The Role Of Self-Expressive Brands And Brand Tribalism In Advocating Apparel Brands

Haris Bin Khalid* and Muhammad Ishfaq Khan**

*Capital University Of Science & Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan
**Capital University Of Science & Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: haris.khalid@cust.edu.pk
ishfaq@cust.edu.pk

Abstract

This study aims to measure the self-concept of the millennial consumer on brand relationship within the context of clothing and textile industry. A framework of self-expressive brands and brand resonance has been articulated, research focused on brand conscious Millennial Generation of Pakistan. The survey was carried within 413 consumers from urban cities of Pakistan, hence every individual of millennials generation who is inclined to branded clothing become a part of population for this study, the confidentiality of respondents has also put in the consideration. The Questionnaire was used to capture responses of respondents. After the completion of survey, analysis has been conducted via structural equational modelling using SPSS 21 and SMART PLS, a structural model tested hypothesized research model. The research is beneficial for organizations and their brands that will enable to answer how millennial consumer could be benefit from the brand tribes that facilitates marketers in increasing the brand relationships resulting in strengthening the brand worth.

Keywords: Brand Advocacy, Brand Tribalism, Self-Expressive Brands, Homophily, Millennials generation,

1. Introduction

Today's brands has significant presence on the digital media platforms, brand users are more expressive and more engaged than ever before, The essence of marketing process is the articulation of strong brands in the minds of the consumers because each brand has a separate identities along with distinctive qualities Self-expressive brand is a concept that is defined as the mechanism by which consumers decide their intention to purchase goods/services in a manner that further makes a connection between the needs of consumers and the value provided by the goods/services (Chatzipanagiotou, Christodoulides and Veloutsou, 2019). Therefore, one of the things that companies should think about is to know the needs of consumers and customers, and the other is to refine the value of products and services in order to create brands that can generate consumers' self-image (Su and Reynolds, 2017). Value of goods and services is nothing but the value for consumers and customers and there are three types of value that can generate self-expressive brand. They are functional value, emotional value and self-expression value (Moorthi and Mohan, 2017). Self-expression value includes the status that can be felt by wearing a first-class brand and the sense of fulfilment that brings consumers closer to the image they want to be (Nguyen, Wu and Chen, 2017). There is no difference in functional value for all products and services as many companies have already created functionally superior products that make it difficult to feel the difference in value

(Johansson, Christiernin and Pejryd, 2016). For instance, the housing industry is an industry that handles ultra-priced products called once-in-a-life home construction, but there are a large number of consumers and customers who go through the housing exhibition halls and get lost without knowing the difference. In other words, construction firms and house makers can take advantage of them and refine their emotional value and self-expression value to differentiate their rivals.

Self-expressive brands are essentially a paraphrase of features that can be turned into values from a consumer perspective (Urde, 2016). However, it is not limited to functional needs, but meets the universal needs of people, contributing to market creation and category growth. It's not the case that consumers have been wondering about the effect for decades and have been caught in the thoughts of feature selling but in order for marketing to contribute to the development of society, each of consumers' needs are required being learned by the brand in order to offer benefit and catering to their self-expressive needs (Baudrillard, 2016). With respect to this, the self-expression value introduced at the end is considered to be the most important factor in branding whereas the value of self-expression is the value of one's own self in the minds of others (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2018). In this way, self-expressive products and services that have become tools to express consumers' own way of life, way of life, and values will sell regardless of price. Self-expression value is close to the highest self-actualisation desire in the five stages of Maslow and on the other hand, emotional value may be close to the second approval for approval or the third social desire (Kovac, 2016). Strong brand conditions depend on the amount of value the brand provides to its customers and if that is the case, unless the organisations understand the value that the brand should provide to the consumers (brand-provided value), they cannot improve or enhance the brand value (Ramesh et al., 2019).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Self-Expressive Brands and Brand Tribalism

The brand can have its impact on shopping decisions of customers by making it a self-expression and this advantages the owner of such brand as well (Fan, 2005). Due to this, the brand which has an intangible function will become an asset of high value for the customers wanting brand that can enhance their social self. in recent time, a brand-new strategy for constructing brand fairness is to create brand tribalism however it's far a huge project for entrepreneurs because the developing process of brand tribalism is to build a network of individuals (Vail, 1989) who have a passion for the equal brand, have a connection, share feelings and opinions at the brand among the individuals in a collection or tribe collectively (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2010). It looks like a tribe that has a symbolic expression, tribal tradition and portioning out through rituals to demonstrate the dedication of the tribe contributors. In the literature, there are some empirical studies locating that brand tribalism has its impact on brand relationship (Taute and Sierra, 2014). Brand relationships are an essential component of constructing brand fairness due to the fact while consumers have already had an emotional bond with the brand, they would recall and be willing to buy the identical brand repeatedly till this will become an addiction.

Pride, believe, dedication, familiarity, and love are the explanatory traits that are best related to the brand within the customer's angle. From many research, they have observed that brand relationships have high-quality consequences on brand loyalty because it creates a group of like-minded people who buy products for reflecting their inner selves. For considering the brand as true with inside the size of an advertisement is critical for the brand and it is important that one party has confidence in credibility and integrity of the alternative celebration (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan,

2010). Clients are dynamic on the subject of their brand choices and thanks to the superiority of statistics and communication technology; postmodern purchasers have grown to be greater stressful of manufacturers for better products or services that can ensure their self-expression with the brand.

Indeed, marketers have struggled to satisfy the rising needs and wishes of purchasers with a selection of techniques (Pekkanen, Närvänen and Tuominen, 2017). Hence, it's far essential to set up customer brand advantageous relationships that promise sustainable buy intentions on a part of the consumer (Tuominen, 2011). Those works have located that there is a sturdy relationship between clients 'tribe and brands' self-expression, leading to constant purchases, beneficial phrase-of-mouth, and social sensitivity to a brand new. Mainly, brand self-expression is while a brand offers a purchaser their unconditional aid to become connected with the brand and builds an emotional bond within the tribe. Brand love can be seen as the catalyst to brand self-expression, and as a booster of buy intention (Taute and Sierra, 2014)

H1: Social Self -Expressive Brand is positively and significantly related to the Brand Tribalism.

2.2 Inner Self-Expressive Brands and Brand Tribalism

Self-expression benefits are the benefits that consumers gain from being able to express themselves through the brand. In this manner, the purpose of perceptual marketing is to allow consumers to get an emotional experience from the product and this kind of experience is not only the emotional satisfaction, but also the satisfaction of self-expression value (Iranmanesh et al., 2017). The self-expression benefit is the personal wealth, status, values and aesthetic taste behind the product. The consumer buys and use the brand because the meaning of the brand is consistent with the expectations a consumer wishes to pass to

others and therefore the brand connotation dissociates from mainstream values is incredible (Merk and Michel, 2019). This kind of brand connotation is just like expressing self to other people, and publicizing the personality in terms of being unique and new, and the motivation to define one's identity and establish self-image is very consistent (Sobol, 2015). The self-expression benefit creates a very attractive buying motive whereas emotional value is completely different from self-expression value (Sripada, 2016). Emotional value is mainly inward--that is, the inner satisfaction and emotional venting, while the self-expression value is more external--that is, let others perceive their wealth, identity, social class, learning, life interests, values and lifestyles. Emotional value is easy to be summarized and perceived in order to make everyone knows better and this is the root cause of many people including industry experts ignoring self-expression value, and even misunderstanding that perceptual marketing is emotional marketing (Martikainen and Pitkänen, 2019). Therefore, in fact, many brands can impress consumers with self-expression value.

H2: Inner Self -Expressive Brand is positively and significantly related to the Brand Tribalism

2.3 Homophily and Brand Tribalism

Consumers can express their expressions and stories through digital and social media and in fact, these consumer changes are creating great opportunities for brands to create new self-expression values (Hudson et al., 2016). In modern branding, it is even becoming an indispensable means to create value together through the self-expression of fans and users. In this way, brand stories also tend to shift from built-up images and fiction to a real user experience that can be sympathetic whereas the brand itself has a clear personality, the values and thorough attention to create brand's supporters, and provide a clear self-expression style, hence homophily: (i.e., love of the identical) is the tendency of people to partner and bond with similar others and increase

togetherness with the people who are similar to them (Phillips, Tracey and Karra, 2013). If human beings with like characteristics tend to behave in addition and additionally have a tendency to set up ties, the brands need to observe that human beings with ties generally tend to act in the identical way. Indeed, this impact has been used as the idea for improving advertising forecasts; moreover, homophily shows that community fellows can be similar on maximum choice-applicable characteristics, instead of only product taste (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). The traits of consumers consisting of product alternatives or susceptibility to influence which encodes the homophily effect remains strong through the years. The relationship between homophily and brand tribalism is interrelated, however studies explored the topic and found that many individuals look for connections and friendships that help them form an identification that would define a group. Ahuvia (2015) had also studied previous literature on the topic and related that while people are attracted towards a brand because of the way its identity matches with their own, the same happened interpersonally, as people were more attracted to people that shared the same personality as them and helped develop a family-like bond. In an online context, the study argues that the sense of similarity brought forward an idea of belonging to a group and feelings of likability and kinship (Abosag & Zakbar, 2018). Furthermore, homophily helps develop feelings of trust and reliability that are present in a group or tribe building a strong, Concluding other research, it was found that instead of a relationship between the product and the consumer, the actual relationship was built as between the consumer to another consumer, however the concept of brand tribalism only applied to the concept of publicly consumed products (Ahuvia, 2015).Currarini & Mengel (2016) agreed with the conclusions made and stated in their research how many individuals behaved positively with people who were a part of the tribe because of the similar attributes and reinstated the concept of

"similarity breeds connection". Krefting & Baruc (2015) endorse the concept of "similarity breeds connection" through the interviews conducted by a digital media scholar for their study, such that feelings of similarity and likeness in individuals enables them to form and be part of brand tribes. Mogotsi (2018) concurs that members of society are able to find significant brand-related similarities between themselves and hence, form an exclusive relationship within the society.

H3: Homophily modifies the relationship of Self expressive brands and Brand Tribalism

2.4 Brand Tribalism and Brand Advocacy

While members of a brand tribe form the group on the basis of mutual devotion to a specific brand, the very members might advocate for it. Hence literature on the topic provides valuable insight on if a relationship between them is positive or the alternative. According to Randiwela & Gunarathna (2017) brand tribes share an identity and are associated with the personality that the brand bestows. This brings forward a feeling of important and self-confidence and emotional connectivity between an individual and the brand itself. People share with each other what they are emotionally connected to and what brings them emotional comfort, hence advocate a brand on the basis of connection that then forms a community with shared feelings of connectivity (Randiwela & Gunarathna, 2017). Taute et al., (2017) further replicated that involvement within a branded community gives a rise in factors such as brand tribe loyalty and brand advocacy; they are closely related and lead to positive word of mouth marketing, recommendations to fellow members and creating value by bringing in other people that then expand the branded tribe through advocacy. Most brand tribe members document about their preference for a brand which in turn allows other members who perceive the branded tribe as valuable to join in with the branded community (Taute et al., 2017). Hence, this advocacy of a brand leads to other people bonding with each other on the

platform and an improved level of understanding of each other's feelings and emotions. When empathetic, people tend to relate to the consumer, and take a chance at the brand being advocated, which indicates to other peers joining in the brand tribe because of a shared experience and enjoyment of the same brand (Langaro et al., 2018).

Chiosa & Anastasiei (2018) take a different view on the topic and report that the relationship between the two depends on two factors that were the level of confidence consumers had on the brand and the perception and the reputation that the brand tribe members held in the society. The study mainly focusing on brand advocacy on Facebook took note that people would advocate a branded product or a branded service on their own if they have faith that increased consumption of the said product or service would lead to improving their tribe's status in society and would benefit the branded community as a whole.Sanz-Marcos (2018)

also takes a varied approach on the topic and discusses the important role tribes play in being brand advocates. According to the study, while consumers have complete freedom to choose a branded product or service for themselves, they also interact in social atmosphere and can likewise, influence others' consumption choice. Brand tribalism should consist of the idea that the tribes while sharing a preference for a particular brand, also have the freedom to express their views on the brand, write their own narratives about it, what it means to them and to consistently alter them with their mutual agreement on feelings (Sanz-Marcos, 2018). If advocacy must be created within the environment, then the brand should take into consideration that the tribe isn't restricted to simply consuming the branded product but is also free to portray the product however they wish to do so (Sanz-Marcos, 2018).

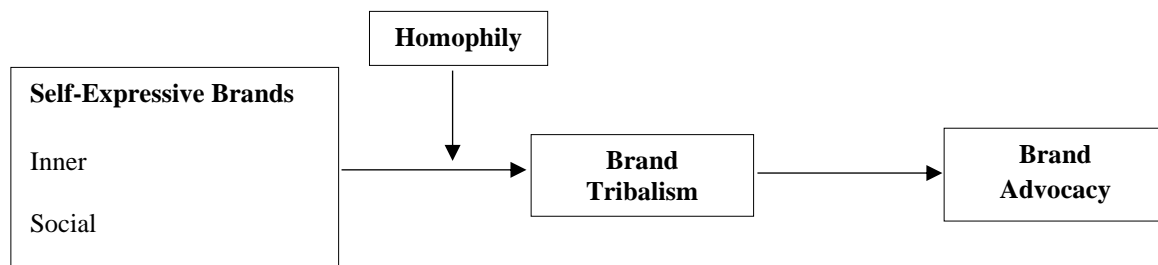H4: Brand Tribalism is positively and significantly related to the Brand Advocacy

Fig.2.1 Theoretical Framework of Brand Relationship (Advocacy)

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and sampling

The population of the study are the generation Y millennials both students and non-students as they found to be more brand conscious and are immensely motivated towards the well-known brands, millennial generation prefer well-known brands. Brand Consciousness refers to the consumer's ability to respond to and recognize the brand when it comes to the

market and it also refers to the ability of consumers to actively mention brands when referring to the product category amongst the other consumers (Workman and Lee, 2013). The stronger the brand consciousness, the more consumers will think of the brand when they purchase the product, and the more likely they are to buy the brand (Walsh and Mitchell, 2010). At the same time, brand consciousness will also affect the formation and intensity of brand association and brand image (Sasmita

and Mohd Suki, 2015). A corporate brand is a manifestation of the value of an intangible asset and an intangible asset and it is a functional element that includes the product (such as use,

quality, service, price, packaging, etc.), the image of the manufacturer and the product while keeping it safe in the conscious mind of customers (Leek and Christodoulides, 2012).

Respondents Profile

Demographics	Percentage %
Gender	
Male	30.4
Female	69.6
Age	
Mean 26.8	
Marital Status	
Married	48
Single	52
Education	
Mean 2.44 (Graduate)	
Brands Cconsumer Use	
Gul Ahmed	2.9
Junaid Jamshed	31.3
Nishat	2.2
Bonanza	7.8
Khadi	16.6
Alkaram	14.1
Uniworth	9.0
ChenOne	2.1
Outfitter	7.3
Royal Tag	0.6
Dinners	1.7
Charcole	3.0
Sana Safina	5.1
Others	4

Table- 3.1

3.2 Scale

The brand advocacy measures developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). The scale for self-expressive brands that is use in the study was also developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and measured using two facets of self i-e inner and social self, further the Cognitive network measures of consumers' perceptions about attitude homophily and status homophily will be carried out for the study based on

McCroskey et al. (1975). For Brand tribalism study uses Moutinho et al. (2007)

4. Results

The estimation method using Structural equation modelling the maximum-likelihood was used to test the hypothesis, with Smart PLS. the model fit indices show the model provides a good fit to the data (2./df 2.53; p 0.000; RMSEA 0.694; NNFI 0.931. the model

fit indices values fall within the range meaning they are above or equal to the 0.9 and RMSEA or below or equal to 0.8 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). The value of chi-sq/Df also in the range the literature suggests as it should be less than 5.

Correlation matrix & Reliability Analysis

S.No	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Brand Advocacy	3.47	.73	1(.82)				
2	Brand Tribalism	3.78	.85	0.39**	1(.87)			
3	Homophily	3.32	.78	0.42**	0.40**	1(.83)		
		3.88	.73	0.66**				
4	Inner Self-Expressive Brands				0.53**	0.61**	1(.89)	
5	Social Self Expressive Brand	3.79	.61	0.58**	0.52**	0.68**	0.58**	1(.85)

Table- 4.1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
n = 413, reliability in parenthesis

The following table of correlation analysis states that both inner and social self are positively correlated with the brand advocacy with their 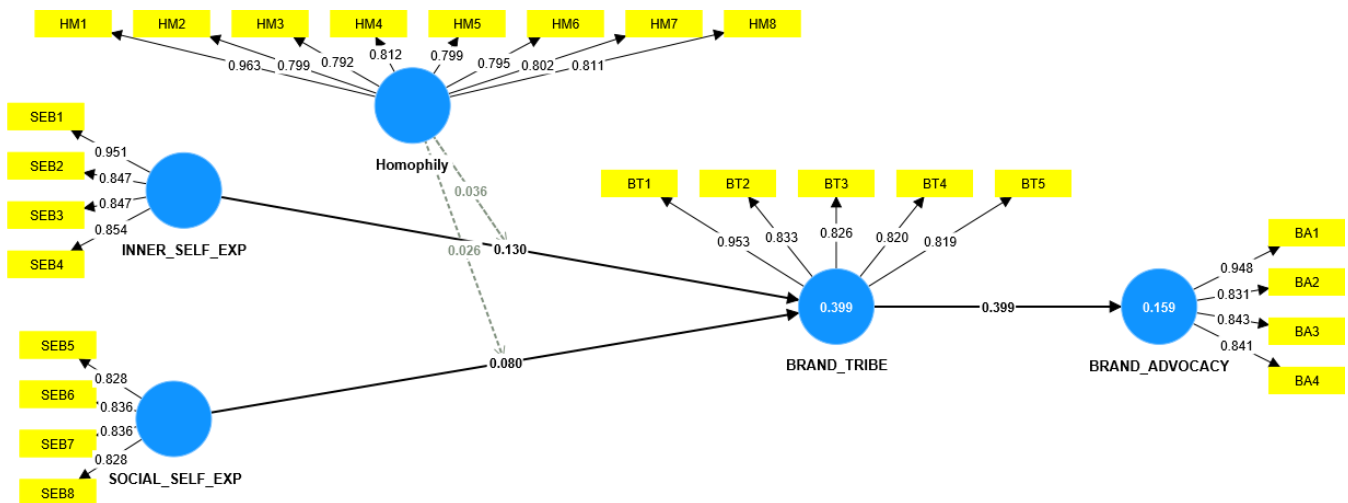respective values 0.66 and 0.58. the values of correlation for both are positive with brand advocacy, though the value represents a moderate correlation but significant at .01 level. The brand tribalism with the value of 0.36 and homophily with value of 0.42 are also positively correlated with brand advocacy, though weak correlation found but significant. These results show significant relationship among the variables.

Fig. 4.1 Results of structural equation modelling (hypothesized model)

Hypothesis	Estimates	p-value		Accepted/ Rejected
Inner Self Expressive Brand → Brand Tribalism	0.130	.000		Accepted
Social Self Expressive Brand → Brand Tribalism	0.080		.000	Accepted
Brand Tribalism → Brand Advocacy	0.399	.000		Accepted
Homophily → Brand Tribalism	0.037		.000	Accepted
Homophily * Social Self Expressive Brand	0.026		.000	Accepted

Homophily * Inner Self Expressive Brand	.0036	.000	Accepted

Table- 4.2

The result shows that the inner self expressive brands has significant and positive effect on brand tribalism and bought .130 unit change in brand tribalism with the significance of .000, therefore the hypothesis H_1 inner self expressive is supported, Results suggest that the hypothesis for social self-expressive brands and brand tribalism also favors and complement each other and has positive and significant relationship with estimate value of .080 meaning .08-unit change in brand tribalism is found with the significant p value, hence H_2 hypothesis is also supported. Homophily also significantly and positively moderates on path of self-expressive brand and brand tribalism impacting .037 unit change hence hypothesis H_3 is also supported. Finally, the results suggest that there is a significant and positive relationship of brand tribalism with brand advocacy is positive, and significant with the estimated values of .399 unit of change and found significant therefore hypothesis H_4 also accepted.

5. Discussion

The brand can have its impact on shopping decisions of customers by making it a self-expression and this advantages the owner of such brand as well (Fan, 2005). Due to this, the brand which has an intangible function will become an asset of high value for the customers wanting brand that can enhance their social self (Fan, 2005). in recent times, a brand new strategy for constructing brand fairness is to create brand tribalism however it's far a huge project for entrepreneurs because the developing process of brand tribalism is to build a network of individuals (Vail, 1989) who have a passion for the equal brand, have a connection, share feelings and opinions at the brand among the individuals in a collection or tribe collectively (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2010). It looks like a tribe that has a

symbolic expression, tribal tradition and portioning out through rituals to demonstrate the dedication of the tribe contributors. Study showed that self-expressive brands predict the brand tribalism, people become member of group and express themselves through the brands they use, branded clothing and fashion branding are the real way of expression through which consumer represent themselves in society. When consumers become a member of community or a brand, they share brand information and stay loyal with the brand and participate their role in strengthening brand relationship. hence brand tribes also serve as the platform for consumers to share their experiences and values gain through brand, the relationship of this study is also consistent with the findings above noted that members of communities share with their friends and family what they like and what they feel resonates with them on an emotional level. Hence, this advocacy of a brand leads to other people bonding with each other on the platform and an improved level of understanding of each other's feelings and emotions. When empathetic, people tend to relate to the consumer, and take a chance at the brand being advocated, which indicates to other peers joining in the brand tribe because of a shared experience and enjoyment of the same brand (Langaro et al., 2018). Chiosa & Anastasiei (2018) take a different view on the topic and report that the relationship between the two depends on two factors that were the level of confidence consumers had on the brand and the perception and the reputation that the brand tribe members held in the society. The study mainly focusing on brand advocacy on Facebook took note that people would advocate a branded product or a branded service on their own if they have faith that increased consumption of the said product or service would lead to improving their tribe's status in society and would benefit the branded community as a whole.Sanz-Marcos (2018)

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