BRAND EXPERIENCE: A RESEARCH ABOUT BRAND EXPERIENCE OF CUSTOMERS AT GOGI RESTAURANTS IN HOCHIMINH CITY

TRẢI NGHIỆM THƯƠNG HIỆU: NGHIÊN CỨU TRẢI NGHIỆM THƯƠNG HIỆU CỦA KHÁCH HÀNG TẠI NHÀ HÀNG GOGI Ở TP. HCM

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Abstract - . How to get customers' satisfaction, trust and loyalty is not an easy question for Korean style restaurant in Vietnam. Brand experience is a key factor that has influences on customers' satisfaction, customers' repurchase and customers' commitments with an organization. The authors use mix method of research that combines quantitative and qualitative methods to test the case of Gogi, a Korean style restaurant. Exploratory factor analysis, SEM bootstrapping procedures are used to test the study hypotheses. Results of the study point out that proposed antecedents such as event marketing and brand clues have positive influence on brand experience and customers' satisfaction, loyalty and trust are results of brand experience. In theory, this research consolidates prior studies. In practice, Gogi continues to keep the food quality, an essential factor for customers to select a restaurant. Furthermore, Gogi should provide more online and offline events to improve customers' perception of brand.

Key words - Event marketing; brand clues; brand experience, brand loyalty; trust; customer satisfaction.

Tóm tắt - Làm thế nào để khách hàng hài lòng, tin tưởng và trung thành là câu hỏi không đơn giản với các nhà hàng phong cách Hàn Quốc tại Việt Nam. Trải nghiệm thương hiệu là một nhân tố quan trọng ảnh hưởng đến sự hài lòng của khách hàng, và sự gắn kết của khách hàng với doanh nghiệp. Các tác giả sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu hỗn hợp bao gồm nghiên cứu định tính và định lượng để kiểm tra trường hợp của Gogi, nhà hàng phong cách Hàn Quốc. Phân tích nhân tố khám phá, quy trình bootstrapping SEM được sử dụng để đánh giá các giả thiết nghiên cứu. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng, các tiền tố như marketing sự kiện, minh chứng thương hiệu có tác động đến trải nghiệm thương hiệu và sự hài lòng của khách hàng, lòng trung thành và sự tin tưởng là hậu tố của sự trải nghiệm thương hiệu. Về lý thuyết, nghiên cứu này đã củng cố các nghiên cứu trước đây. Về mặt thực tiễn, Gogi cần tiếp tục giữ vững chất lượng của thực phẩm, một nhân tố quan trọng để khách hàng lựa chọn nhà hàng. Ngoài ra, Gogi cần cung cấp các sự kiện marketing trực tuyến cũng như trực tiếp để nâng cao nhận thức của khách hàng về thương hiệu.

Từ khóa - Marketing sự kiện; minh chứng thương hiệu; trải nghiệm thương hiệu; lòng trung thành với thương hiệu; sự tin tưởng; sự hài lòng của khách hàng.

1. Introduction

The last two decades experience the influences of Korean culture in Vietnam through series, music and fashion [1], [2]. More and more, not only Korean cultural products but also Korean food become popular with Vietnamese people. Catching this trend, the company "Cong Vang" has built the chain of restaurant "Gogi" which is specific in Korean grill meals. Thanks to the influences of Korean music and movies, Vietnamese people are excited to try at Korean style restaurants. This is an advantage, but it cannot last forever. How to satisfy customers, make them come back and share positive feelings to relatives or friends is an uneasy task for managers. In theory, branding literature provides guidelines to strengthen consumer-brand relationship. Recently, researchers focus on analyzing brand experience [3], [4]. In Vietnam, there were certain research that paid attention to brand experience such as the research of Huong, Hong, & Khai which analyzed the impacts of brand experience on brand loyalty in retail fashion industry [5]. In the same year, Huong & Hong analyzed the influences of brand experience on brand relationship in retail industry [6]. Authors intend to fill the gap by proposing a research model which is based on existing literature to point out the antecedents and consequences of brand experience. The structure of the paper is follows: Firstly, authors introduce the theory related to brand experience. Secondly, we analyze the impacts of antecedents with brand experience and its consequences. Next, the study analyzes the outcomes of survey. Besides, authors argue the results, provide recommendation, and point out the future research directions.

2. Background

2.1. The theoretical background

Brand experience

Experience is "something that happens to you that affects how you feel" (Cambridge Dictionaries Online). This definition points out that emotional reactions to an event build experiences. Conceptualizing as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses, brand experience is established when people contact different parts of a brand such as brand's design and identity, packaging, information, and environments [7]. Alloza argues that buyers have experience with a brand when they contact the brand [8]. It is essential to understand that brand experiences develop when customers interact directly or indirectly with the brand [9], [10]. People will remember an experience if it is specific and they participate in this experience [4].

2.2. The research model and hypotheses

The impact of Event marketing on Brand experience

According to Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, event marketing provides opportunities for customers to get experience with a brand [4]. Event marketing has a wide range of promotional tools: product launches, incentive/reward programs, product sampling, conferences, road shows, publicity events, charity fundraisers, competitions/ contests, trade shows, exhibitions, corporate entertainment and product visitor attractions [11]. Event marketing has significant impacts on brand experience when it offers opportunities for customers to contact brand [12]. Thus, it can be said that event marketing is an antecedent of brand experience.

H1: Event marketing has a positive impact on brand experience.

The impact of Brand clues on Brand experience

There are three types of brand clues: technical clues, mechanic clues and humanic clues [13]. Brand clues which include different things such as slogans and mascots [14], colors [15], shapes [16], design elements [17], packaging [18], brand name [19], [20] customer billing, order and application forms [21] can built consumers' experience with a brand. When people find information about a product, buy and consume the product, they are exposed to brand clues which will establish buyers' feelings with the product and affect their buying decisions [22]. According to Berry et al, experiences are established when people expressed their feelings with brand clues [23]. Therefore, it is essential to understand that brand experience is influenced by brand clues.

H2: Brand clues have a positive impact on brand experience.

The impact of Brand experience on Brand loyalty and on Brand trust

Oliver defines brand loyalty as

> "deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing effort shaving the potential to cause switching behavior" [24, p34].

This definition stresses the two aspects: behaviors and attitudes [25], [26]. On the one hand, loyal customers will repurchase the brand. On the other hand, loyal customers will engage with the brand in terms of some unique value. For instance, a person may often have dinner in a restaurant because of several reason. Firstly, there is only one restaurant in his/her area. Secondly, the restaurant differs in quality, convenience, service, and so forth from others. Furthermore, the diner may feel closed with the restaurant or with its staff. The customer becomes loyal to the restaurant and he/she is willing to eat again at the restaurant and pay for higher price. The customer may introduce his/her favorite restaurant to friends, colleagues. This leads to the increase in sales and in profit.

Brand trust is defined as "feeling of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, that it is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer" [27]. It is clear that the service provider gets more trust from customers if the service quality is consistent and if the service provider can fulfill the customers' need [28]. According to Aijo, trust has been identified as the anchor that establishes the valuable relationship and success in long-term [29].

The studies of Ha & Perks [30]; Zarantonello & Schmitt [31] confirmed that brand loyalty and brand trust are influenced by brand experience. It is noticeable that brand loyalty and brand trust are consequences of brand experience.

H3: Brand experience has positive impact on Brand loyalty

H4: Brand experience has positive impact on Brand trust

The impact of Brand experience on Customer satisfaction

Since the mid-1980s, numerous researchers focused on customer satisfaction (e.g., Anderson [32]; Anderson & Sullivan [33]; Churchill & Surprenant [34]). Initially, numerous researchers supposed that the result of the customers' assessment when using a product is customers' satisfaction, dependent on how they perceived value, quality of product, and their expectations (e.g., Anderson [32], Oliver [35]). Actually, however, customer satisfaction conceptualizes as the key consequence of brand experience (e.g., Chahal & Dutta [36]). Accordingly, Meyer & Schwager define customer satisfaction as the combination of experiences that customers have with the brand [37]. Customer satisfaction is a response to brand experiences [38]. Therefore, customer satisfaction is a result of brand experience.

H5: Brand experience has a positive impact on Customer satisfaction

3. Methodology

To analyze the relationships between independent and dependent variables, a quantitative approach was used. Three items of Event marketing, five items of Brand clues, four items of Brand loyalty, four items of Brand trust and six items of Brand experience were adopted from Khan & Fatma [39]. Finally, a study of Sahin et al, provides three items for Customer satisfaction [40]. Furthermore, five-point Likert-type scale ranging 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to rate indicators. Accordingly, a survey questionnaire was built to gather opinions from customers who have meal at Gogi restaurant in Hochiminh city, the most developed economic center in Vietnam. A group of ten students who stand at the waiting area of Gogi restaurant and suggest customers who are waiting to participate in the survey. A total of 325 questionnaires were collected and only 298 questionnaires are qualified for data analysis.

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used by using SmartPLS version 3.2.8. PLS-SEM has more advantages compared with CB-SEM, particularly once the model is complicated and the research framework is exploratory in nature [41].
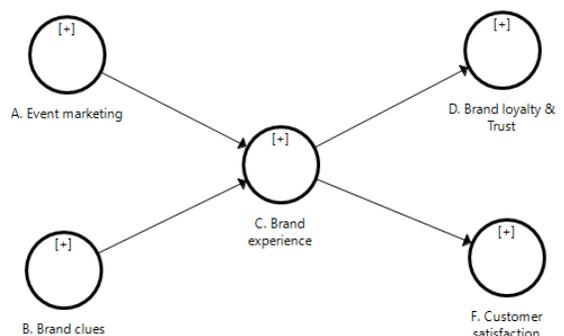
4. Results

Figure 1. *The revised research model*

4.1. Respondents' profiles

Table 1. Respondents' profiles

Criteria	Frequency (people)	Percent (%)	Criteria	Frequency (people)	Percent (%)
Age band			**Gender**		
Under 25	50	17%	Female	179	60%
From 25 to 34	150	50%	Male	119	40%
From 35 to 44	80	27%	**Total**	**298**	**100%**
From 45 to 54	10	3%	**Income band**		
Over 55	8	3%	Less than 300 USD/month	78	26%
Total	**298**	**100%**	From 300 to 700 USD/month	126	42%
Education			From 700 to 1200 USD/month	59	20%
High school	59	20%	Over 1200 USD/month	35	12%
College/University	163	55%	**Total**	**298**	**100%**
Postgraduate	62	21%			
Others	14	5%			
Total	**298**	**100%**			

Nearly two thirds of the respondents were less than 35-years old (67%) and were having bachelor's degree and above (76%). A quarter of reviewees earned less than 300 USD/month and 68% respondents had monthly income of less than 700 USD as shown in Table 1.

4.2. Results and discussion

The assessment of research model has two stages: (1) Evaluating the relationships between indicators and their variables; (2) Evaluating the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

Assessment of measurement model

At the same time, authors check the reliability of indicators, the internal consistency, the convergent validity and discriminant validity of constructs.

Table 2. Variables' information

Variables	Outer loading	CR	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	Outer weight
A. Event marketing (EM)		0.896	0.767	0.811	
EM1	0.899				0.552
EM2	0.902				0.559
EM3	*				
B. Brand clues (BC)		0.933	0.857	0.875	
BC1	0.939				0.549
BC2	0.932				0.52
BC3	*				
BC4	*				
BC5	*				
C. Brand experience (BE)		0.94	0.904	0.84	
BE1	0.942				0.367
BE2	*				
BE3	*				
BE4	0.915				0.372
BE5	0.891				0.353
BE6	*				
D. Brand loyalty & Trust (BL&T)		0.939	0.918	0.754	
BL1	0.869				0.241
BL2	0.832				0.21
BL3	0.879				0.233
BL4	*				
T1	0.896				0.245
T2	*				

Variables	Outer loading	CR	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	Outer weight
T3	*				
T4	0.864				0.222
F. Customer satisfaction (CS)		0.917	0.865	0.787	
CS1	0.891				0.395
CS2	0.898				0.36
CS3	0.873				0.372

*: items are removed from the constructs

Table 3. HTMT ratio, Inner VIF values and R2 values

Variables	HTMT ratio				Inner VIF values			R-square
	A. EM	B. BC	C. BE	D. BL&T	C. BE	D. BL&T	F. CS	
A. Event marketing					1.672			
B. Brand clues	0.782				1.672			
C. Brand experience	0.818	0.675				1.000	1.000	0.508
D. Brand loyalty & Trust	0.862	0.658	0.894					0.667
F. Customer satisfaction	0.792	0.842	0.81	0.796				0.516

Items will be removed if their outer loading is lower than 0.4 while others higher than 0.7 should be kept from the constructs [42], [43]. Furthermore, we just remove indicators with outer loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 if this action can improve the composite reliability or the average variance extracted values. All CR value are higher than 0.7; therefore, all constructs achieve the internal consistency [41]. They also achieve convergent validity when AVE values are higher than 0.5 [41].

To assess the discriminant validity, authors use HTMT ratio. A construct only achieves discriminant validity when HTMT ratio is below than 0.900 [44]. However, the two constructs "Brand loyalty" and "Trust" cannot achieve. In order to solve this issue, authors decided to merge these two constructs and then, we have the new one "Brand loyalty & Trust". People become loyal to brands for many reasons, but one of those reasons is always brand trust [45]. Therefore, it is possible to merge two constructs "Brand loyalty" and "Trust".

Assessment of structural model

The evaluation of structural model includes four issues: collinearity issues, the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships, the level of R^2, the f^2 effect size. The model does not have collinearity issues when all inner VIF values are smaller than 5 [41].

Table 4. Path coefficients – f^2 values

Hypothesis	Coefficient	P Values	Conclusion	f-square	Level of predictive accuracy
H1	0.508	0%	Supported	0.314	Medium
H2	0.273	0%	Supported	0.090	Small
H3	0.817	0%	Supported	2.001	Large
H5	0.718	0%	Supported	1.065	Large

All p values are lower than 5%, therefore, all hypotheses are supported. The results in Table 4 show that two antecedents: (1) Event marketing; (2) Brand clues influence positively and significantly on Brand experience. Therefore, H1 and H2 were confirmed. Brand experience influenced positively on Customer satisfaction and Brand loyalty & Trust. Hence, H3 and H4 were also supported. From Table 4, based on coefficient's values, we can conclude that Event marketing has stronger impact than Brand clues on Brand experience. Furthermore, Brand experience has greater influences on Brand loyalty & Trust rather than Customer satisfaction.

The minimum R^2 value is 0 and the maximum R^2 value is 1. The higher R^2 value is, the higher-level predictive accuracy the research model has. R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can, as a rule of thumb, be respectively described as substantial, moderate, or weak [42], [46]. As seen in Table 3, it is conclusive that the research model has moderate level of predictive accuracy. The R^2 value of Brand experience is 50.8% means that only two independent variables "Event marketing" and "Brand clues" account for a half in order to interpret the movement of the dependent variable "Brand experience". The R^2 value of "Brand loyalty & Trust", "Customer satisfaction" is 66.7%, 51.6% which means the significance of the antecedent "Brand experience" as we suggested in the proposed research model.

Moreover, the difference of exogenous in explaining the movement of endogenous is an important issue. This measure is referred to as the f^2 effect size. Three values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35, respectively, express small, medium, and large effects [47] of the exogenous latent variable. The results from Table 4 point out the fact that "Brand experience" is an essential anchor of "Brand loyalty & Trust" and of "Customer satisfaction" while "Brand clues" has only small impacts on "Brand experience".

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1. Theoretical implications

This research aims to check the relationship of brand experience and its antecedents and its consequences. Findings support the hypotheses that event marketing and brand clues influence positively brand experience. Results confirm a significant positive impacts of brand experience

on brand loyalty and trust, customer satisfaction. With these supported hypotheses, the research has vital theoretical contributions.

5.2. Practical implications

The results show that both two constructs: event marketing and brand clues have significant positive impacts on brand experience. Event marketing has stronger impact than brand clues (see Table 4). Therefore, in order to maximize the brand experience of customers, restaurant's managers should focus on improving event marketing activities. Based on the value of outerweight (see Table 2), it is clear that customers like to take part in or appear at the events of Gogi restaurant. So, the restaurant can provide online and offline events to attract customers' attention. About brand clues, customers prefer Gogi because of its food quality. It is essential to understand that in Vietnam, food safety is an important issue and quality of food is one vital factor that people consider when they choose a restaurant. The results also pointed out the fact that even being loyal to Gogi restaurant, customers do not accept to pay for higher price.

5.3. Limitations and further research

As other researches, this one also has some restrictions which highlight the avenue for future research. Firstly, not only two factors: consumer value and brand identification but also other factors that have impacts on brand loyalty. Secondly, the study has not analyzed the influence of demographic elements on brand experience. Only two or three items are kept in the constructs, therefore, researchers should work prudently to translate questionnaires from English to Vietnamese version in order help respondents answer more easily

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