Development of a Scale For French Consumer Brand Equity

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Abstract: Little research has been done to develop a scale to measure consumer-brand equity. The authors report the results of a multi-step study to develop and validate a multidimensional brand equity scale. A total of 801 consumers evaluated athletics shoes, coffee and cars. Multi-step psychometric tests demonstrate that the new brand equity scale is reliable and valid. Four factors are revealed: loyalty, brand knowledge, quality/price and social value. Key words: Consumer brand equity, scale

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Over the past 10 years, a growing stream of scholarship has contributed new insights on building and managing consumer brand equity. Brand equity refers to the value added by the brand name to the product (Farquhar 1989). Findings have shown that a product’s brand equity positively affects future profiles and long term cash-flow (Srivastava and Shocker 1991) and mergers and acquisitions (Mahajan and al. 1994). However, this field of research has stagnated owing to a lack of consensus concerning the definition of the main construct and how it can be measured.
Park and Srinivasan (1994), distinguish between two kinds of definition. The first category refers to a firm point of view for measuring brand equity. From this perspective, equity is considered as the financial worth of the brand. The second category of definition is related to the consumer’s point of view and refers to the preference or the perception of added value of a brand name.

There are many methods for measuring consumer based brand equity. Researchers currently use ad hoc measures such as price premium (Aaker 1991), conjoint analyse value of brand names (Cobb-Walgren and al. 1995), collections of consumer-based perceptions (Agarwal and Rao 1996) or scanner data (Kamakura and Russel 1993). However all of these measurements are primarily used by managers since they don’t include separate dimensions of brand equity.

In this vein, Yoo and Donthu (2001) were the first to develop a multidimensional consumer brand equity scale and to focus on its psychometric proprieties. The authors found three dimensions: loyalty, brand association/attention and perceived quality. These dimensions were later approved by Washburn and Plank (2002) who underlined the need to refine the dimensionality of brand equity such as perceived quality which should include price effect.

The use of student samples has limited previous research. Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Washburn and Plank (2002), both used student samples to validate their consumer brand-equity scales. The aim of this research is to further refine the subtlety of brand equity analysis previously undertaken by the aforementioned authors by introducing more discriminating indicators and at the same time to create a French consumer brand equity scale.

In order to develop this scale, three studies were conducted taking into consideration Churchill’s paradigm. The objective of the first study was to generate a pool of items. After realising a series of 16 in-depth student interviews and a review of relevant literature, 43 items were selected. Three marketing experts then evaluated the content validity of these items. Each expert was presented with a brief definition of consumer brand equity and was asked to match the definition with the appropriate items. This process resulted in a set of 23 items for further analysis.

The objective of the second study was to refine and to test the 23 items. For this reason, data was collected concerning a random sample of 25 brands of athletic shoes via e-mail surveys. A total of 455 usable responses were received. The results of exploratory principal components factor analysis suggest a 12-item scale with four dimensions. As with Yoo and Donthu’s scale, the first two factors capture the value facet of loyalty and perceived brand quality. The third factor captures brand knowledge which is divided into brand recognition and brand awareness (Keller 1993; Aaker 1992). Finally, the forth dimension refers to the social value related to the consumption of the brand. Exploratory results seemed reasonable and parsimonious, and encouraged further structural testing using confirmatory factor analysis.

The third study was conducted to generate data for confirmatory factor analysis. Once again, the survey was e-mailed to a random and anonym sample of French consumers. Two questionnaires links were sent; the first surveyed two car brands (Clio and Opel Corsa) and the second addressed the equity of two French coffee brands (Carte noire and Grand’Mère). These surveys resulted in 346 usable questionnaires. A series of confirmatory models was examined and evaluated using SEPATH module. The results give a good fit index (e.g., RMSEA_Carte Noire=0.052 and GFI_Carte Noire= 0.943 (Hair and al. 1998)) and definitely prove that the structure of consumer brand questionnaires. A series of confirmatory models was examined and evaluated using SEPATH module. The results give a good fit index and the second addressed the equity of two French coffee brands (Carte noire and Grand’Mère).

The findings of this study differ from other research because, in contrast to Yoo and Donthu’s scale, we distinguish conceptually and empirically between brand association and brand awareness. This choice is supported by Low and Lamb (2000) who demonstrate that associations represent a more global concept and can be split into many dimensions. Second, social value is considered here as an independent dimension. In this way, Keller (2003) proposed that a new intriguing line of research, related to brand communities (Muniz and O’Guinn 2000) or subculture consumption (Mc Alexander 1995) can influence the overall evaluation of the value and the degree of brand knowledge. We think that the emergence of this social dimension is due in part to these new kinds and styles of consumption. Furthermore, according to Michel (1999), social representations of the brand are imbedded in the core of mental representation of French consumers. Finally as Nunnallay and Berstein (1994) say, scales are made by: “conventions or agreements among scientists about a good scaling”. Thus, we intend to test and validate this study in other cultural contexts by using representative samples.

References