all loadings greater than .72); finally, three “think” items loaded on the third factor (all loadings greater than .75).

We then ran another exploratory factor analysis on the six “sense” and “feel/relate” items that loaded on the first factor in the analysis above. After we applied the Varimax rotation, this subsequent analysis revealed two “nested” factors—the “sense” factor (all loadings greater than .72) and the “feel/relate” factor (all loadings greater than .69). These two factors explained 74.3% of variance generated by these six items only.

Consequently, it seemed that the best model was the three factor model: “act” items loading on one factor, “think” items loading on another factor, and the two “nested” factors within the third factor—“sense” and “feel/relate”.

After we analyzed a number of models, the confirmatory factor analyses confirmed that the best models were the one that emerged in the exploratory analysis (the three factors plus two “nested” factors; see above) and the conceptually similar four-factor model: sense, feel/relate, act, and think. Its GFI was equal to .92 and CFI to .92; the lower bound of the 90% confidence interval of the RMSEA estimate was .08 indicating borderline reasonable fit. Since it is easier to implement the four factor “non-nested” model as a measurement tool, we decided to further work with that model.

Current Work

We are now testing both the divergent and predictive validity of the Brand Experience Scale. More specifically, the next study aims at showing that our scale measures a construct different from that measured by other scales, i.e. the Brand Personality Scale. Another study wants to demonstrate the impact that the brand experience has on brand loyalty, brand attitude, customer delight, and customer satisfaction.

REFERENCES


