Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences 12 (5): 1060-1076, 2017
ISSN: 1816-949X

Assessing Relationship Quality Elements by Using the Conceptual Approach of Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE): A Literature Review

S. Gholami
Multimedia University, Cyberjaya, Malaysia

Abstract: This study aims to contribute to the debate on the arena of brand and relationship marketing. This review was provided an archived of past research points relevant the studies of brand and relationship marketing to explore, analyze and develop a clear understanding regarding the various topics and methodologies applied in relationship quality elements and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) approaches published articles. This review identifies different theoretical and methodological characteristics of the way in which relationship quality elements and CBBE schemes are proposed in the relationship marketing context. The literature review covers many areas such as; common elements of relationship quality, highlighted CBBE schemes, role of brand equity in conducted researches, long-term relational outcomes and the relevant approaches and dual value between customer and relationship quality. Many research gaps were identified in these fields. To fill theses gaps and future researches, several propositions were proposed. The study was provided great benefits for marketers, practitioners, researchers and educators though providing a clearer outlook and deep understanding for all the issues related to the field of brand and relationship marketing.

Key words: Relationship Quality (RELAQUAL), Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE), long-term relation, value, firm, customer, framework

INTRODUCTION

Relationship quality: Relationship quality can be regarded as a meta-construct composed of several key components reflecting the overall nature of relationships between companies and consumers. Although, no a common consensus exists regarding relationship quality conceptualization there has been considerable speculation on the central constructs comprising this overarching relational construct (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002). The relationship quality components or dimensions proposed in the past research include cooperative norms (Baker *et al.*, 1999), opportunism (Dorsch *et al.*, 1998), customer orientation (Dorsch *et al.*, 1998; Adrian and Bejou, 1994), seller expertise and conflict, willingness to invest and expectation to continue (Kumar *et al.*, 1995). However, there is a general agreement that customer satisfaction with a service provider's performance, trust in the service provider and commitment to the relationship with the service firm are the key components of relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002). Hence, this study made an outline of the major constructs of the Relationship Quality (RELAQUAL) identified in the literature.

Based on the papers related to the marketing science, 3 main and common dimensions of relationship quality were emphasized in this research: trust, satisfaction and commitment. Of course, more dimensions than those suggested in Table 1 may be needed though there is a more or less agreement on these 3 dimensions. Here, each of these constructs was defined.

The common dimensions of relationship quality

Trust: Trust is the cornerstone of relationship commitment. The measurement of relationship quality in this study was anchored on the dimension of trust which has been widely discussed in the literature of long-term relationships between buyers and sellers (Hajli, 2014; Lungtae and Atthirawong, 2014; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Christian and Delhey, 2012). The commitment-trust theory that places an emphasis on the long-term interactions between buyers and sellers (Ha *et al.*, 2011) is another important dimension applied in B2C and B2B relationships. The 3 vital constructs exist for this theory: relationship commitment, cooperation and trust (Park, 2009). Morgan and Hunt (1994) found trust to have a positive impact on relationship commitment, functioning as a key determinant in the cooperative relationships with consumers in the business marketing (Kim *et al.*, 2008). Other researchers pay attention to trust as a most important component underlying the relationship between buyers and providing a stable impact on buyer-seller relationships (Mahesh and Srivastava, 2012). Several other studies have come to the conclusion that trust is a necessary ingredient for successful long-term relationships (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002; Lin *et al.*, 2003)

Table 1: An overview of the relationship quality studies

Constructs	Crosby *et al.* (1990)	Mohr and Spekman	Storbacka	Wilson and Jantrania	Naude and Buttle	(Liang *et al.* (2011)	Frequency of constructs
Trust	•	•		•	•	•	5
Coordination		•			•		2
communication		•	•				2
Commitment	•	•	•	•		•	6
Joint problem solving		•					1
Bonds				•			1
Goal congruence				•			1
Satisfaction	•		•	•	•	•	5
Investments				•			1
Power					•		1
Profit					•		1

since, it is the focus of all relational exchanges (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and functions as a basic element during the initial period of establishing a high-level relationship (Sahin *et al*., 2011; Yonghong and Singh, 2006).

In their definitions of trust, those studying the relationship marketing attitude withdrew from the classical philosophical views. Trust has generated much discussion. Besides more practical fields like marketing (Andaleeb, 1995) and management (Jay and Hansen, 1994) trust has found a central position in the different disciplines such as sociology (Lewis and Weigert, 1985; Lewis, 2015) economics and psychology (Deutsch, 1960; Larzelere and Huston, 1980). A variety of terms have been used to refer to the dimensions of trust. These include reliability (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) credibility (Ganesan, 1994) ability (Anadaleeb, 1995) integrity and benevolence as the psychological variables associated with a set of accumulated presumptions involving these attributes (Gurviez and Korchia, 2003). Finally, reliability and attribution of good intentions to the brand relative to consumer's welfare and interests (Sahin *et al*., 2011) were focused on as the 2 main aspects of brand trust. All these proceed to show that trust is crucial in building strong relationships between a consumer and a brand thus leading to brand loyalty (Lau and Lee, 1999). Trust and commitment are the key mechanisms for continued and steady financial performance (Johnson and Grayson, 2005; Liang *et al*., 2011; Sahin *et al*., 2011). Particularl in studying the relationship consumers have developed with service providers, commitment, trust and satisfaction seem to have major roles (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Gurviez and Korchia, 2003; Liang and Wang, 2005). Although, the aforementioned studies greatly contribute to defining trust, the approach taken by Sahin *et al.* (2011) was found to be more appropriate for the trust definition in this research.

They drew upon 2 approaches proposed in the literature. Firstly, trust was treated as a belief, sentiment or expectation about a partner's trustworthiness based on his/her expertise, reliability or internationality. Secondly, vulnerability has an impact on trust since it involves reliance on a partner. In other words, trustworthiness refers to confidence in a partner and a trusting behavior is related to the willingness to take risks by relying on that partner (Marcel *et al*., 2014). A recent research done by Johnson and Grayson (2005) described cognitive trust as a customer's willingness to rely on a service provider's competence and reliability while the affective trust is perceived as a partner's intrinsically well-intentioned actions.

Customer satisfaction: Satisfaction is the degree to which performance meets customer's expectations. A customer's decision to stay with or switch from a product or service provider (Smith and Barclay, 1997; Vanitha *et al*., 2014) would depend on his/her satisfaction. Satisfaction was the second dimension used to measure customer relationship in this study since customer satisfaction is an extremely important component of brand equity. Therefore, the use of satisfaction as a measure is consistent with the previous research on relationship marketing, finding satisfaction to be a key determinant of the relationship between a customer and service provider (Leverin and Liljander, 2006; Lopo *et al*., 2013).

A key theory that is drawn upon to explain customer satisfaction is the expectation-disconfirmation theory describing the process of evaluating customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Selnes, 1998). In this traditional perspective, satisfaction is treated as the outcome of a comparison between expectation and perceived performance leading to either Customer Satisfaction (CS) in which the perceived performance is a bettered or fulfilled expectation (positive confirmation) or Customer Dissatisfaction (CD) in which the perceived performance falls below the customer's expectation (negative disconfirmation). It can be seen that satisfaction refers to a cumulative construct assessed by expectation, perceived performance and past experience of satisfaction (Fornell *et al*., 1996; Park, 2009). In this study, customer satisfaction is defined as the overall satisfaction with a supplier or brand while earlier experiences further shape this satisfaction. According to Selnes (1998) the expectation disconfirmation theory does not differentiate between the different types of expectations. Therefore, the expectations towards a core product and supplier are not distinguished.

In other words, the studies of customer satisfaction have been developed around 2 types of evaluations: cumulative satisfaction and transaction-specific satisfaction. The cumulative satisfaction model is an economic-based approach that reveals satisfaction as a customer's overall experience (Gustafsson *et al*., 2005). Indeed, this definition encompasses both welfare economics (Stevens, 1989) and economic psychology (Fornell *et al*., 1996) while customer satisfaction is viewed in a consumption utility context. In contrast to the transaction specific satisfaction, a significant advantage of this approach is that it allows a customer's behavior and economic choices to be better anticipated.

The recent research into transaction-specific satisfaction has been focused on the relationship between brand equity dimensions like perceived quality and satisfaction and the role of strong emotion in satisfaction assessments (Peltola, 2014). Therefore, the essence of this method is to motivate companies to make a shift from using the product-centric to applying customer-centric indices to ensure customer satisfaction besides maintaining its competitive advantage. In this study, customer satisfaction was viewed as incorporating customer centricity, trust-covering, relationship commitment, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand awareness (Devos *et al*., 2012) to create better insight into how well the policies and programs of a supplier/customer relationship are working.

The market-based indicator on the other hand, uses traditional metrics that are focused on financial aspects like profitability, market share and profit margins as well the centric-based metrics concentrated on unobservable or perceptual indicators such as service quality, intention to purchase and customer satisfaction (Carter *et al*., 2013; Kristof and Odekerken, 2003) Cravens and Piercy suggested that the traditional metrics used by senior managers to assess and measure their products and services in the market be updated to more customer-centric indicators due to the enhanced attention paid to Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (Gholami and Rahman, 2012).

Furthermore in reviewing the literature on relationship marketing in this study, it was found that Forenell *et al*. (1996) and Park (2009) have conceptualized customer satisfaction to be characterized by a cumulative construct evaluated by expectations and perceived performance as well as past satisfaction. Crosby *et al*. (1990) conceptualized satisfaction as an emotional state, i.e., a response to a mix of various experiences. Similarly, Park (2009) defined satisfaction in a B2B context as "a positively affective state resulting from the appraisal of all the aspects of a firm's working relationship with another firm". In his view, satisfaction leads to a long-term continuation of relationships. In contrast, Veronica and Strandvik (1995) suggested that the evaluation process is shaped by cognition when defining satisfaction as "customer's cognitive and affective evaluation based on his/her personal experiences across all the service episodes within the relationship". Working on their definition, Roberts *et al*. (2003) carried out a research on the role of satisfaction in measuring relationship quality. Never the less in evaluating satisfaction they found the cognition aspect to be important for modeling relationship quality and determining service quality.

A large number of studies (Liang and Wang, 2005; Palmatier *et al*., 2006; Smith and Barclay, 1997; Kristof and Odekerken, 2003) have used this definition based on an affective state. The researchers argued that satisfaction is a cumulative effect within the course of a relationship rather than being composed of discrete quantities associated with each transaction. According to Anderson and Mittal (2000) the benefit of a long-term cumulative customer satisfaction is "what motivates firms to invest in customer satisfaction". Therefore, given the intention in this thesis to evaluate satisfaction as a measure of relationship quality based on the relationship experiences that customers have with their hoteliers, this definition was appropriate.

Despite the many approaches to the understanding of satisfaction, Leverin and Liljander maintained that in order to understand customer satisfaction, one has to view it in the context of a transactional exchange (i.e., each transaction is separately evaluated) or relational exchange. The reason is that the role of satisfaction in the context of relationship marketing differs from customer satisfaction in an overall exchange (Palmatier *et al*., 2006). Their study was focused on the role of satisfaction in the relationship marketing context while reflecting that loyal customers evaluate their satisfactions based on their relationship experiences and not a single and specific service encounter. According to the above-mentioned discussion, the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) supports the different aspects of satisfaction such as being satisfied or highly satisfied with products and services and satisfied or happy with brand having a very satisfying experience taking a right decision and having one's needs satisfied in various situations. Specifically, the theory reinforces and advocates post-purchase or post-adoption satisfactions and perceived performance.

Relationship commitment: Commitment was the third dimension used to measure relationship quality in this study since it is believed to be significant in long-term relationships. In this regard, a number of views have been put forward in the literature. According to Hui *et al*. (2013) mutual commitment is the foundation of relationships while Morgan and Hunt (1994) maintained that commitment is a vital component for building successful long-term relationships. Other researchers (Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Roberts *et al*., 2003) extended this argument to the need for not only a mutual but also reciprocal commitment to build relationships. Hence, commitment level is defined as the strongest predictor of the decision to voluntarily continue a relationship (Baldauf *et al*., 2003).

Commitment is an important dimension and a measurement of relationship quality and viability (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Erifili and Dimitriadis, 2012; Park, 2009; Hui *et al*., 2013). Therefore, commitment reflects the health of relationships and should be regarded as a dimension of relationship quality (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Park, 2009; Hui *et al*., 2013). In defining commitment, the marketing researchers have drawn heavily upon 2 disciplines: social exchange (Carter *et al*., 2013; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002) and organizational behavior (Allen and Meyer, 1990, 1996; Brouer *et al*., 2013; Fullerton, 2014; Muneer *et al*., 2014; Porter *et al*., 1974).

From the perspective of organizational behavior, Porter *et al*. (1974) defined organizational commitment as "the strength of identifying an individual by his/her degree of involvement in a particular organization". Total 3 major elements of this definition can be identified: assessment of motivation, intention to remain with the organization and identification of the employees based on organizational values. In their comprehensive literature review of organizational commitment, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) found much research supporting organizational commitment as being affective (a desire based attachment to an organization) continuative (acost based attachment to an organization determining staying with or leaving it) and normative (obligation based attachment to stay with an organization).

According to Roberts *et al*. (2003) a commitment of this nature works through different psychological mechanisms. To them "employees with strong affective commitments stay with the organization because they want to employees with strong continuative commitments stay with it since they feel they have to and those with strong normative commitments stay with it because they feel they ought to".

Though Allen and Meyer (1996)'s components of affective, continuative and normative commitments have been integrated into marketing practice, only two components of commitment are seen as important to the marketing researchers: Affective and continuative commitments (Fullerton, 2005; Harrison-Walker, 2001). Fullerton (2005) provided 2 reasons to justify omission of the normative component in the marketing literature. Firstly, "the effect of normative commitment has been almost always found in the same direction as and weaker than the effect of affective commitment when examining their constructs in the organizational behavior literature" and secondly, "normative commitment is usually highly correlated with affective commitment and some researchers addressing organizational behavior have questioned the extent to which it can be taken as a distinct construct".

Therefore, the types of relationship commitments chosen for some related studies have been affective commitment and calculative commitment (Gustafsson *et al*., 2005). To understand how commitment was interpreted in this study, the concept was broadly reviewed from the marketing literature perspectives before viewing it from the relationship marketing perspective. Relationship commitment in the relationship marketing texts has been recognized as one of the potential drivers of customer satisfaction and loyalty Jane and Merrilees, 2007). As a result, the previously proposed definitions of affective commitment and calculative commitment are seen as the 2 constructs of relationship commitment (Jensen and Klastrup, 2008; Kim and Hyun, 2011). Calculative commitment is a rational economic-based commitment that uses the data such as supply and demand and switching costs as determinants. This kind of commitment has been described as a colder type Davis *et al*., 2008). Affective commitment is more emotional and is characterized by the degree of personal involvement or reciprocity that a customer has with a company. This type of commitment has been described as being hotter resulting in greater commitment and trust (Gillett, 1989). Following the previous discussion and literature review, the commitment-trust theory that regards costumer relationship enhancement generally emphasizes on calculative and affective commitments as the 2 parts of relationship commitment. This theory supports supplier-customer relationship, trust in the company and relationship with the supplier while providing the best care of customers as a main dimension of affective commitment. In addition, features like economic pay-off and location advantages are regarded as calculative commitment. Based on the above discussion, the following proposition was suggested in this study.

P1: According to the marketing science papers, Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment (TSC) are the 3 main and common elements in Relationship Quality (RELAQUAL).

The different perspectives of "BE" researches: The 3 theoretical perspectives mentioned above shape the groundwork for the considered conceptual framework while taking into account financial-based and consumer-based brand equities and a combination of both approaches (Franzen, 1999). These multilevel and interdisciplinary approaches are represented as a framework for a full understanding of a company's choice between brand equity, brand knowledge (brand image) and customer satisfaction. Hence, brand equity was developed and conceptualized from different perspectives in the researches attempting to explore the concepts for broadly disparate purposes.

Brand equity based on the financial-based approach: In the researches, brand equity has been assessed as a brand value to a firm and the majority of measures for the financial and product market outcomes classified as "BE" by Keller and Lehmann, (2006) has been covered. Financial outcome measures are reflected on the brand value considered by a company as a financial asset while they may consist of the different performance indicators of a brand value or a company's study of financial markets. Simon and Sullivan (1993) who used financial market value and the incremental cash flows in branded compared to unbranded products as well as both micro and macro approaches for determining brand equity, comprise an example of the researches carried out based on this approach. Also Mahajan *et al.* (1994) assessed the significance of "BE" in acquisition decisions while regarding the dimensions of growth market development, exposure to longevity and financial performance.

Furthermore, another, bundle of studies with this perspective incorporate those focusing on brand value and market based assets including a base of customer relationship and partner like the co-branding and networking found important by Srivatava, Shervani and Fahey to assess market performance and shareholder value. Moreover, Srivatava considered a new approach of brand equity management, i.e., measuring assessing and forecasting the product market and identifying the important source of brand equity (brand awareness, attribute perception bias and non-attribute performance). Likewise, Yeung and Ramasamy considered the impact of brand value and business performance (ROA, ROI, net margin and profit margin) in the long run. The product market outcomes introducing the marketplace of performance indicators have been highlighted in these studies.

Regarding this approach, the latest research presented by demonstrated a framework of trademarks as the measures of branding efforts and classified them based on brand identification and association and understanding of the financial ROI in their categories. In addition, investigated the potential relationship between the declarations of brand buy-and-sell agreement and stock market. As a result, the researches of brand equity have been exhibited to affect market share, purchase intention, price premium, brand extension and firm performance (Park, 2009).

Considering the results of the mentioned studies, suppliers and companies in different industries not only have to consider the tangible and financial aspects of brand equity such as price premium, market share and incremental cash flow but also need to be more focused on the sustainability relationships with their customers so as to cover both tangible and intangible aspects of brand equity in those industries. The financial approach of brand equity considers brand to be tangible and financial asset can be shown in a variety of states of the financial statements published via companies (Barwise *et al.*, 1990; Xu, 2011).

Brand equity from consumer's perspective: Considerable academic (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Erdem and Swait, 1998; Keller, 1993; Keller and Lehmann, 2006) and industrial (Buil *et al.*, 2008; Ravi and Quester, 2013) attentions have been accepted in the current studies of consumer-based brand equity. The basis for these studies is customer mindset measures. Keller and Lehmann (2006) defined customer mindset measures as "everything that exists in the minds of customers with respect to a brand like thoughts, perceptions, feelings, beliefs, experiences, attitudes and images" and covered a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative measures of "BE" applied to both academic and industrial aspects. Erdem and Swait (1998) perceived 2 perspectives focused on consumer-based brand equity, including cognitive psychology and customer's process of the related brand and economic theory in information technology. The pioneering researchers of the first perspective (cognitive psychology and cognitive processes) are Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993).

Also the different marketing elements or marketing mix factors were considered as the quality signals in the majority of studies on the mentioned theory. These factors and elements contain price (Stiglitz, 1987) store image (Dodds *et al.*, 1991) advertisement (Chapman, 1999; Nelson, 1974) distribution intensity price promotion (Shimp, 2003) and advertisement and price (Milgrom and Roberts, 1986). Additionally, Keller (2001) and Keller and

Lehmann (2006) suggested that customer mindset measures can be summarized into 5 key dimensions, including attitude, activity, attachment association and brand awareness. Likewise, Aaker (1991) proposed the brand equity models comprising the 4 mindset measures of brand awareness, loyalty, brand association and perceived quality in addition to the measure of other proprietary brand assets like trademark, patents and channel relationships.

Consequently to use the notion of customer-based brand equity, it is also significant to quantify the sources and outcomes of brand equity (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Yet, despite a wide range of researches no broad and universal scales have been expanded for all kinds of product classes. Nonetheless, several common scales have been created to be applicable to a variety of classes of products (Netemeyer *et al*., 2004; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). Hence, discovered that the majority of common measures conceptualized by Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) have a convergent validity and are thus suitable for the brand equity construct.

The approach of consumer-based brand equity is efficient and useful for industries since measuring customer's mindset. Moreover, it can cover both the qualitative and quantitative measures of "BE" for the actors of industry such as firm holders and subsidiaries as well as their suppliers. Another reason is that CBBE approach reinforces long-term relationships and customer-centric perspectives, besides a company image through the key dimensions of attitude, activity, attachment association and brand awareness.

Brand equity from a holistic perspective: The approach to understanding brand equity operates based on the combination approach which is a mix of both financial and customer-level approaches (Kim and Kim, 2005; Lassar *et al*., 1995). Some studies provide important evidence for holistic perspectives. For example, Lassar *et al*. (1995) focused on the added value and competitive advantage of brand equity attributes (e.g., resilience against competitors's promotional pressures, opportunity for a successful extension and creation of a barrier to competitive entry). Moreover, evidenced customer perception and behavior and brand value as the significant indicators of brand strength and financial outcome, respectively.

Additionally, more studies indicated that brand loyalty, brand attitude and financial-related value on CBBE as well as brand image and acquisition are blended with both the firm and customer perspectives (Dyson *et al*., 1996). Also focused on the benefits of metrics and indices according to brand knowledge, brand personality, brand contract fulfillment, brand-driven customer acquisition, brand-driven customer retention and loyalty, brand-driven penetration and frequency, brand positioning and financial brand value in the ROBI process. At the same time, global brand equity with the help of brand strength and brand net earning has been emphasized in some studies (Motameni and Shahrokhi, 1998). In this venue, establishment of a stakeholder brand value model and total brand equity with managers, suppliers, media, competitors, governments, NGOs, public opinions, employees and consumers (Jones, 2005) besides investigation of the relationship between brand equity and business unit financial performance (Frank and Vijn, 2010) have been highlighted in the latest research. However, this study recommended further reliance on the theory of cognitive process and psychology to investigate the relationships between the famous customer-based brand equity and CRM-based customer satisfaction. The earlier researches on the various perspectives of brand equity outlined are summarized in Table 2.

As mentioned above there is an agreement among scholars on the common definition of brand equity as marketing outcomes or effects. Some researchers (Aaker, 1991; Farquhar *et al*., 1990; Keller, 2001, 1993) believed that these outcomes add to the product its name of brand compared with the same product without a brand name. Hence, the specific outcomes may be the firm-level effects such as revenue, market share, cash flow and price or consumer-level effects like knowledge, image, awareness and attitudes or a combination of them. As a result, a product with powerful brand equity can enhance consumer's trust and reduce the risk of service buying while it can be made tangible from its intangible aspect. Also brand equity creates consumer's advantages via increasing their confidence and enhancing their satisfaction as well as creating benefits for companies by making incomes, highlighting the image and exploiting on their brands to provide more growth of their businesses. To this goal, CBBE schemes that are popular and noteworthy in the brand literature were used in this study.

Conventional CBBE schemes: The lack of a universally accepted definition of brand equity has resulted in various methodologies for construct measurement. However, there is some consensus that brand equity may indicate the added value represented in certain brands. Having a better understanding of the definition and perspective of brand equity may help those involved in marketing to see how value may be added to their brands. This study utilized the CBBE perspective to introduce and describe the important constructs because CBBE schemes provide a scale by which brand building activities can be evaluated for growth as well as a checklist for marketing the study initiatives (Keller, 2001). Feldwick introduced 3 ways by which brand equity could be recognized, understood, interpreted and utilized by indicating the total brand value as a distinct asset when it is sold or comprised on balance sheet as a scale of the power of consumer's attachment to the brand and as a description of the beliefs and associations a consumer has about and with the brand. The first interpretation is from a firm-based perspective of brand equity, whilst the other two are associated with the consumer-based perspectives of brand equity (David and Amanda, 2009). Thus, CBBE is enhanced by generating the consumer's favorable responses to the promotion activities, pricing, advertisement and distribution of a brand. Indeed, this conceptualization revealed that CBBE is a consumer-oriented model. The CBBE concept was a key component of the framework for this study. The development of the CBBE model was determined by 3 objectives. Firstly, the model needed to be state-of-the-art reflecting the latest thinking on branding by both academia and industry. Secondly, the model had to be applicable to multiple brands in various industries around the globe. Lastly, the model had to comprehensively cover a wide variety of vital branding topics with sufficient depth to generate valuable guidelines and insights. The CBBE model was chosen as a means to support the marketing and management teams of firms to set their marketing strategies and update their decisions concerning their brands (Keller, 1993) (Table 2).

Further reasons for employing the conventional plan were as follows: the CBBE schemes are strategically focused on based on marketing decisions to aid brand equity. It can be important for firms and customers to completely understand the dimensions of brand equity and industrial marketing they follow interdisciplinary and multilevel approaches representing a framework for a better understanding of a company's selection from among customer relationships factors, brand equity and other relevant constructs the CBBE plans provide a yardstick for measuring marketing activities, tracking opportunities and planning, implementing and monitoring the strategy and the CBBE perspectives quantify the sources and outcomes of brand equity to cover a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative measures in both academic and industrial fields.

Studies on the role of brand equity: In the previous studies on the different aspects of brand equity, business markets, classifications and the related gaps were addressed. The roles of brand equity and its antecedents and consequences in various business markets have been dealt with in the more recent empirical researches. Many of these studies have been conducted in the context of industrial brand equity. The studies carried out recently are listed in Table 3.

Table 2: The concept of CBBE and its measurement

Researcher(s)	Dimensions of CBBE
Aaker (1991, 1996)	Brand loyalty; brand awareness; perceived quality; brand associations
Blackston (1992)	Brand relationship; trust; customer satisfaction with the brand
Keller (1993)	Brand knowledge; brand awareness; rand associations
Sharp (1996)	Company awareness; brand image; relationship with customers/existing customer franchise
Berry (2000)	Brand meaning; brand awareness
Burmann and	Brand benefit clarity
colleagues	Perceived brand quality; brand benefit; uniqueness brand sympathy; brand trust

Therefore, regarding the different perspectives of "BE" researches, conventional CBBE schemes and studies on the role of brand equity in the marketing literature, the 2nd proposition was suggested in this study.

P2: Antecedents, mediators and consequences in the marketing researches are implied in the CBBE approach.

Relationship quality incorporating relationship marketing factors and brand equity outcomes: Figure 2 exhibits the conceptual framework of relationship quality, CBBE and long-term relational approaches. As the above-mentioned relationship quality was highlighted through the relevant literature, trust, satisfaction and relationship commitment were extracted as the 3 common dimensions. Brand equity is an extension of Aaker (1991)'s model. Aaker's suggestions include; creation of values for both the customer and the firm through brand equity; enhancement of value for the firm via customer's value and incorporation of multiple dimensions in brand equity. Aaker's model was extended in 2 ways in this study. First, a distinct brand equity construct was placed between brand equity dimensions and the value related to the customer and the firm. The way brand equity is related to its individual dimensions is represented by brand equity construct. A high or low construct is derived from brand equity since it is a brand name value. The way brand equity dimensions contribute to the brand can be understood via a separate construct of it. Second, brand equity antecedents, i.e., marketing activities were added in this study as they were assumed to have significant impacts on the brand equity dimensions (Yoo *et al*., 2000).

Table 3: The studies conducted on brand equity

Study	Business market	Classification of study	Finding	Gap
Baldauf *et al.* (2003)	Tile market	BED CBED	Strong support found for measures of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality as antecedents of firm performance, willingness to buy and customer value	Did not fully cover the distinctive nature of industrial branding (products and services)
Van Riel *et al.* (2005)	Specialty chemicals	ABED BED CBED	Empirically validated and theoretically structured approach to measure brand equity and antecedents and consequences for industrial products	Focused exclusively on a single market (specialty chemicals) and relationships between dimensions of brand equity and their consequences were not examined
(Cretu and Brodie	Shampoo	ABED BED CBED	More specific influence of brand's image ound on the customers' perceptions of f product and service quality as well as company's reputation on perceptions of customer value and loyalty	Did not fully cover the distinctive nature of industrial branding (products and services) and did not consider the consequences of the dimensions of brand equity
Roberts and Jane	Leasing of retail space	BED CBED	Found influence of brand attitudes on the contract renewal, perceptions of service quality and role of brands in building trust between the supplier and the customers	Did not fully cover the distinctive nature of industrial branding (B2B services such as management consulting projects and B2B products) and the sample size should have been larger
Taylor *et al.* (2007)	Financial services-insurance	BED CBED	Proposed model addressed brand equity as comprising of perceived quality, brand value, brand attitude and brand uniqueness The overall value of brand equity is proposed as their consequence	Did not cover the relationships between dimensions of brand equity and their consequences as well as relationships among dimensions of brand equity (Kim and Hyun, 2011)
Davis *et al.* (2008)	Logistical services	BED CBED	Logistical service providers and their customers had different perspectives on the relative influence of brand image and brand awareness on brand equity	Did not fully cover the distinctive nature of industrial branding (B2B services) (Kim and Hyun, 2011)
Han and Sung (2008)	Electronics, electricity, engineering, chemicals, plastics, equipment	ABED BED CBED	Supplier competence directly affected purchasing value and customer satisfaction and via purchasing value and satisfaction, it indirectly affected customer commitment, switching cost, brand trust and loyalty	Did not consider the distinctive nature of industrial branding (B2B services) (Kim and Hyun, 2011)
Jensen and Klastrup (2008)	Industrial pump manufacturer	ABED BED	Customer brand relationship was influenced by product quality, service quality, price, differentiation, promise, trust and credibility	Did not consider the distinctive nature of industrial branding (B2B services) (Kim and Hyun, 2011)

To conceptualize brand equity, it was assumed by Aaker (1991) to create value for the customer and the firm. This assumption was well supported. For instance, it can be said that a merger is finally influenced by brand equity which affects acquisition decision-making (Mahajan *et al.*, 1994) and stock market responses(Lane and Jacobson, 1995; Simon and Sullivan, 1993). Furthermore, brand name extensibility is determined by brand equity (Rangaswamy *et al.*, 1993). Also brand choice probability, willing to pay the premium prices, effectiveness of marketing communication and opportunities of brand licensing are all increased while vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and elastic responses to price rises are decreased by brand equity (Farquhar *et al.*, 1990; Keller, 1993; Smith and Park, 1992). In brief, a firm is provided with sustainable competitive advantages by brand equity from a managerial perspective (Yoo *et al.*, 2000). Parallel with Aaker's conceptualized model, other researchers have focused on the supplementary dimensions of brand equity to clarify its characteristics for different investigations. The results of these studies are shown in Table 3.

The existing researches on the relationship marketing determinants and brand equity outcomes can be divided into 2 groups. The first group deals with the analysis of the relationship between relationship marketing consequences and a single variable that plays a significant role in the relationship marketing. This would be referred to as a "univariate" approach. On the contrary, the relationship outcomes are simultaneously investigated by the second group in terms of two or more constructs via a "multivariate" approach.

Thus, besides taking into account a determinant-outcome relationship, the second group would also investigate a determinant-determinant relationship. The main approaches to the development of long-term relationships between service firms and customers are summarized in Table 1. A vast majority of the relationship marketing literature has clearly focused on only a few of the constructs though a multitude of them has been discussed in the context. Trust commitment and customer satisfaction are among the most common constructs.

Based on the disconfirmation paradigm, when the difference between performance evaluation and expectations is perceived by a customer, his/her satisfaction is understood from his/her emotional reaction (Oliver, 1980; Roland *et al.*, 1995; Yi, 1990). Satisfaction impact on loyalty and word-of-mouth communication has been significantly evidenced in several studies. However, this impact has been suggested in more recent studies to be rather complex (Bloemer and Kasper, 1994; Reichheld, 1993; Oliver, 1980; Stauss and Neuhaus, 1997).When remaining in a business relationship rather than terminating it is strongly believed by a customer to lead to higher net benefits (Geyskens *et al.*, 1996) and an emotional bond is accordingly established between them for a long term (Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Geyskens *et al.*, 1996), this orientation of the customer is described as commitment. As an important direct antecedent of customer loyalty, commitment was found by Pritchard *et al.* (1999) to be strongly supported for the hotel and airline services in their recent study. Whenever a customer believes a service provider is reliable with a high degree of integrity, trust is established. Several researcher consider trust as a necessary component of a long-term relationship (Ganesan, 1994; Neeli and Berry, 1997). Nevertheless, the direct effect of trust on loyalty has been questioned by recent empirical studies (Grayson and Ambler, 1999). Since, only a single construct has been regarded as a driver of customer loyalty and word-of mouth communication in the aforementioned studies they are generally considered as limited studies. Thus, a more holistic multivariate approach is required since the mentioned outcomes of relationship marketing are most probably resulted from an interaction between multiple constructs. Morgan and Hunt (1994)'s commitment-trust hypothesis of relationship marketing is considered as a first approach in this regard. Their "key mediating variable model" of relationship marketing represented the mediators positioned at the center of customer's relationship commitment and trust.

Although, some hypothesized paths towards these key mediating variables for relationship outcomes could not be verified by Kalafatis and Miller (1996) commitment and trust positions as mediators were corroborated in their replication study. The 2 factors of service value perceived by the customer and situational variable result in the relationship marketing outcomes which were developed by Blackwell *et al.* (1999) in the value-situation model of repeat purchase behavior based on service relationships. The consumption situation including physical and social surroundings, temporal perspective and task definition as well as the benefits received by the customer and his/her personal preference and sacrifice would put an influence on the value. The significant relationship of value and situational impacts with repeat purchase behavior was revealed by the model's empirical test on pharmaceutical services (Blackwell *et al.*, 1999).

An approach based on relationship content has been recently proposed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), Crutchfield (1998) and Morgan (2001) who argued that the process of building a relationship is basically shaped by a number of essential relationship contents, including economic, social and resource exchanges as the key antecedents of relational outcomes like customer loyalty. Based on this approach, the economic, social and resource contents of relationships include the economic benefits and costs of a customer participating in the relationship, feelings of compatibility among partners and the numerous roles of resources in the relationship, respectively.

Ultimately, the relationship quality model and relational benefits approach are the 2 well-known multivariate approaches that provide an understanding of relationship marketing outcomes. The basic assumption in the relationship quality model is based on the central role of the customer's evaluation of the relationship to decide to continue or leave his/her relationship with a service provider. Incorporating customer satisfaction as a key concept, Morgan and Hunt (1994)'s commitment trust theory makes the basis for most of the relationship quality conceptualizations. The relational benefits approach emphasizes on the necessity of taking a benefit from the relationship by both the customer and service provider for ensuring the relationship continuity and stability. To establish a long-term relationship, several different motives have been identified for customer relationship which need to be fulfilled.

To model the determinants of relationship marketing outcomes in this study these 2 latter approaches were considered to be of the most expressive ones. Moreover to model the actual impacts on the consumer's word-of mouth decisions and loyalty, the most appropriate method was a multivariate approach with regard to the multi-dimensionality of factors determining the relationship marketing outcomes and the complexity of customer's decisions based on the relationship. Studying the issue based on the two concepts mentioned above was appropriate since they incorporated some reliable multivariate approaches such as commitment-trust theory. The other relevant methods were either less theoretically documented like the service-profit chain approach which may be taken as a heuristic framework or less discussed in the literature such as the relationship content approach and value-situation model. Accordingly, the concepts of

Table 4: Long-term relational outcomes and the relevant approaches

Name	Type	Description	Key construct	Illustrative research
Satisfaction approach	Univariate	Customer satisfaction as antecedent of relation as outcomes (i.e., customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth communication)	Customer satisfaction with the service provider's performance	Fornell (1992) and Hallowell (1996)
Trust approach	Univariate	Trust as antecedent of relation outcomes	Consumer trust in the relationship partner (i.e., the service provider)	Neeti and Berry (1997), Grayson and Ambler (1999) Moorman *et al.* (1992)
Commitment approach	Univariate	Commitment as antecedent of relation outcomes	Customer commitment to the relationship	Pritchard *et al.* (1992)
Commitment-trust theory	Multivariate	Commitment and Trust as key Mediating variables between antecedents and relation outcomes	Customer commitment and trust	Kalafatis and Miller (1996), Morgan and Hunt (1994)
Value-situation model	Multivariate	Perceived value and situational variables predict repeat purchase behavior	Value of the service as perceived by the customer and the customers individual situation	Blackwell *et al.* (1999)
Relationship content approach	Multivariate	Three basic relationship contents fundamentally shape the process of relationship building	Economic content of the relationship, resource content, social content	Crutchfield (1998), Morgan (2001), Robert *et al.* (2000)
Relationship quality approach	Multivariate	Customer evaluation of transactions and the relationship as a whole predict relational outcomes	Satisfactions, trust, commitment, various other constructs	Crosby *et al.* (1990) Hennig-ThurauandKlee(1997), Smith and Barclay (1997)
Relationship benefits approach	Multivariate	Relational outcomes for the firm are dependent upon the customers receiving certain relational benefits	Different type of relational benefits include confidence benefits, social benefits and special treatment benefits	Gwinner *et al.* (1998), Reynolds and Phillips

Partially derived from (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002) and the research findings

relationship quality and relational benefits were explained in more details (Table 4). Therefore with regard to the different factors of relationship marketing, relationship quality schemes, studies on brand equity outcomes and conceptual framework in the marketing literature, the 3rd and 4th propositions were suggested in this study.

P3: Relationship marketing associated with the CBBE approach lead to long-term relationship outcomes that create values for the firm and customer.

P4: Value to the customer in long-term relations brings value to the firm in the flat market era. Atilgan as the proponents of financial perspective defined brand equity as the total value of a brand that is a divisible asset when it is sold or included in a balance sheet. Simon and Sullivan (1993) considered brand equity as the incremental cash flow with which the branded products are commanded over unbranded products. However, the perspective of strategic applications is focused on using brand equity to guide marketing decisions. It is more important for suppliers and customers to understand their own perceptions of brand equity. Perceptions affect outcomes such as customer acquisition and retention. The value placed on brand equity by the customer and the supplier changes with time. Monitoring brand equity helps in the assessment of brand value and can result in more targeted marketing activities. Using brand equity from a strategic perspective can add value to many of the suppliers and firms in the industries and services. Hence, the final proposition was proposed in this study (Fig. 1).

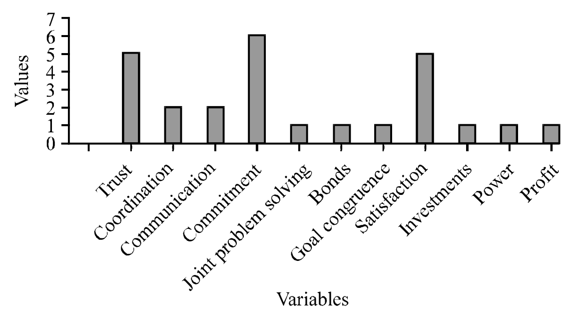

Fig. 1: Relationship quality constructs

P5: The core element derived from the interaction between Relationship Quality (RELAQUAL, CBBE) and value to the customer is as a dual value creation.

MATRIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the aims stated in this research, a qualitative literature review was employed to assess and integrate the conceptual framework of Relationship Quality (RELAQUAL) elements with the CBBE approach as an alternative to a subjective attitude. In the first phase by reviewing the researches on relationship quality, all the studies were considered to be performed between 1990 and 2011. The results obtained were the data set of 2 defined decades making the first part of the conceptualization model.

The second phase was focused on the brand equity schemes between 1990 and 2011. This period of studies

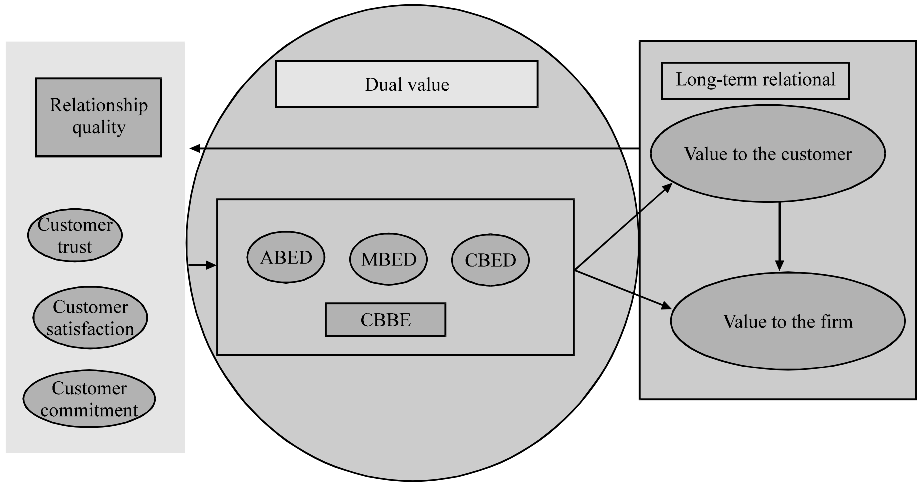

Fig. 2: The conceptual framework

Table 5: The reviewed articles

Schemes	No. of articles	Percentage
FBBE	25	26.88
CBBE	61	65.59
FBBE	7	7.53
Total	93	100.00

was divided into 3 time sections. Overall, 93 articles were reviewed. According to the results, 26.88% was related to the Financial Based Brand Equity (FBBE). 65.59% of the reviewed articles were considered as based on CBBE. Only, 7.53% of the rest of the papers reflected FBBE. The results are shown in Table 5.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, Relationship Quality (RELAQUAL) elements, CBBE perspective, long-term relational outcomes and the related approaches were used to introduce and describe the important constructs in the marketing science. This study was also focused on the links between customer relationship factors such as trust, customer satisfaction and relationship commitment as the common dimensions of CBBE. A conceptual model was developed using CRM-based customer relationship factors and the theoretical frameworks of Aaker (1996). The proposed framework allowed us to hypothesize the mediating roles of brand dimensions. Finally, the long-term relational outcomes were considered in the model. In the framework, the impact of value to the customer on the value of the firm was very important and the creation of a dual value through value to the customer and relationship quality was a fresh issue in the marketing literature (Fig. 2).

Relationship quality as the cornerstone of marketing strategy to optimize customer relations through CBBE is a novel and fresh topic in the marketing arena. Focusing on the marketing notion, the elements of relationship quality and brand equity are as the aspects related to a company's performance (Angulo and Criado, 2007). The theoretical aspects were considered for exploring brand equity (Aaker, 1991 and Keller, 1993, 2001) and investigating the relationship quality scale (Anderson *et al*., 1994; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Angulo and Criado, 2007). Moreover, there was important evidence in the existing literature that brand equity is an antecedent, mediator and consequence of relationship quality Anderson and Mittal, 2000; Chandrashekaran *et al*., 2007; Kim and Lee, 2008). Additionally, brand equity provides distinctive benefits for producers and managers while enabling a company to create massive volumes and real margins. It sets a durable platform for establishing new products and protects brand vs competitive assaults (Cobb-Walgren *et al*. 1995). According to Kellr and Lehmann (2006) long-term relational outcomes have a significant role in assessing and monitoring a brand with important elements such as trust, customer satisfaction, relationship commitment, brand loyalty, brand awareness and perceived quality. It is an as an asset in the acknowledgement and statement of financial and non-financial indicators with a particular value for the firm and customer based on a CRM approach.

CONCLUSION

In this study, some effective factors on the relationship quality and brand equity were introduced. Furthermore, the links between the relationship quality and antecedent, mediating and consequent dimensions through trust, customer satisfaction, relationship commitment and brand equity were discovered in this research. The major contribution of this study was the use of an integrated CBBE model in the industrial marketing. This research represented one of the first attempts to integrate the relationship quality elements as the determinants of brand equity and long-term relational outcomes. Hence, the discussion on brand equity and its measurement can be depicted as a "black box" for both customer-centric scales and brand equity practices regarding the different industries.

IMPLICATIONS

From the practitioner's aspects, the important advantages of the bond between brand equity and relationship quality factors can be studied whether managers are doing successfully or need an improvement via receiving customer's attitudes and opinions on services and products before during and after a launch. It can show a reliability of and assurance about the quality of relationship by hearing and finally seeing the company's position standing with its customers rather than its competitors.

Practically, the findings of this study will exhibit how decision makers, top managers and customers distinguish the goods centric constructs and service-based concepts of brands. Thus, it may assist company managers understand customer based assessments of their brands and help them improve clear guidelines to situate their brands according to customer's options. Furthermore, an examination of the impacts of the relationship quality factors on brand equity and consequent values to the firm and customer will advance marketer's perceptions of factors that may enhance brand power and create insights towards brand equity management. Likewise, this manuscript empirically demonstrates these relationships and manifests how they can help drive objective marketing performance.

Consequently, this study will not only present the theoretical verification which supports the value of brand equity based on CBBE but also will provide a practical model that displays how brand equity dimensions guide tactical decisions and marketing strategies, evaluation of brand extendibility assessment of the effectiveness of marketing efforts and actions and tracking and monitoring the brand health in different industries. In addition, due to being as an important value in the profit chain, R&D intensity can be controlled during performing the pertinent studies. Hence, industries can use the results of this research to optimize the long-term relationships between their brands and customers by focusing on the customer-centric scales.

SUGGESTIONS

First, the body of knowledge in the brand literature and relationship quality in the existing marketing research was affixed in this study. The discussion was integrated by the judgment of one prominent scheme to a definite extent to configure the constructs of interests. It presented (Aaker, 1991, 1996)'s brand equity conceptualization by considering brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality as well as other brand properties. Also some dimensions of this scheme were integrated into the customer relationship elements. This is an open venue, through which the academic researchers can concentrate on the integration approach for designing, implementing and mentoring long-term relational outcomes as well as performing CRM.

The scales developed from this research will be a worthy tool with which a company's brand equity can be analyzed. These suitable scales enable researchers to obtain more perfect outcomes from their studies. Thus, researchers in the services and industries will have an aid to recognize the importance and role of customer-centric relationship quality in brand equity and value for the firm and customer by utilizing valid brand equity scales in an attempt to meet with superior results. Hence, the second outcome of this research was anticipated to open a fresh door on the scientific researchers of the industrial marketing process.

Third, the recommended study will display an integrated model of brand equity in the CBBE framework via indicating a set of mediating variables such as brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand awareness in the defined relationships between CRM-based factors and brand equity constructs. Theoretically, scholars can investigate how the dimensions of relationship quality elements are better evaluated to reach favorable brand equity and introduce the gaps that possibly lead to the enhanced brand equity levels. Also the discussion of brand equity and its measurement can be depicted as a "black-box" orientation on both customer-centric scales and brand equity practices regarding the different industries (Christodoulides and Chernatony, 2010; Kristy and Beatty, 2000).

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