
An Analytical Study on Brand Engagement in Self-Concept: A Perspective of Pakistan's Consumer Market

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This paper contributes to a new construct Brand Engagement in Self-Concept (BESC) in Pakistani consumer market. The purpose of the study was to analyze if Self Brand Connection (SBC) and BESC coexist. The study also determines the relationship of BESC with some aspects of consumer behavior, specifically with behavioral intentions. Findings show that BESC relates to the brand loyalty, satisfaction, likelihood of repurchase and switching costs; but it has no relation with price sensitivity and time sensitivity. The study reveals that the demographical factors of age and gender have no significant impact on BESC, while marital status and household income have a significant effect on BESC.

Introduction

In the previous decade, researchers have been working considerably on the relationship building between brands and the consumers (Aaker, Fournier and Brasel 2004); (Chaplin and John 2005); (J. E. Escalas 2004). What makes consumers to recall brands? How an experience is being made memorable for the consumers? (Vieira 2010) What strategies make a brand to capture share of mind and share of heart? These questions are important in a sense that they would help marketers and managers to create strong brands (Vieira 2010). The answers to these questions generate the concept of BESC.

BESC is relatively a new conception in the world of marketing and the branding prose (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009). The major concept which is considered as a base in this research is SBC. The researchers have explored the connections between the consumers and their brands and found that SBCs existed and lead to positive attitudes toward brands (Escalas and Bettman 2003, J. E. Escalas 2004, Escalas and Bettman 2005). Former researches mainly considered the connection and association between the self-concept of a consumer and a specific brand (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009). Comparatively, recent studies demonstrate that BESC is a generalized individual difference which

proposes a phenomenon of general engagement of a consumer with many brands. These studies have examined the importance of BESC and have analyzed that how consumers tend to consider various brands as fraction of their selves (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009, Vieira 2010). These two studies have been considered as a support for this research.

The current research is about exploring BESC and analyzing this construct with other major phenomena of marketing such as, loyalty intentions, behavioral intentions, switching costs and satisfaction. It also demonstrates the demographics effects on BESC and measurement of BESC with respect to the demographical factors like age, gender, marital status and household income.

SBC

Scholars have been exploring the relationship of consumers with their brands and they have found that SBC does exist and it can lead to the favorable attitudes toward those particular brands (J. E. Escalas 2004). The terms SBC and self-brand association are used interchangeably (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009). SBC measures the extent to which the consumer connects the perceived brand meaning to the self-concept (Moore and Homer 2007). SBC may be formed by processing the experiences one had with a specific brand (J. E. Escalas 2004). The ultimate impact of a brand depends on quality of the experiences consumers may have with that brand and to what level these experiences can create connections within consumers' mind (Fournier 1998). Consumers may develop a personal connection to a brand if a specific brand is relevant and associated to the self-concept (J. E. Escalas 2004).

BESC

BESC can be defined as an individual differential measure that represents the consumers' tendency to involve the brands that are important to them as part of their self-concept (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009). It is a generalized understanding of brands with respect to the self and the consumers vary on this view concerning the importance of brands near them.

Normally, it is acknowledged that consumers use different brands to represent a desired self-image to present this image to other people and to themselves as well (Belk 1988). The idea of brand engagement refers to how consumers express themselves by using the brands which they consider important. Consumers try to show the self to others through the brands they select (Elliot 2004). Consumers tell about themselves to other people by using different brands that they chose for themselves as they feel those brands can reflect their personality. This reflection of a personality helps consumer relate their "self-concept" to those particular brands. When consumers start relating the brands to themselves and they view those brand relevant to their lives, a connection is a bridge between the consumers and those brands (Fournier 1998); (Uncles 2008). It describes that how consumers relate themselves to particular brands and build connection to those brands. However, the

tendency of incorporating multiple brands into one's self concept varies from consumer to consumer, situation to situation.

SBC and BESC

BESC is a more comprehensive and generalized view of consumer-brand linkage as multiple brands are incorporated in a consumer's self-concept. BESC is particularly engaging one's self with more than one brands; whereas, the possessions might include the unbranded products or services. Additionally, the importance that consumers attach to possessions might not be related to the self (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009).

Consumers are connected to their brands and this SBC can lead to the favorable brand attitudes (J. E. Escalas 2004). SBC suggests the connection with a specific brand whereas, BESC construct is the measure of association with various brands that are incorporated in a consumer's self-concept (Vieira 2010) at one point in time. According to Vieira, consumers associate their self-image with a particular brand in order to present themselves to other people. They may perhaps extend and associate their self-image to other important brands as well. Consequently, consumers do not represent themselves by a single specific brand. Therefore, instead of using just Nike products to depict an image to run faster, a consumer might use Asics and Adidas as well, while showing the priority for different brands that are important to that consumer.

BESC and Attitude

In a previous experiment, SBC was related positively to favorable attitudes towards the brand and to more likelihood of purchase (J. E. Escalas 2004). Furthermore, a research shows that the consumers with higher BESC will probably indulge themselves with brands that have more favorable attitudes in their own self-concepts. For those with lower BESC, the clear identification of a brand is not that important as they will probably not include the brands in general to define their self-concept (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009).

Different Marketing Phenomena

Different marketing phenomena which were studied in this research include: consumer loyalty, price and time sensitivity of a consumer, likelihood of repurchase and satisfaction.

Consumer Loyalty: Generally, consumer loyalty is being defined in terms of repeat purchases or relative volume of the same brand being purchased (Newman and Werbel 1973, Tellis 1988). It is said that the consumers with high level of BESC attach more value to their favorite brands than those with low level of BESC, which means that they reflect more brand loyalty (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009).

Price Sensitivity: Consumers expect that their favorite premium quality brands are of higher prices (Janiszewski and Lichtenstein 1999). Based on this argument, it is assumed that the consumers are less price sensitive toward the brands they are

engaged with(Vieira 2010). For instance, a Nike shoes consumer with greater BESC would perceive high priced shoes as more attractive.

*Time Sensitivity:*A study found that the consumers with high BESC level show willingness to delay buying for their favorite brand(Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009). In fact, the consumers vary considerably to the extent to which they involve brands as part of their self-concept (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009). BESC is related to a differential brand loyalty which means that with high BESC level consumers show less price and time sensitivity regarding their favorite brands (Sprott, Czellar and Spangenberg 2009).

Likelihood of Repurchase: Likelihood of repurchase means the chance of buying a product again after it has been purchased once or more. When a consumer feels connection to a particular brand its likelihood of repurchase increases, based on the argument of (J. E. Escalas 2004). An assumption is made that the consumers with higher BESC show higher likelihood of repurchase. YetVieira(2010) reveals that BESC does not have a significant impact on the likelihood of repurchase. However, a study revealed that SBC is associated with higher likelihood of purchase (J. E. Escalas 2004).

*Satisfaction:*Satisfaction is an “evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and the actual performance of the product” (Tse and Wilton 1988). In another research it is defined as a “pleasurable fulfillment” (Oliver 1997).

Some studies have revealed that consumers who show high SBC level are more consistent in their behavior with respect to that specific brand and this increases their likelihood of trial and purchases (J. E. Escalas 2004)and willingness to pay(Janiszewski and Lichtenstein 1999) more for that brand. Thus, the consumers who show high scores of BESC and SBC are more loyal to the brands (Vieira 2010) , ICED (2011). They show more likelihood of purchase and thus, are more satisfied (Vieira 2010).

Consumer Involvement: Now-a-days, consumer involvement is one of the major components of purchase behavior(Rothschild 1979, Ray 1982). Consumer's involvement shows that how much consumer knows about the offering and consumer purchase intention or preference is based on consumer involvement (Laurent and Kapferer 1985). Highly involved consumers are trying the new objects, offerings and show their willingness to purchase in a better way because they already get the information about the offering before purchase (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1992).

Switching Costs: Generally, switching cost is known as a cost that restrictsthe consumers from switching to the competitive goods or service.Switching costs are not just limited to the economic costs.Switching costs may range from thesearch costs, transaction costs, learning costs, loyal consumers discount, consumer habit, emotional cost and cognitive effort, coupled with the financial, social and psychological risk on the part of the buyer(Fornell 1992).According to Vieira (2010),BESC is positively related to the switching costs.The dimensions of

switching costs which are used in this study include: financial cost, time cost, energy cost, and psychological cost.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to analyze the general measure of BESC through Mobile-phone, Clothing and Laptops consumers. For this, BESC was compared with SBC and their relation was tested. This research is based on cross-sectional analysis and deductive approach has been used. Both primary and secondary research approaches have been used to understand the importance of BESC and to analyze this construct.

The study was conducted in a non-contrived environment. The unit of analysis was the general public of Lahore, Pakistan. The target population includes all the consumers of national and international brands, of age 18 and above. Male and female both are included and the assumption is made that the target population is literate enough to understand the wording of the questionnaire and can accurately answer the questions. Moreover, the data was collected through self-administered questionnaires and the sample size for the study was 300. The demographic characteristics being studied are Age, Marital status, Household income and Gender.

The questionnaire for data analysis has been adopted from somewhat similar study of Vieira (2010) and was modified for better understanding of the respondents. A 5-points Likert-scale ranging from Strongly Disagree as 1 to Strongly Agree as 5, was used. Finally, SPSS (19.0) was used to analyze the data.

Results

Following are the results and findings of the study:

Inferential Analysis

SBC and BESC

H₀: SBC and BESC are not related positively.

H₁: SBC and BESC are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between SBC and BESC is significant at 99% level of confidence. The result of Pearson correlation depicts that the strength of the relationship between SBC and BESC is moderate to strong and positive.

This shows that the consumers which show SBC also possess BESC. As the significance value is less than 0.01, therefore, we can accept H₁ and reject the H₀ at 0.01 confidence level.

Table 2 shows the value of R Square shows that 47.6% of change in BESC is caused due to the change in SBC. Table 3 shows the values to frame the regression equation for these variables. In table 3, the coefficient for constant equals to 0.773 which is the intercept and the coefficient for independent variable i.e. SBC, 0.782 is the slope.

Therefore, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{BESC} = 0.782 * \text{SBC} + 0.773$$

BESC and Loyalty

H₀: BESC and loyalty intentions are not related positively.

H₂: BESC and loyalty intentions are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and Loyalty is significant at 99% level of confidence, and the result of Pearson correlation shows that BESC and loyalty have a moderate and positive relationship. This shows that the consumers who show BESC also possess loyalty. On the basis of results, we accept H₂ and reject the H₀ at 0.01 confidence level.

The value of R Square in Table 4 shows that 24.7% of change in loyalty is caused due to the change in BESC. In table 5, the coefficient for constant (loyalty) 1.512 is the intercept and the coefficient for independent variable BESC, 0.437 is the slope.

Therefore, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{Loyalty} = 1.512 + \text{BESC} * 0.437$$

BESC and Satisfaction

H₀: BESC and satisfaction are not related positively.

H₃: BESC and satisfaction are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and Satisfaction is significant at 0.01 level of confidence, and the result of Pearson correlation depicts that the relationship between BESC and satisfaction is moderate and positive. This shows that the consumers which show BESC also possess Satisfaction. Seeing the results, we can accept H₃ and reject the H₀.

In Table 6, the value of R Square shows that 24.7% of the change in satisfaction level is attributed to the change in BESC. In table 7, the coefficient for constant (satisfaction) 2.622 is the intercept, while the coefficient for independent variable BESC, 0.383 is the slope.

Therefore, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{Satisfaction} = 2.622 + \text{BESC} * 0.383$$

BESC and Likelihood of Repurchase

H₀: BESC and likelihood of repurchase are not related positively.

H₄: BESC and likelihood of repurchase are related positively.

The value of Pearson correlation in Table 1 indicates that the relationship between BESC and Likelihood of repurchase is moderate to strong and positive. This shows that the consumers which show BESC also show the Likelihood of repurchase. From the results, we can accept H₄ and reject the H₀.

In Table 8, the value of R Square shows that 39.3% of change in the Likelihood of repurchase is caused due to change in BESC. In table 9, the coefficient for constant (Likelihood of repurchase) 1.587 is the intercept and the coefficient for the independent variable (BESC) 0.592 is the slope.

Thus, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{Likelihood of repurchase} = 1.587 + \text{BESC} * 0.592$$

BESC and Price Sensitivity

H₀: BESC and Price sensitivity are not related positively.

H₅: BESC and Price sensitivity are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and price sensitivity is not significant. The value of Pearson correlation is -0.067 which is less than 0.3 and greater than 0.00. This shows a weak relationship between BESC and price sensitivity. The negative sign with value shows the inverse relationship between BESC and Price sensitivity. It means that the consumers who show higher BESC do not possess Price sensitivity. As the significance value is 0.245 which is higher than 0.01 so we can reject H₅ and accept the H₀.

BESC and Time Sensitivity

H₀: BESC and Time sensitivity are not related positively.

H₆: BESC and Time sensitivity are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and waiting time is not significant. This shows that the consumers who show stronger BESC cannot wait longer for the newer technology/style/design in their favorite brands. The table shows the significance value equals to 0.476 which is greater than 0.01. Hence, we reject H₆ and accept the H₀.

BESC and Attitude

H₀: BESC and Attitude are not related positively.

H₇: BESC and Attitude are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and Attitude is significant at 95% confidence level. The value of Pearson correlation shows that the strength of the relationship between BESC and Attitude is weak but positive. This shows that the consumers which show BESC also possess favorable Attitudes. As the significance value is less than 0.05, thus, we can accept H₇ and reject the H₀.

Table 10 mentions the value of R Square which shows that only 2.0% of change in Attitude is caused due to the change in BESC. In table 11, the intercept for the regression equation is 2.422 and the coefficient for independent variable (BESC) 0.124 is the slope.

Thus, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{Attitude} = 2.422 + \text{BESC} * 0.124$$

BESC and Involvement

H₀: BESC and Involvement are not related positively.

H₈: BESC and Involvement are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and Involvement is significant at 99% confidence level. The value of Pearson correlation shows that the relationship between BESC and Involvement is weak yet it is a positive relationship. This shows that the consumers which show BESC also possess Involvement. On the basis of the results, we can accept H₁ and reject the H₀.

In Table 12, the value of R Square shows that 6.3% of change in the involvement level is caused due to change in BESC. In table 13, the intercept for the regression

equation is 2.694 and the coefficient for the independent variable (BESC) 0.172 is the slope.

Thus, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{Involvement} = 2.694 + \text{BESC} * 0.172$$

BESC and Switching Costs

H₀: BESC and Switching Costs are not related positively.

H₉: BESC and Switching Costs are related positively.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between BESC and Switching Cost is significant at 99% confidence level. The value of Pearson correlation indicates that BESC and Switching Cost have moderate and positive relationship. This means that the consumers which show higher BESC also face higher Switching Costs. As the significance value is 0.000 (which is less than 0.01), therefore, we accept H₁ and reject the H₀.

In Table 14, the value of R Square shows that 14.9% of change in the Switching Costs is caused due to change in BESC. In table 15, the intercept for the regression equation is 1.942 and the coefficient for independent variable (BESC) 0.342 is the slope.

Therefore, the regression equation is:-

$$\text{Switching Costs} = 1.942 + \text{BESC} * 0.342$$

Demographic Analysis

BESC and Gender

H₀: BESC is not associated with Gender.

H₁₀: BESC is associated with Gender.

T-Test analysis shows that the mean BESC of gender is not significantly different. Here, level of significance is greater than 0.05. Hence, H₀ is accepted and H₁₀ is rejected. *BESC is not associated with Gender.*

BESC and Marital Status

H₀: BESC is not associated with Marital Status.

H₁₁: BESC is associated with Marital Status.

T-Test analysis shows that the mean BESC of Marital status is significantly different. Here, level of significance is less than 0.05. Hence, H₀ is rejected and H₁₁ is accepted. *BESC is associated with Marital Status.*

BESC and Household Income

H₀: BESC is not associated with Household Income.

H₁₂: BESC is associated with Household Income.

ANOVA test analysis shows that the mean BESC of five Household Income groups are significantly different. Here, level of significance is 0.000, which means the level of BESC among consumers vary for different household income. Hence, H₀ is rejected and H₁₂ is accepted. *BESC is associated with Household Income.*

BESC and Age

H₀: BESC is not associated with Age.

H₁₃: BESC is associated with Age.

ANOVA test analysis shows that the mean BESC of Age is not significantly different. Here, level of significance is greater than 0.05. Hence, H_0 is accepted and H_{13} is rejected. *BESC is not associated with Age.*

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This paper provides an overview of the new construct regarding the extent of association of different brands to their own self known as BESC. The text demonstrates the importance of the general tendency of how consumers engage their favourite brands in their self-concept. The empirical findings specify that BESC is an important concept in the fields of marketing and branding as it involves brand related consumer concepts such as loyalty, attention, preference and influence.

BESC is a different construct than SBC, as the later suggests the personal connection to a specific brand. The new construct is valuable for understanding the importance of different brands in the lives of the consumers. A limited aspect of BESC has been studied in this research. Moreover, this study has shown that BESC is not affected by demographic variables such as age and gender. However, the difference in household income and marital status of consumers result in different levels of BESC. Furthermore, BESC has a positive relation with other marketing concepts like, consumers' involvement and attitude, consumer satisfaction, switching costs, consumer loyalty and the likelihood of repurchase. The study also revealed that the consumers with stronger SBC also hold stronger BESC. Consumers generally do not use and stick to only one brand throughout their life. Their preferences vary with the passage of time and people use different brands at one point in time.

The study reveals that there is no relationship between BESC and time sensitivity, some people who show stronger BESC are time insensitive and others are time sensitive, this also varies from category to category. And also there is no relationship between BESC and price sensitive; this also varies from individual to individual, as some people are more price conscious than others. And the study also revealed that to some consumers price is not a factor to choose their favourite brands. A brand can be favourite; even if the consumer does not have the purchasing power to purchase and use it.

Finally, BESC provides the insight as to how meaningful different brands can be for an individual. Consequently, those meaningful brands are considered more favourably and have higher level of likelihood of repurchase. BESC can be very useful for further studies in marketing research. Further studies can reveal different findings with additional measures and different constructs such as advertising and public relation. Moreover, future studies may scrutinize the individual differences in the inclination of consumers to form BESC and symbolizing the properties of the brands.

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