

Brand Equity and Mediating Role of Brand Reputation in Hospitality Industry of Ghana.

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Abstract

The Present study aims to investigate the brand equity of the local as well as international fast food restaurants in the country of Ghana. Furthermore, the study investigates the particular brand association (B Ass.) and brand awareness (B Aw.) dimensions of the brand equity (BE). Moreover, the mediating role of the brand reputation (BR) examined in between dimensions of brand equity and brand trust (BT). In addition the moderating effect of social media also investigated. Study adopted the partial least square 3.0 for inferential statistics as

well as structural equation modelling. The results of the study exhibited, that BE has positive and significant influence on BR. In addition, the effect of brand awareness on brand trust partially mediated by brand reputation, while the association between brand association and brand trust is fully mediated. The outcomes of the scholarship add to advance indulgent of the multifaceted psychosomatic procedures tangled in purchaser selection standards for a fast food restaurants and service industry.

Keywords: Brand Equity (BE), Brand Awareness (B Aw.), Brand Association (B Ass.), Brand Reputation (BR), Brand Trust (BT), and Social Media (SM).

1 – Introduction

Building and sustaining a brand is indispensable in the current era of modest marketing milieu, and BE is the result of well-planned, and utilized brand activity stashes [56]. The dimension of BE should precisely assess purchasers' insights of the brand in order to advance marketing approaches that bring into line with consumers' (Cs) morals [28]. It's pertinent, not only to customers, buyers, or users, who buy, and use a brand, but also to executives and marketing personnel's, who assess the routine of the particular brand and make influential schemes [46]. Hence, the assessment of BE offerings an efficient means to judge both end user brand insights and marketing motion [32].

Vicissitudes in Cs, routines have directed to an upsurge in the plea for diverse eating experiences and to the fast advancements in the fast food restaurant hospitality industry [44]. Such progress has an impact the exterior of various local and international brands which repeatedly form robust brands in order to fortify keenness and BE so that Cs are capable to identify a particular restaurant [37]. [50] Proposes that liberated cafes and restaurants putting effort as because the Cs are varying to local restaurants. Hospitality industry of Ghana ranked 4th in African country, especially from profitability point of view [41]. In addition, [2], exhibited that hospitality especially contributed more into the GDP of the country, it accounted for 7.8% in 2015. Furthermore, service sector accounted 56.6% industry of the country, reports stated that, 28.4% of population has internet access. Among them (e.g. 82.22% Facebook, 7.52% Twitter, 7.3% Pinterest, 1.8% are YouTube users). In developed countries like U.K.'s eating habits to put orders and doing dining in continue to grow, local food street enjoying more profits than well-known brands [10]. In 2014, it was supposed to be value roughly (£ 16.4 billion) and current

market of chain restaurants predictable to propagate to (£ 22 billion) over the next ten years [22]. Albeit some scholars have considered the progress of the fast food restaurants, an inadequate number of scholarships emphasis on Cs based BE in the hospitality industry [37, 55]. Researcher's argument whether BE dimensions utilized in products marketing can be practical to service-based brands. Owing to the distinctive qualities of services like intangibility and heterogeneity, products-based BE, it is claimed, necessitates alterations to encounter hospitality industry and service brand assessment necessities [47].

Furthermore, while preceding studies have evaluated the association amongst BR and BT [10, 50], no scholarship has, to the finest of our knowledge, studied the influence of BR on the association amongst Cs based fast food restaurants and BE and BT in hospitality industry in Ghana. Scholars consider BT as a vital driver in the hospitality sector mostly due to food safety, taste, hygiene and health [3, 60]. Moreover, trust is the greatest general extent of brand and consumer link, and may be an important factor BE [4]. Therefore, Cs habitually select trustworthy eateries grounded on trust. As utmost Cs trust on the eatery's status to surmise quality of food, services, and hygiene, so restaurants devote profoundly in emerging a standing that is reflected reliable [19, 63]. Increasing hunger towards the usage of internet in the country, increasing penetration rate of 16.3% and 33.6% of population is using internet [27]. It is argued, that consumers not only pay attention to brands via visiting but also spread good as well as bad word of mouth of mouth by using social media. When Cs make selection against the service brands such as eateries, they give higher weightage to risk reduction [39]. That is, Cs try to decrease doubt and disquiet by taking into account the overall BE, BT, and BR. Hence, it is vital to investigate advance the associations among BE, BR, BT and moderation of social media in the restaurant industry.

2 – Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development

A substantial extent of enquiry is rapt towards classifying the measurements of BE and forming a conjoint basis for additional scholarship [9, 57]. [1] Categorized four measurements of BE, specifically, B Aw., B Ass., perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Keeping in view the distinctive qualities of services, scholars have investigated accustomed dimensions of service BE. To investigate the BE of luxury hotels and chain eateries, [37] used (e.g. B Aw., brand image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty). Constructing on this, [55] make an addition of the

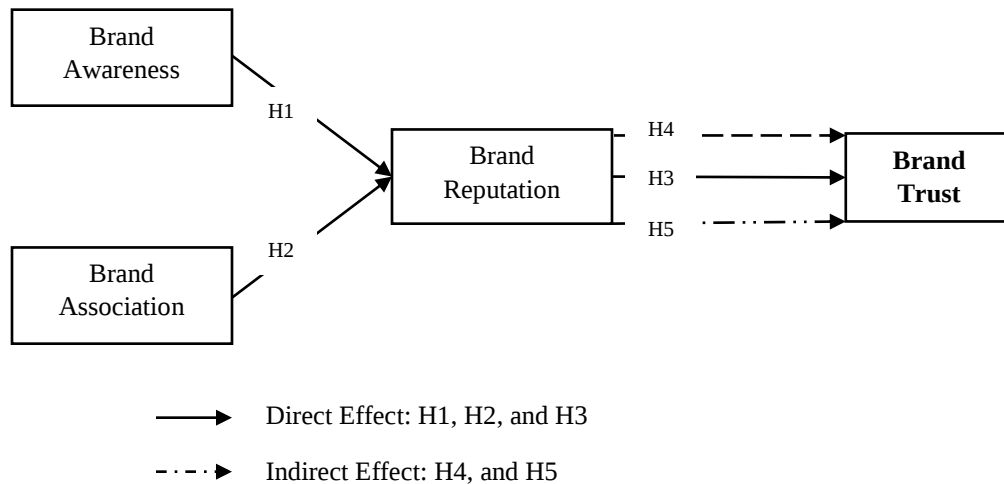
food quality to perceived quality measure in the context of chain restaurant. In the current study, we utilized to measure of their studies B Aw., and B Ass., dimension of BE.

To determine further association to other branding features, the present education further includes BR and BT. BT is “one of the most important characteristics of the chain restaurant brand because it increases consumers’ associations with intangible attributes such as taste, reliable hygiene, atmosphere, etc.” In the hospitality sector, augmented BT decrease Cs supposed risk when making a choice for a service [19]. With concern to this, status is also an appreciated intangible plus of a brand [16]. In hospitality industry, reputation is mainly critical, given the services’ imperceptible character and the difficulty in assessing its quality deprived of having experienced it [26]. Scholars have confirmed that decent reputation is seeming as a signal of trustworthiness [60] and acts as a forerunner to trust [4, 61]. [10] Explored the mediation role of trust among “corporate reputation and brand loyalty” in the restaurant industry, and the outcomes buttressed preceding revisions in that “corporate reputation has an influence on trust.” Furthermore, [31], also used the perceived BR as a mediator between brand extensions BE and perceived quality. Thus the present work adopts BR as a mediating variable among BE and BT..

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Fig.1 represents the conceptual framework of the study. In this study we use Brand awareness and brand association as an independent variable, brand trust as dependent variable, brand reputation as mediator, and social media tools as moderator.

2.2 Hypothesis Development;



2.2.1 The impact of B Ass., on BR

[35] Defines BR as “the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers”. The knots comprise particularly facts of a goods and services, such as logos, labeling, price, and advertisement of the particular brand, furthermore, positive or negative toward-of-mouth and the Cs past experience [29]. [1] states that the basis of BE is the awareness of a brand name which can generate optimistic links for Cs. B Ass., are considered as one of the most critical drivers in building a brand image [36]. Positive brand image, in turn, creates a good brand reputation. The formation of a brand image through advertisement, labeling, colors of logos, letters and symbols defines a product/service position, and effectively standing strengthens a robust “brand image” [51]. [53] Notified that a resilient memory impact strengthens a brand image. Cs who is devoted to a brand often associate escort with a progressive reputation [52]. Hence, the present study hypothesizes that:

H₁: B Ass, has a positive and significant impact on BR.

2.2.2 The impact of B Aw., on BR

Brand awareness is “related to the strength of the brand in the minds of consumers, and it enables consumers to recognize and recall the brand, thus enhancing brand equity [35].” B Aw., is a vital goal of marketing efforts in particular organizations, as because “brand image and brand attitude” cannot be shaped in its absenteeism [40]. Some scholar’s highpoint the vitality of B

Aw., in the context of service industry [34, 38]. It is associated with a brand name; it indicates the likelihood that a specific brand name emanates to the Cs mind [35]. A brand name helps to decrease the risks of purchasing and using another service brand [7]. [43], notifies that B Aw., donates to construct sincerity, which in turn, generates trustworthiness intensions. Trust of Cs to a particular brand, thus improves BR. Researchers have confirmed that B Aw., is associated with BR [42]. Both dimensions of brand equity (B Aw., and B Ass,) are reflected to be the core elements of reputation [14, 45], and hoards in B Aw., can tip to “sustainable competitive advantage and long-term brand value” [40]. Hence, the following the hypothesis constructed.

H₂: B Aw, has a positive and significant impact on BR.

2.2.3 The impact of BR on BT

Scholars approve that reputation is correlated with attitudes [54]. Attitudes are the “feelings and beliefs about a brand on the basis of the knowledge and information obtained from a consumer’s experiences” [64]. Therefore, “a brand’s reputation refers to the attitude of consumers that the brand is good and reliable” [3]. [58], proposes that an optimistic reputation articulates a low level of risk and arouses purchasing decisions. Scholars’ acme that trust lessens “uncertainty and risk” [11, 32]. In the service sector, trust is considered a most critical factor in the consumer buying decision [8]. When Cs trust a brand, they trust that the “food is of high quality, reducing uncertainties like lack of hygiene and freshness.” Hence, in preserving an optimistic association amongst Cs and earners, the researchers reflect trust as a vital element [17]. BR has the capability to decrease doubt and generate trust [58]. In the context of a hospitality industry such as fast food and chain restaurants, reputation is considered more influential due to the services’ vagueness [13, 49]. Investigators have confirmed that BR has an optimistic consequence on BT [6, 61]. Reputation thus transports improved trust in the quality of services [25]. Thus, the current study hypothesizes that: ***H₃: BR has a positive and significant impact on BT.***

2.2.4 Mediating effects of Brand Reputation;

We test the direct impact of BE dimensions on BT to explore the partial and full mediation effects of BR on the association among BE dimensions and BT. Scholars have investigated the link among BT and Cs based BE [15, 57]. For instance, [37], states that

humanizing qualities of services are surely connected to refining BT. Hence, by growing food safety standards, quality of food, and the service capability of operating in the eatery, the trust in the brasserie brand is raised [8]. In addition, [43] found that B Ass., is the dominant factor of BT in service brands. Furthermore, some scholars used the BR as mediator between BE dimensions and BT and founds the positive outcomes [25, 6]. [25], notified, the positive partial mediation between B Aw., and BT, while, they found the full mediation between B Ass., and BT. Hence, present study hypothesizes that:

H₄: The relationship between B Aw., and BT is positively and significantly mediated by BR.

H₅: The relationship between B Aw., and BT is positively and significantly mediated by BR.

3 – Methodology

3.1. The sample and data collection

A pilot study conducted, before main conduct of the survey. The main survey, led in the major cities of the country (e.g. Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Sunyani. Before proceeding towards filling the questionnaire, respondents were asked do they have any experience of fast food restaurants and brands. The Technique of field survey adopted, specifically convenient random sampling method used. N = 369 respondents represent the population of the country.

3.2. Measurements

To assess the constructs (variables), a 7 point-Likert scale used, which range from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. B Aw., measured by using 3 items. B Ass., measured by using 3 items. BR assessed by using 4 items. Construct of BT evaluated by using 5 items. The items were adopted from previous studies [25, 6,].

4 – Findings

The table – 1: show the results related to the assessment of the constructs. As per rule of thumb set by [48], the coefficient value of CA should be higher than **0.7**. Reliability will be excellent if it falls in between 0.7 to 0.9 it will be named high reliability. If in between 0.5 to 0.7 it will

become moderate. And if it will be < 0.5 it will categorize low. Three constructs results (B Aw. = 0.714, B Ass = 0.748, BR = 0.884, and BT = 0.841) fall in the range of 0.7 to 0.9 called excellent reliability. In addition, related to the loading, [12], proposed that loadings should have a value greater than 0.5. Furthermore, [5], stated that the value of AVE should be greater than the 0.5. And According to [21], composite reliability of construct should be greater than 0.7. Hence, keeping in view all the rules of thumbs related to reliability and validity standards, the results of the study founded satisfactory and meet the basic criteria developed by the previous scholars.

4.1. Table – 1: Measurement Model Evolution

Construct	Items	Loading	CA	CR	AVE
<i>Brand awareness</i> (B Aw.)	B Aw1	0.781	0.714	0.795	0.565
	B Aw2	0.667			
	B Aw3	0.800			
<i>Brand association</i> (B Ass.)	B Ass1	0.874	0.748	0.849	0.656
	B Ass2	0.884			
	B Ass3	0.648			
<i>Brand reputation</i> (BR)	BR1	0.869	0.884	0.92	0.741
	BR2	0.839			
	BR3	0.875			
	BR4	0.861			
<i>Brand trust</i> (BT)	BT1	0.821	0.841	0.888	0.614
	BT2	0.659			
	BT3	0.758			
	BT4	0.856			
	BT5	0.809			

Two methods were used to evaluate the “discriminant validity” of the variables. 1) it was ensured that the cross loadings of indicators should be greater than any other opposing constructs [24]. 2) According to the [20] criterion, the square root of AVE for each construct should exceed the inter-correlations of the construct with other model constructs” (Table 2). Hence, both approaches ensured the satisfaction of the results and validity.

Table – 2: Discriminant Validity Coefficients

	B Ass.	B Aw.	BR	BT
B Ass.	0.810*			
B Aw.	0.803	0.752*		
BR	0.644	0.734	0.861*	
BT	0.556	0.675	0.733	0.784*

Note: * Bold values represent the square root of average variance extracted (AVE).

Table – 3: Paths Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Direct Effect						
	B Ass. -> BR	0.136	0.066	2.053	0.041	Supported
	B Aw. -> BR	0.623	0.060	10.365	0.000	Supported
	BR -> BT	0.560	0.031	18.090	0.000	Supported
Indirect Effect						
	B Ass. -> BR -> BT	0.076	0.036	2.103	0.036	Supported
	B Aw. -> BR -> BT	0.349	0.044	7.938	0.000	Supported

5 – Discussion and Conclusion

The current study adds to the mounting literature on BE, BR, and BT. Initially this, work emphasis on the dimension of BE, those are vital for the hospitality industry and tourism (Marriott, Hayat Residency, Domino's, Nandos', KFC, Pizza Hut, and McDonalds). This article states that, both dimensions are considered to be the crucial elements of the BE. Albeit, numerous, work has been investigated against BE, but this work is in particular country like Ghana is new and still needed to be examined. The results shown in table – 3: indicate that both dimensions of the BE (e.g. B Aw., B Ass.) have optimistic effects on BR. In addition BR has a robust influence on BT. Therefore, we confirm the mediating role of BR in between BE dimension and BT.

More precisely, we have built six hypotheses. Among them four are direct and rest indirect as exhibited in fig. 1, and table – 3. All the hypotheses founded positive and significant, the decision was supported on the basis of having t-value > 2, and p-value < 0.05. Furthermore, the results founded are consistent with previous studies. $H_1 = B \text{ Ass.}$, has positive and significant

influence on BR. Results mentioned in the table – 3: (Beta = 0.136, standard deviation = 0.066, t-value = 2.053, p-value = 0.041). Results are consistent with previous studies of [53, 25]. $H_2 = B$ Aw., has positive and significant influence on BR. Results mentioned in the table – 3: (Beta = 0.623, standard deviation = 0.060, t-value = 10.365, p-value = 0.000). Results are consistent with previous studies of [25, 43]. $H_3 = BR$ have positive and significant effects on BT. Results mentioned in the table – 3: reveals (Beta = 0.560, standard deviation = 0.031, t-value = 18.090, p-value = 0.000). Results are consistent with previous studies of [6, 60, and 61]. Hypothesis – 4 & 5: established in support of mediating effect of BR towards BT, the results founded positive and significant as t-value 2.103 and 7.938 > 2 and p-value 0.036 and 0.000 < 0.05. The results noted also supported by previous studies [25, 6]. In conclusion, it is indispensable to understand the drive of stopover and advance BE dimensions grounded on the aims of the visit in the hospitality industry to improve the reputation and trust of service providing organizations. Furthermore, executives should habitually crisscross whether Cs are satisfied with restaurant, and alter it consequently grounded on social inclinations and target Cs penchants.

6 – Limitation and Future Direction

This study was conducted in Ghana. In addition, it focused only on major brands (McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut) and is served in the hospitality industry. Technique of field survey adopted. Only major cities covered. Furthermore, only two dimensions of the brand equity considered. Hence, future studies needed to involve other dimensions of the brand equity (e.g. brand affect, self-congruence, food and service quality). Furthermore, this study can be applied to other industry/sectors. This study can carry forward the study effects of brand equity dimension on brand performance, brand loyalty, firm performance. Furthermore, the interaction effect of social media needed to be explored on branding. Marketing heads required to focus on the qualities of the foods and services, ambiance, staff grooming and use of languages as it's prone to the establishment of trust and reputation of the brand and restaurant [30]. In addition, According to [23], "superior quality, effective advertising, service excellence, emotional memories, identity construction, self-expression, and socialization can evoke emotional attachment." Marketing executives should contemplate how to arouse Cs sensitive attitudes based on their demographics (e.g. age, gender, and education) and other driver's like trust, goals

and an environment. For instance, the atmosphere of service providing companies (e.g. lighting, color, layouts, and music) needs to be considered as per Cs symbolic necessities.

7 – References

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