

Retailer's perspective of product brand equity: An empirical study of Vietnamese independent drink stores

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Abstract

In the literature on product branding, significant attention has been paid to brand equity in the consumer context, but relatively little attention has been paid to the application of the concept of brand equity in the business-to-business context. This research attempts to bridge this gap by exploring the customer-based brand equity concept from the retailers' perspective. The study was conducted in the context of the Vietnamese independent retail grocery sector. This context was chosen on the basis that there has been limited research conducted on branding in the Vietnamese context and due to the prominence of the independent grocery sector in the retail industry of Vietnam. By using AMOS 16 and SPSS 16.0 software, the results of the study indicate that brand equity plays an important role in the retailing context, and it comprises three dimensions - brand association, brand trust and brand loyalty. As the result of a strong brand, retailers commit to a long-term business relationship with the brand's manufacturer. Two of these three dimensions of retailer-based brand equity, (brand association and brand trust) are positively and significantly related to the brand's performance at the retail outlet. Manufacturer support, including advertising, sales promotion and trade promotions has been confirmed by this study to be an antecedent of retailer-based brand equity, brand performance and customer perceived value as well.

Keywords: Brand equity, brand association, brand trust, brand loyalty, customer value, manufacturer support, brand performance.

JEL codes: C12, M20

1. Introduction

Brand equity is one of the hottest topics in management today (Aaker, 1991). On the other hand, brands are the heart of most customer business (Kapferer, 1992; Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). Brand equity has become one of the most important marketing concepts since the late 1980s, both in academic research and business practice (Srinivasan et al., 2001). The historical evolution of brands has shown that brands initially have served the role of differentiating between competing items, representing consistency of quality and providing legal protection from copying. The brand can itself imply status, enhance image and project or augment lifestyle so that the ownership of the brand becomes value in its own right. (Bradley, 1995; Egan – Guilding, 1994). Brand equity is the incremental utility and value added to a product by its brand name. Researchers have catalogued the apparent effects of various marketing efforts and market conditions on brand equity.

When talking about the brand equity, we mean a brand's mental equity or strength. Basically, brand equity stems from the greater confidence that consumers place in one brand than they do in a competitor's. This confidence translates into increasing productivity and efficient marketing that result in consumers' positive brand attitudes, brand choice, and brand loyalty, and their willingness to pay a premium price for the brand (Keller, 1993). That is, brand equity presents to marketers a more thorough understanding of consumer behavior as a basis for making better strategic decisions about marketing actions as well as management. The development of branding theory from a retailing perspective will provide a significant contribution to both brand managers and marketing researchers. Most branding theories are built in the context of developed countries, especially in the area of the retailing perspective of brand equity. The Vietnam retail market has been more attractive for foreign investors since the nation became a member of WTO in the year 2007. However, the penetrating of international retail firms from Germany, France, USA and Singapore has raised the severity of competition in the market (VnExpress, 2006; AC Nielsen, 2006) that will be a serious problem for all players in future. In sum, the Vietnamese retail market, especially, the modern retail system promises the investors both opportunities and challenges. How to get over challenges and get sustainable profit is the question that any retailer in Vietnam has asked. Therefore, our study on independent stores in Hue, Vietnam will be meaningful for application purposes.

Founded on customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993, Aaker, 1991), the purposes of the study were:

- To identify key brand associations in brand equity, consumer-based brand equity theory translate to the retailer context, about consumer perspectives and the relationship between manufacturers and retailers and Customer value.
- To investigate retailers' perspective, in order to provide a more complete understanding of the role of branding in marketing strategies. This research attempts to bridge this gap by exploring the customer-based brand equity concept from the retailers' perspective. It aims to explore how consumer-based brand equity theory translates to the retailer context, incorporating the key constructs of brand association, brand trust, brand loyalty, manufacturer support, customer value and the performance of the brand.
- To provide in-depth research and managerial implications about retailer' perspective from which sound conference management and marketing approaches and practices are suggested.

2. Theoretical framework, conceptual model and hypotheses

2.1. Retailer based brand equity

Brand association

Aaker (1996a) defines brand associations as: 'Anything linked in memory to a brand'. The company uses brand associations to evoke strong feelings in the consumer and in this way tries to differentiate itself and create a strong position in relation to the competition. The consumer uses brand associations as a help to organize and control information in the memory.

Brand association in retailer-based brand equity is proposed as a second order construct which includes two dimensions: brand satisfaction and consumer-based brand equity. The following two subsections provide further discussion of these two concepts.

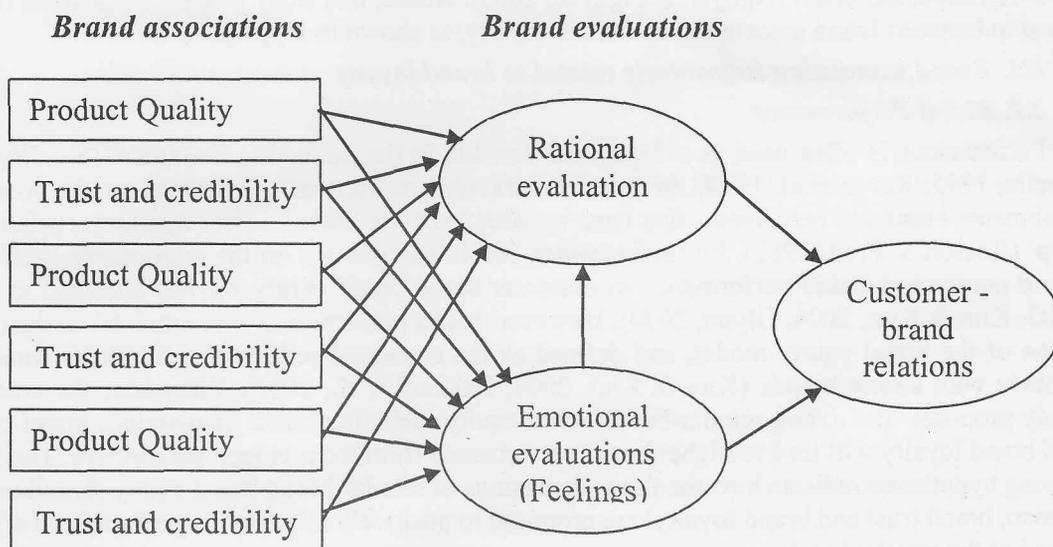
Brand trust

Drawing on the above mentioned literature we define brand trust 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. First, brand trust involves a willingness to put oneself at risk, be it through reliance on the promise of value that the brand represents. Second, it is defined by feelings of confidence and security. Third, brand trust involves a general expectancy because it cannot exist without some possibility of being in error. Fourth, it is related to positive or non-negative outcomes. Fifth, it requires making dispositional attributions to the brand such that it is regarded as reliable, dependable, and so on.*

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as a commitment of the retailer to maintain stability in a long-term relationship with a manufacturer (Lam, Shankar, Erramili & Murthy, 2004). In convenience loyalty, brand loyalty is based on buying convenience. This type of loyalty may be attacked by the

Figure 1: The customer – Based Brand equity Model (Anne and Lars, 2004)



expansion of a competitor into convenience channels. It can be concluded that some types of loyalties are relatively easy to change because the habit is only superficial, sustained by buying convenience or the fact that the brand is the first to occur to mind. (Dickson, 1994). The brand loyalty of the customer base is often the core of a brand's equity. It reflects how likely a customer will be ready to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product features.

Relationships among the three dimensions of retailer-based brand equity

Based on attitude theory, brand association is proposed to have a positive relationship with brand trust (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The fact is that retailers would not trust the brand if they could not recognize the image of the brand. Therefore, the positive image of a manufacturer's brand in retailers' perceptions is a necessary condition leading to good feelings toward the brand. Moreover, based on consumer-based brand equity theories, the positive association held in the customer's mind will constitute the positive feeling of customers (Wood, 1998). Based on these arguments, Hypothesis 1 is stated as follows:

H1: Brand association is positively related to brand trust

In relationship quality theories, trust is proposed to be positively related to commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Based on this theory, the trust of retailers in brands will lead to a long-term commitment and relationship between the retailer and the brand manufacturer. Moreover, the theory of reasoned action asserts that attitudes towards an act lead to intentions. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) suggested that the weighted combination of attitudes towards an act and subjective norms (e.g. attitudes about an object or other people) leads to intentions and eventually leads to behaviors. In other words, the positive feeling of retailers towards a brand will lead to the intention to keep doing long-term business with the brand's manufacturer. Therefore, brand trust is proposed to have a positive relationship with brand loyalty, which leads to Hypothesis 2.

H2: Brand trust is positively related to brand loyalty

Furthermore, the loyalty of the retailer towards a brand cannot be achieved without their first knowing about the brand (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2003). Hence, this study proposes a positive relationship between brand association and brand loyalty, as shown in Hypothesis 3.

H3: Brand association is positively related to brand loyalty

2.2. Brand Performance

Performance is often used as a dependent variable in the marketing literature (Boulding & Staelin, 1995; Raven et al. 1994). In channel marketing, performance is defined as 'the accomplishments - real and perceived - that have resulted from the manufacturer distributor relationship' (Rosson & Ford, 1982). Limited research before has focused on the relationship between brand equity and brand performance in customer-based brand equity models (Baldauf et al., 2003, Kim & Kim, 2004, Glynn, 2004). However, brand performance is recognized as the outcome of the brand equity model, and defined as the economic results manufacturers want to achieve with strong brands (Kim & Kim, 2004, Baldauf et al., 2003). Therefore, the current study proposes that strong retailer-based brand equity including brand association; brand trust and brand loyalty will lead to higher brand performance from the retailers' perspective. The following hypotheses indicate how the three dimensions of retailer-based brand equity (brand association, brand trust and brand loyalty) are proposed to positively relate to the performance of the brand at the retailer level.

H4: Brand association is positively related to brand performance

H5: Brand trust is positively related to brand performance

H6: Brand loyalty is positively related to brand performance

In summary, brand performance is defined as the economic performance of a brand in the retailer context, as the outcome of the retailer-based brand equity model.

2.3. Customer Value (or customer perceived value)

Perceived value has its root in equity theory, which considers the ratio of the consumer's outcome/input to that of the service provider's outcome/input (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). The equity concept refers to customer evaluation of what is fair, right, or deserved for the perceived cost of the offering (Bolton & Lemon, 1999). Perceived costs include monetary payments and non-monetary sacrifices such as time consumption, energy consumption, and stress experienced by consumers. In turn, customer-perceived value results from an evaluation of the relative rewards and sacrifices associated with the offering. And customers often measure a company's ratio of outcome to inputs by making comparisons with its competitors' offerings.

Customer value is "the fundamental basis for all marketing activity" (Holbrook, 1994). And high value is one primary motivation for customer patronage. In this regard, Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol (2002) mentioned that customer value is a super ordinate goal and customer loyalty is a subordinate goal, as it is a behavioral intention. On the other hand, customer value is defined as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality is positively related to perceived value. Brand loyalty should positively impact customer value. Loyal customers recognize the favorable benefit/cost opportunity. Given these relationships, we propose the following hypotheses:

H7. Brand loyalty is positively related to customer value

2.4. Manufacturer support

Many studies have been conducted in the consumer context to consider that marketing strategies are recognized as the antecedents of brand equity. (Palazon-Vidal & Delgado-Ballester, 2005; Simon & Sullivan, 1993; Yoo et al. 2000). Simon and Sullivan (1993) proposed several marketing strategies as efficient tools to build brand equity, such as advertising expenditures, marketing research expenditures, age of the brand, advertising share, order of entry and product portfolio. Some other strategies have also been considered in brand equity models, including public relations (Aaker, 1991). The study of brand equity antecedents was first investigated and empirically tested in Yoo et al.'s (2000) model, in which five concepts represented marketing mix strategies, namely, price, store image, distribution intensity, advertising spending and price deals (Yoo et al., 2000). Furthermore, Palazon-Vidal & Delgado-Ballester (2005) proved that sales promotions are also a tool in building strong brands.

From a supply chain perspective, there is only one study that appears to have considered marketing strategies in the brand equity model, Glynn's (2004) study on the source of brand value in supply chains. Glynn (2004) found that manufacturer support, including advertising support, merchandising support, key parts of the range, useful category information, key category growth, and additional choice, is the source of brand value. This means that manufacturer support seems to be the dimension of brand association in term of retailer perception. This finding is different from consumer-based brand equity theories, in which marketing strategies act as the

antecedents of brand equity. In order to make clear the point that whether manufacturer support represented marketing strategies is the antecedent of brand equity or the dimension of brand association in the retailer context, the current study uses consumer-based brand equity as the foundation to develop a retailer-based brand equity model, therefore, manufacturer support, adapted from Glynn (2004), is proposed as an antecedent of retailer-based brand equity. Therefore, three dimensions of retailer-based brand equity, comprised of brand association, brand trust and brand loyalty, are proposed to be positively related to manufacturer support. Hypotheses 8, 9, 10 and 11 demonstrate this as follows:

H8: Manufacturer support is positively related to brand association

H9: Manufacturer support is positively related to brand trust

H10: Manufacturer support is positively related to brand loyalty

However, advertising, sales promotions and trade promotions are also used to increase the short-term benefits of brand manufacturers, such as sales volumes and market share (Duncan 2002). In other words, manufacturer support can also be used as a direct tool to affect brand performance.

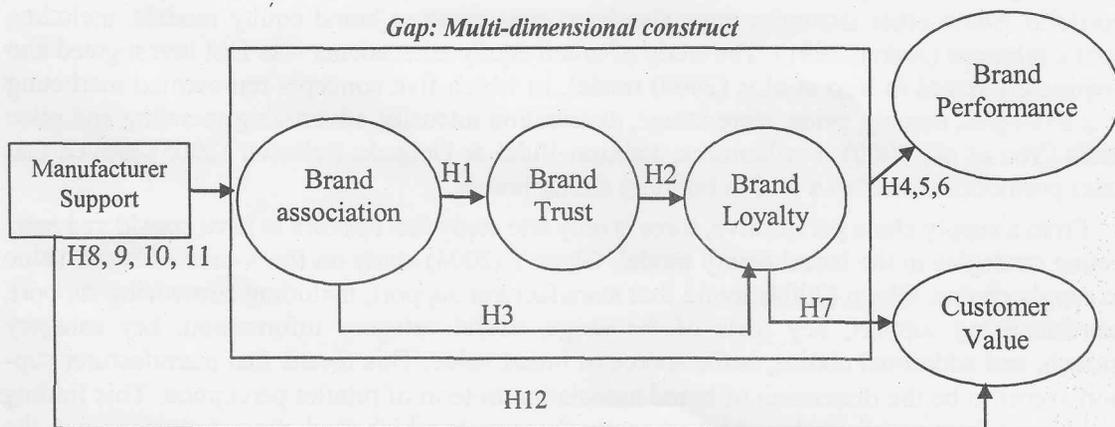
The added hypothesis is therefore proposed as follows:

H11: Manufacturer support is positively related to brand performance

Little (2004) investigated the processes of customer value creation and delivery from an organization-wide perspective. The conceptual framework that emerged described customer value creation and delivery as a triad of processes: making, keeping and enabling promises, consistent with the three promises framework. An important fourth dimension also emerged: the “realization” of the value created by these three processes, acknowledging the outputs of investment in the marketing processes in the form of value for customers and financial value for the firm. Thus we suggest that notion of customer-value realization is closely linked to the role of the service brand.

In terms of the brand-value chain (Keller, 2003), channel relationships mediate the linkage between the marketing programmer and the end-customer, which ultimately affects the market

Figure 2: Presents the final theoretical model of retailer-based brand equity proposed in this study



performance of the service brand and shareholder value. The evidence from Glynn and Brodie's (2004) research shows that resellers take into account a manufacturer's brand support resources as well as the service brand to end-customer relationship.

Given these relationships, we propose the following hypotheses:

H12: Manufacturer support is positively related to Customer Value

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling design

The target population of this study is the Retailer and the target sample is residents including owner, reseller or manager in independent stores in Hue, Vietnam. The sampling design was based on the combination of convenience sampling methods. Firstly, the population of the study needs to be chosen. Population is defined as 'the complete set of units of analysis that are under investigation, while element is the unit from which the necessary data is collected (Davis 2000, p. 220). This study focuses on independent grocery retailers to investigate the effect of retailer-based brand equity on brand performance and customer Value. The empirical study is conducted in the Vietnamese market in order to test the theoretical model. Therefore, the population of the study is Vietnamese owners and/or managers of grocery stores, who are responsible for stocking merchandise, in Hue City, an ancient city of Viet Nam.

The selection of the manufacturers and resellers reflects two concerns: access to key participants within the dyad and theoretical reasons (Eisenhardt, 1989). Theoretical sampling meant that these participants were chosen because of their perspectives on brands within manufacturer-reseller relationships. Within both channels, manufacturer's participants consisted of at least one marketing manager and one sales manager; reseller participants consisted of one head office buyer and one store manager.

The marketing managers provide the strategic perspective on the brand, while sales managers focus on operational matters with resellers. A similar situation existed with resellers with head office buyers providing the strategic perspective and store managers providing an operational perspective as well as insights about the resellers' customers.

Potential participants were contacted by letter to explain the nature of the research and to obtain their agreement to participate in the research. The researcher then phoned the participant to arrange an interview. Initially marketing managers were contacted to test the interview protocol and to obtain relevant reseller contacts. With reseller participants at least one retail manager at a head office level was interviewed and one retail store manager. The general merchandise manager (or equivalent) was contacted in the retailing organization to obtain permission to interview the relevant retail buyers.

The soft drink product category was chosen as the product to investigate for the current study, as this is one of the most popular FMCG goods which are widely distributed throughout the retailer system. Four brands are included in this study: Pepsi, Coke, Bach Ma and Thach Bich, in which two brands are classified as international brands (Pepsi and Coke) and two as local brands (Thanh Tan and Bach Ma). All of these soft drink brands are very popular in Viet Nam so would be easy for respondents to identify with.

3.2. Measurement of Research Constructs

Measuring brand association

- Measuring brand satisfaction

Brand satisfaction, denoted as BS, is defined as an overall evaluation of fulfillment in the relationship between brand manufacturers and retailers (Gaski & Nevin 1985).

The measurement of 'satisfaction with supplier' has been tested in relationship marketing with high reliability and has also been re-tested in the context of resellers, in Glynn (2004). Therefore, this measurement of satisfaction is adapted to measure brand satisfaction in the current study.

Each item was measured by a seven-point likert-type scale anchored by: 1: strongly disagree and 7: strongly agree.

- Measuring consumer-based brand equity

As discussed in section 2, in the current study consumer-based brand equity is proposed as the second dimension of brand association in the retailer-based brand equity model, and is defined as the consumer's overall assessment of the brand value, based on the perceptions of the retailer. The measurement of this concept was tested from the research of Davis, F.D. (2003). This current study adapts this scale measurement of consumer-based brand equity, which comprises five items using a seven-point scale (strongly disagree/strongly agree) to test the Vietnamese independent retailer context.

Measuring brand trust

The conceptualization of trust and its operational measurements are still a controversial issue in the marketing literature (Nguyen 2002). In the context of salespeople, Kennedy, Ferrel and Leclair (2001), mentioned trust in a buyer-seller relationship as trust of the salesperson and trust of the manufacturer. Other researchers such as Genersan (1994), Geysken et al. (1996) and Doney and Cannon (1997) define and measure trust in different forms such as benevolence, honesty, and credibility. However, two dimensions of trust, honesty and benevolence, are the most commonly referred to the relationship marketing literature (Geyskens et al., 1996; Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp, 1995)

In the reseller context, Glynn (2004) adopted the measurement scale of trust from Kumar et al. (1995) which comprised two concepts, honesty and benevolence, to test in the New Zealand supermarkets. However, in the scale purification process, the honesty items were deleted (Glynn 2004). This matter will be reinvestigated in the current study of Vietnamese independent groceries, in order to confirm the dimensions of trust in this retailing context. Therefore, based on the original measure of trust in Kumar et al's (1995) study, trust is proposed as a second order construct which includes two dimensions, honesty and benevolence.

Brand loyalty

In this study, brand loyalty is defined as the commitment of the retailer to the relationship with the brand's manufacturer. The measurement of commitment remains an issue in the relationship marketing literature (Nguyen 2002). Commitment can be approached from a continuance, behavioral or affective perspective (Kim & Frazier 1997). However, in the channel literature, the continuance commitment is most recognized (Anderson & Weitz 1992; Kumar et al. 1995; Morgan & Hunt 1994).

The measurement scale of retailer commitment towards manufacturers' brands was tested by

Table 1: Response frequency of each brand

	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Coke	83	26.3
Pepsi	72	22.9
Thanh Tan	81	25.7
Bach Ma	79	25.1
Total	315	100.0

Davis (2003), based on the original measurement scale of relationship commitment in Morgan and Hunt (1994). This study uses the scale developed by Davis (2003) to measure the commitment of retailers to brand manufacturers in Vietnamese retailers.

Brand Performance

Performance has been measured both in objective (e.g. profitability) and subjective (e.g. partner assessment, or satisfaction) terms (Nguyen, 2002). These two types of approaches may be measuring the same theoretical construct, because both measurements are highly correlated (Beamish, 1988; Geringer & Hebert, 1991). The most widely used indicators to measure performance are financially driven, such as sales volume, growth and profitability (Lee 1998; Zou, Taylor & Osland, 1998). In Baldauf et al. (2003), brand performance at the retailer level acts as the outcome of brand equity management in the value chain. Brand performance includes brand profitability performance and brand market performance.

Adapted from Baldauf et al.'s (2003) study, brand performance in the current study focuses on the financial aspects from the subjective approach. Using the subjective approach means that respondents are not asked to indicate particular performance results or figures objectively. Rather they are asked to indicate how they perceive the branded product performs in comparison to other competing brands sold in stores. As such, this overcomes the problem of respondents being concerned about releasing confidential store performance data. The two dimensions of brand performance used in Baldauf et al.'s (2003) study are treated as a uni-dimensional constructs, which has also occurred in some other studies in the marketing literature (Kumar et al., 1992; Nguyen, 2002; Styles, 1998).

Customer Value

Customer value is defined as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1988).

Customer Value, denoted as CV, is measured by seven items using a seven-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree).

Manufacturer support

Manufacturer support was firstly conceptualized and measured in the retailing context in Glynn's (2004) study. Given the relevance of this scale to the context of the current study, the original measurement developed by Glynn, consisting of seven items, is also used in the current study to measure 'manufacturer support' in Vietnamese independent retailers.

Manufacturer support, denoted as MS, is measured by seven items using a seven-point Likert

Table 2: Characteristics of respondents

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	27	32.1
	Female	57	67.9
<i>Age</i>	Less than 30 years	7	8.3
	31 – 40 years	31	36.9
	41 – 50 years	32	38.1
	51 – 60 years	14	16.7
<i>Years in business</i>	Less than 1 year	14	16.7
	1 to 3 years	31	36.9
	4 to 10 years	28	33.3
	More than 10 years	11	13.1
<i>Position of respondent</i>	Owner	56	66.7
	Sales person	27	32.1
	Other	1	1.2
<i>Knowledge about market</i>	No knowledge	9	10.7
	Very little knowledge	47	56.0
	An adequate amount of knowledge	18	21.4
	A lot of knowledge	9	10.7
	A very high level of knowledge	1	1.2
<i>Size of retail store</i>	Small store	20	23.8
	Medium store	36	42.9
	Large store	28	33.3

scale (1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree). Before pilot testing was conducted, the survey instrument was checked by a member of the Vietnamese grocery retail sector to confirm that the questions had content validity and made sense in the research context.

4. Data analysis and findings

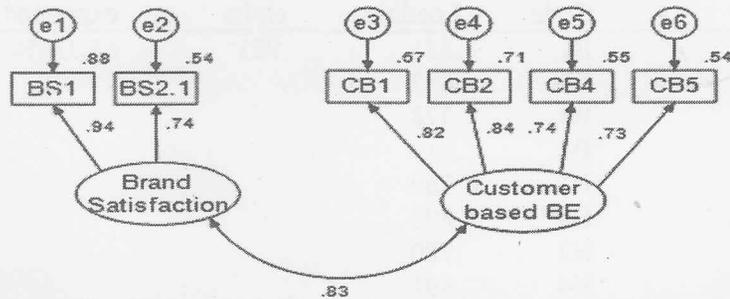
4.1. Descriptive statistics

This study was conducted using two groups of drink product – international brands (Coke and

Table 3: Exploratory factor analysis results for brand association

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Brand association	BS1	.865	.920	61.539%	5.539
	BS2.1	.740			
	BS3	.840			
	BS4.1	.642			
	CB1	.804			
	CB2	.834			
	CB3	.803			
	CB4	.731			
	CB5	.777			

Figure 3: Confirmatory factor analysis results of brand association



P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.271	1.240	.045	.989	.990	.998	.996	.998	.533	.528	.532	.028

Note: BE: Brand Equity

Pepsi) and local brands (Thanh Tan and Bach Ma). The number of responses for each soft drink brand is provided in Table 1.

Demographic characteristics of respondents are provided in table 4.2. Of 84 respondents included in sample, there were 27 (32.1%) male and 77 (67.9%) female. Among many ranges of age, a lot of respondents followed between 31 to 50 years old, in detail 31 (36.9%) were 31-40 years old and 32 (38.1%) were 41-50 years old. Essential years in business were from 1 to 10 years: there were 31 (36.9%) from 1 to 3 years in business, 28 (33.3%) from 4 to 10 years in business. 20 (23.8%) were classified as small-size stores (approximately 16 m² in area and operated by a single owner); 36 (42.9%) were classified as medium-size stores (up to 30 m² with 1 or 2 employees); and 28 (33.3%) were classified as large stores (over 30 m² with 3-5 employees and stocking a large range of products).

The ratio among these three types of retailers correlated to the ratio among these types of stores from the sample frame. In addition, the respondents were largely the store owners – 56 (66.7%). The rest of the respondents were either sales people - 27 (32.1%) or other – 1 (1.2%). The big problem is that many respondents have little knowledge of brands. There were 9 (10.7%) who had no knowledge about brands and 47 (56%) had very little knowledge about brands, including 56 owners, as shown in Table 2.

4.2. Measurement model

4.2.1. Brand association

Brand association was hypothesized to be a two-factor latent construct involving brand satisfaction (BA) and consumer-based brand equity (CB). Four items, BS1 to BS4.1 were used to measure brand satisfaction and five items, CV1 to CV5, to measure consumer-based brand equity.

Firstly, an inspection of the item-to-total correlation of the three items measuring brand satisfaction showed that all items were satisfied and the Cronbach's alpha was reasonable at $\alpha=0.920$. The result of the exploratory factor analysis is reported in Table 3. Items for brand

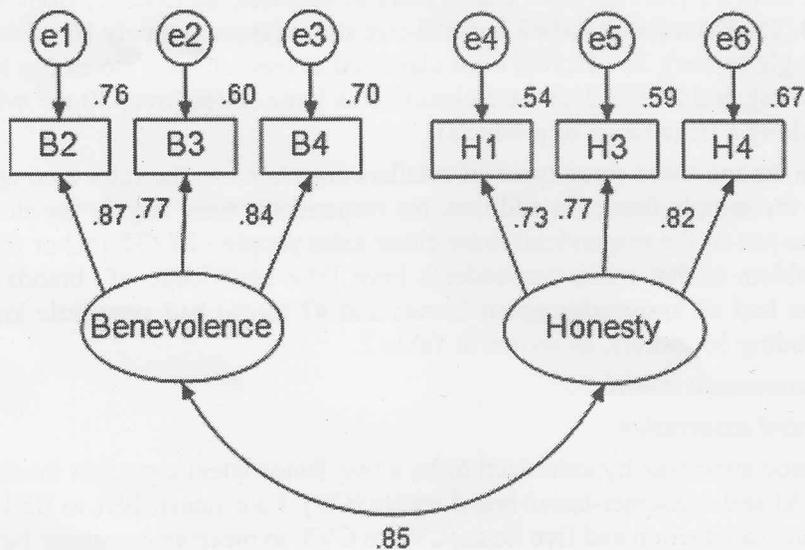
Table 4: Exploratory factor analysis results for brand trust

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Brand trust	B1	.851	.921	65.331%	5.227
	B2	.857			
	B3	.778			
	B4	.819			
	H1	.769			
	H2	.806			
	H3	.780			
	H4	.801			

association had moderate to strong loadings, ranging from 0.740 to 0.865 (all being above the acceptable factor loading >0.35 (Hair et al 1995)). One factor was extracted with an eigen-value of 5.539, accounting for 61.539% of the total variance. However, this result was only the preliminary assessment, achieved with exploratory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis was subsequently conducted to further assess whether two constructs, brand satisfaction and consumer-based brand equity, and achieve discriminant validity.

Adequacy of the model is evaluated on the basis of fit indices. However, the modification test showed that some error variable in the model, represented more than measurement error

Figure 4: Confirmatory factor analysis results of brand trust



P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.025	2.197	.053	.982	.983	.991	.982	.991	.533	.524	.528	.062

Table 5: Exploratory factor analysis results for brand loyalty

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Brand loyalty (BL)	BL1	.888	.889	75.372%	3.015
	BL2	.839			
	BL3	.886			
	BL4	.859			

(Arbuckle & Wothke 1999). To achieve a better fit, the measurement model of brand association was re-specified. The refined brand associations, with BS3, BS4.1 and CB3 were deleted and showed a significantly increased level of fit: all GFI, NFI, IFI and CFI are greater than 0.9 and closed 1; PRATIO, PNFI and PCFI are greater than 0.5; especially, RMSEA equal to 0.048 (<0.05) that is at good level of fit. All factor loading exceeded 0.7 and correlation between two factors is 0.83, do not exceed 0.85. This result suggested that the two components of brand association demonstrated unidimensionality and their convergent validity were therefore achieved. The correlation between these two dimensions was 0.83 with a standard error of 0.209 and P-value equal to 0.000. This indicated that the correlation between CB and BS was significant, supporting the discriminant validity between these two dimensions.

In short, although RMR is not less than 0.05, P-value is significant (>0.05), brand association is comprised of two components 'brand satisfaction' (BS) and 'consumer-based brand equity' (CB). Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that these two dimensions of brand association were discriminant, even though the exploratory factor analysis rejected this hypothesis. Finally, brand association was measured by six items.

4.2.2. Brand trust

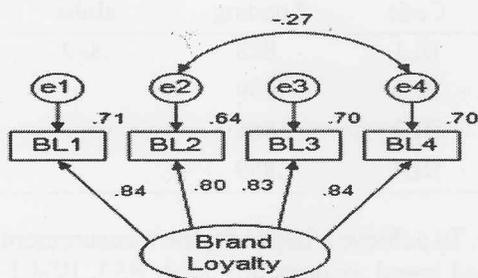
The construct of brand trust was initially hypothesized as a multidimensional construct comprising two dimensions, benevolence (B) and honesty (H). After pretesting, eight items were used to measure brand trust.

The results of the exploratory factor analysis are reported in Table 4. Although factor loading of two items, B1 and H2 are so high but they were deleted in confirmatory due to increase fit model level. The results showed that all items for brand trust had moderate to strong loadings, ranging from 0.769 to 0.851 (all being above the acceptable factor loading >0.35 (Hair et al 1995)). These findings indicated that these two components of brand trust had convergent and discriminant validity.

Further validity assessment of the brand trust measurement was conducted by confirmatory factor analysis. The confirmatory factor analysis model had 8 degrees of freedom and the results showed that the model did not receive significant fit to the data based on the chi-square (not significant at p-value of 0.025 and RMR of 0.053 (>0.05) indicates a quite poor fit, other indicators are examined. All GFI (0.982), NFI (0.983), IFI (0.991), TLI (0.982), and CFI (0.991) exceed 0.9; parsimonious indicated greater than 0.5 such as PRATIO (0.553), PNFI (0.524) and PCFI (0.528) as expected. RMSEA of 0.062 (<0.08) is at a reasonable level of fit (Hair et al 1995). Furthermore, other model fit indices satisfy the condition of goodness-of-fit.

Based on low factor loading and modification indices of the measurement model of brand

Figure 5: Confirmatory factor analysis results of brand loyalty

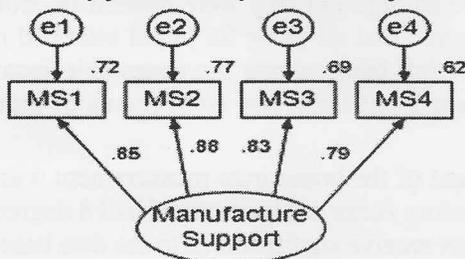


P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.101	2.695	.035	.996	.996	.998	.986	.998	.167	.166	.166	.073

Table 6: Exploratory factor analysis results for manufacturer support

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Manufacturer Support	MS1	.888	.902	77.515%	3.101
	MS2	.901			
	MS3	.877			
	MS4	.855			

Figure 6: Confirmatory factor analysis results of manufacturer support



P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
.810	.211	.011	.999	.999	1.002	1.006	1.000	.333	.333	.333

trust, B1 and H2 were deleted to increase the level of model fit (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). The revised confirmatory factor analysis model of brand trust showed that the two components of brand trust satisfied the unidimensionality condition and their convergent validity was achieved, as shown in Figure 4. All six items had high factor loading (from 0.73 to 0.87). The correlation between these two dimensions was 0.85 with a standard error of 0.142 and P-value equal to 0.000. This finding indicated that the correlation between benevolence and honesty is significantly different from unity (P-value = 0.053), supporting the discriminant validity between these two dimensions. In short, brand trust comprises two components, benevolence and honesty. As such, brand trust is measured by the six items shown above.

4.2.3. Brand Loyalty

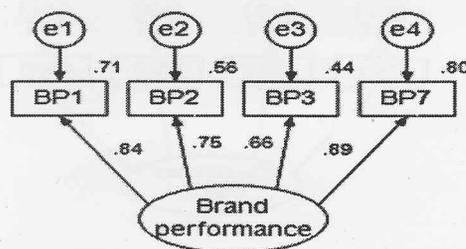
The construct of brand loyalty was hypothesized as a unidimensional construct. Four items, BL1 to BL4 were used to measure brand loyalty. An exploratory factor analysis produced one factor with a total variance extracted of 75.372 percent, an eigen-value of 3.015 and Cronbach's alpha score of 0.889. The exploratory factor analysis result of brand loyalty is shown in Table 5. All items for brand loyalty had strong loadings, ranging from 0.839 to 0.888 (all being above the acceptable factor loading >0.35 (Hair et al 1995).

To test the unidimensionality of brand loyalty, all items were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis. The confirmatory factor analysis model of brand loyalty has 1 degree of freedom.

Table 7: Exploratory factor analysis results for brand performance (BP)

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Brand Performance	BP1	.856	.917	67.397%	4.718
	BP2	.858			
	BP3	.737			
	BP4	.780			
	BP5	.821			
	BP6	.830			
	BP7	.857			

Figure 7: Exploratory factor analysis results for brand performance (BP)



P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.245	1.408	.024	.996	.996	.999	.996	.999	.333	.332	.333	.036

The initial results showed that the model fit the data well (chi-square statistic=2.7, p=0.101). As a result, the RMR can be used as alternative, with smaller values indicating a better fit to data. The RMR of 0.035 (<0.05) presents a good fit. Among comparative indicates, GFI (0.996), NFI (0.996), IFI (0.978), TLI (0.986), and CFI (0.998) stand out to indicate that model fits data well. But parsimonious indicated less than 0.5 such as PRATIO (0.167), PNFI (0.166) and PCFI (0.166) not as expected. However, RMSEA of 0.073 (<0.08) is at a reasonable level of fit (Hair et al 1995). Furthermore, other model fit indices satisfy the condition of goodness-of-fit.

An examination of the modification indices suggested the addition of a constraint between the error term for items BL2 and BL4, in order to improve the model fit.

4.2.4. Manufacturer Support

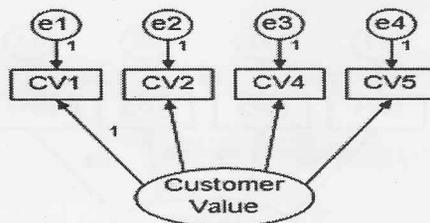
The construct of manufacturer support (MS) was hypothesized as a unidimensional construct. Four items, MS1 to MS4, were used to measure manufacturer support. Exploratory factor analysis initially showed that manufacturer support loaded onto two factors with a total extracted variance of 77.515 percent and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.902 that's excellent reliability.

As this construct was measured by four items, the confirmation factor analysis of manufacturer support would have two degrees of freedom with P-value of 0.810 (>0.05) is significant. RMR of 0.011 (<0.05) indicates a good fit and RMSEA of 0.000 is at a perfect level of fit. Even though parsimonious indicated less than 0.5 such as PRATIO (0.333), PNFI (0.333) and PCFI (0.333) not as expected but GFI (0.999), NFI (0.999), IFI (1.002), TLI (1.006), and CFI (1.000)

Table 8: Exploratory factor analysis results for Customer Value

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained	Eigenvalue
Customer value	CV1	.830	.810	70.427	1.034
	CV2	.741			
	CV3	.851			
	CV4	.854			
	CV5	.854			
	CV6	.765			

Figure 8: Confirmatory factor analysis results of Customer Value



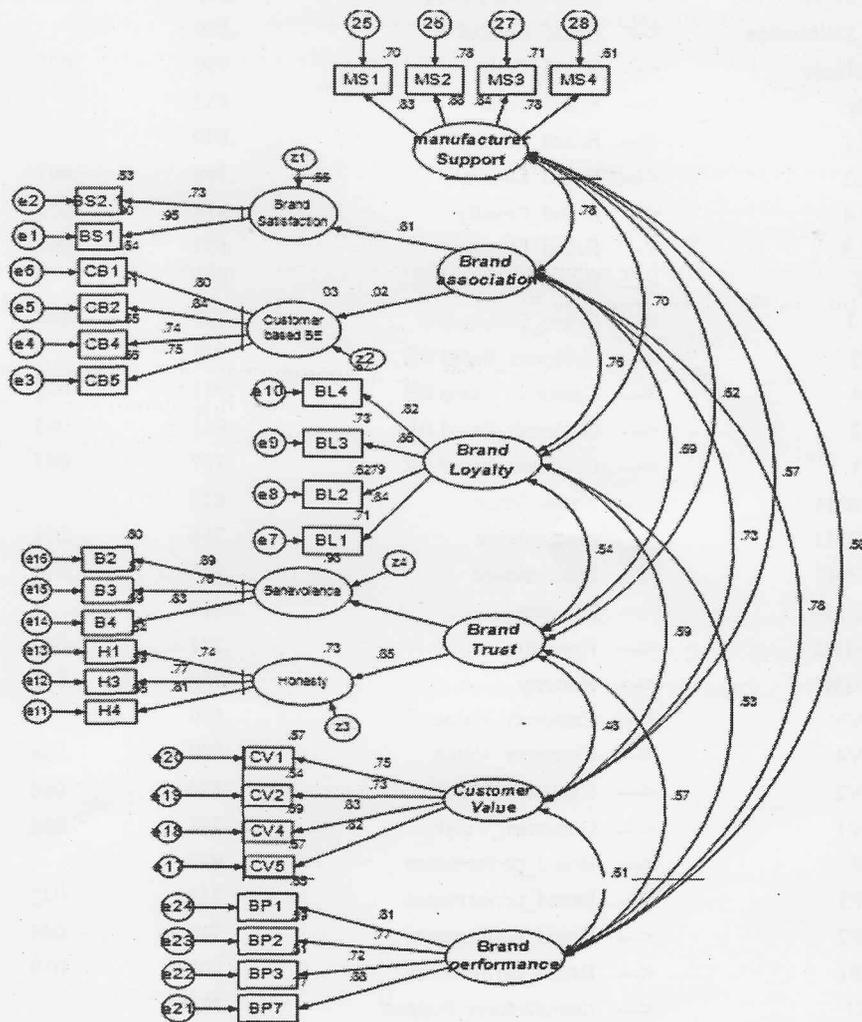
P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.214	1.541	.033	.995	.995	.998	.994	.998	.333	.332	.333	.041

stand out to indicate that model fits data well. Therefore, other model fit indices satisfy the condition of goodness-of-fit.

4.2.5 Brand Performance (BP)

The construct of performance was hypothesized as a unidimensional construct. Seven items, BP1 to BP7, were used to measure the brand performance of the retailer. The results of the exploratory factor analysis showed that measurement items for performance loaded onto one

Figure 9: Confirmatory factor analysis results of six constructs



P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.000	2.481	.151	.836	.875	.922	.910	.921	.873	.764	.804	.069

factor and extracted with an eigen-value of 4.718, accounting for 67.397 percent of total variance. Eight items satisfied the factor loading value (ranging from 0.737 to 0.858) and the item-total correlations, with a high Cronbach alpha of 0.917.

Following the exploratory factor analysis, brand performance was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis. The findings indicated that P-value of 0.245 (>0.05) is significant. RMR of 0.0241 (<0.05) indicates a good fit and RMSEA of 0.036 is at a good level of fit. Even though

Table 9: Standardized parameters, Standard Errors, Critical ratios and P-values

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Customer_based BE	<--- Brand_association	.816	.076	13.382	***
Brand_Satisfaction	<--- Brand_association	.810			
Benevolence	<--- Brand_Trust	.990	.076	10.817	***
Honesty	<--- Brand_Trust	.852			
Q10BL1	<--- Brand_Loyalty	.840			
Q10BL2	<--- Brand_Loyalty	.788	.067	15.968	***
Q10BL4	<--- Brand_Loyalty	.816	.055	17.112	***
Q10BL3	<--- Brand_Loyalty	.857	.061	18.233	***
Q8BS1	<--- Brand_Satisfaction	.950			
Q8bs2.1	<--- Brand_Satisfaction	.729	.044	13.786	***
Q8CB5	<--- Customer_based BE	.746			
Q8CB4	<--- Customer_based BE	.741	.062	13.325	***
Q8CB2	<--- Customer_based BE	.841	.063	15.352	***
Q8CB1	<--- Customer_based BE	.797	.067	14.438	***
Q9BTBM4	<--- Benevolence	.828			
Q9BTBM3	<--- Benevolence	.756	.071	14.954	***
Q9BTBM2	<--- Benevolence	.894	.078	18.389	***
Q9BTHM4	<--- Honesty	.814			
Q9BTHM3	<--- Honesty	.771	.047	14.248	***
Q9BTHM1	<--- Honesty	.736	.049	13.250	***
Q12CV5	<--- Customer_Value	.816			
Q12CV4	<--- Customer_Value	.828	.068	16.079	***
Q12CV2	<--- Customer_Value	.734	.068	13.791	***
Q12CV1	<--- Customer_Value	.754	.064	14.142	***
Q11BP7	<--- Brand_performance	.877			
Q11BP3	<--- Brand_performance	.715	.042	13.854	***
Q11BP2	<--- Brand_performance	.770	.045	15.773	***
Q11BP1	<--- Brand_performance	.809	.039	18.046	***
Q7MS1	<--- manufacturer_Support	.835			
Q7MS2	<--- manufacturer_Support	.880	.057	19.284	***
Q7MS3	<--- manufacturer_Support	.845	.063	18.046	***
Q7MS4	<--- manufacturer_Support	.784	.060	16.218	***

parsimonious indicated less than 0.5 such as PRATIO (0.333), PNFI (0.332) and PCFI (0.333) not as expected but GFI (0.996), NFI (0.996), IFI (0.999), TLI (0.996), and CFI (0.999) stand out to indicate that model fits data well. Therefore, the CFA model is viewed to fit the data.

An examination of the modification indices indicated that some pairs of measurement items had high correlation. This means that the error variables in the model represented more than just measurement errors (Arbuckle & Wothke 1999). The new results from the refined confirmatory factor analysis model, in which BP4, BP5, and BP6 were deleted, showed a better fit. In short, brand performance is best measured by the following four items: BP 1, BP2, BP3, and BP7.

4.2.6 Customer value

The construct of Customer Value (CV) was hypothesized as a unidimensional construct. Six items, CV1 to CV6, were used to measure customer value.

Exploratory factor analysis initially showed that customer value loaded onto two factors with a total extracted variance of 70.427 percent and a Cronbach's alpha of .810 that's good reliability.

Even though all six items in Exploratory Factor Analysis results have high loading but to improve model fit CV2 and CV6 were deleted. As this construct was measured by four items, the confirmation factor analysis of manufacturer support would have two degrees of freedom with P-value of 0.214 (>0.05) is significant. RMR of 0.033 (<0.05) indicates a good fit and RMSEA of 0.041 is at a perfect level of fit. Even though parsimonious indicated less than 0.5 but the left ones stand out to indicate that model fits data well. Therefore, other model fit indices satisfy the condition of goodness-of-fit.

Table 10: Standardized parameters and correlations between the measures

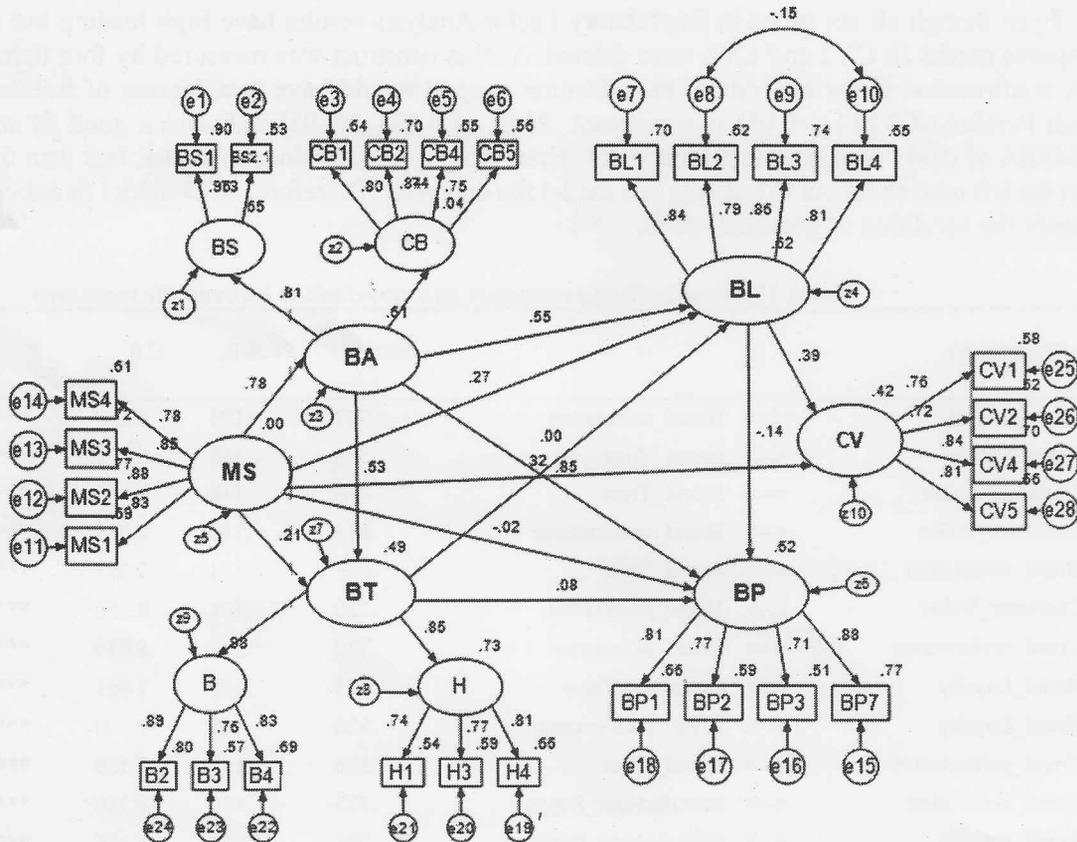
Correlations		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand_Loyalty	<--> Brand_association	.757	.184	8.539	***
Brand_Loyalty	<--> Brand_Trust	.544	.163	6.311	***
Customer_Value	<--> Brand_Trust	.478	.138	5.798	***
Customer_Value	<--> Brand_performance	.613	.155	7.785	***
Brand_association	<--> Brand_Trust	.691	.174	7.297	***
Customer_Value	<--> Brand_association	.728	.161	8.250	***
Brand_performance	<--> Brand_association	.782	.192	8.819	***
Brand_Loyalty	<--> Customer_Value	.588	.145	7.621	***
Brand_Loyalty	<--> Brand_performance	.526	.165	7.100	***
Brand_performance	<--> Brand_Trust	.573	.159	7.128	***
Brand_association	<--> manufacturer_Support	.775	.180	8.740	***
Brand_Loyalty	<--> manufacturer_Support	.704	.170	8.688	***
Brand_Trust	<--> manufacturer_Support	.616	.167	6.859	***
Customer_Value	<--> manufacturer_Support	.568	.141	7.414	***
Brand_performance	<--> manufacturer_Support	.582	.165	7.716	***

4.3. The final measurement model

After conducting a confirmatory factor analysis for each construct, to further assess convergent and discriminant validity of all measures, a total measurement model is subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. Across constructs, discriminant validity will be achieved if a 95 percent confidence interval of the correlation does not include unity, suggesting that the model receives a satisfactory level of fit (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). The final measurement model (often called the saturated model) is the model where all constructs are free to correlate with one another (Hair et al, 1995).

The fit of the six factor model (brand association, brand trust, brand loyalty, manufacturer support, customer-perceived-value and brand performance) was assessed. An examination of the overall fit statistics for the measurement model, as shown in Figure 9, indicated that the model provided acceptable fit to the data, with CMIN/df = 2.481 (<5) (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) as

Figure 10: Full structural equation model



P	CMIN/df	RMR	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
.000	2.609	.185	.830	.868	.914	.902	.914	.881	.765	.805	.072

well as CFI (0.921), GFI (0.836), IFI (0.922), TLI (0.910), PRATIO (0.873), PNFI (0.764) and PCFI (0.808) and RMSEA (0.069) which satisfied the threshold of 0.08. In short, the measurement model of this study appears to have an acceptable fit.

In table 9 an examination of factor loadings reveals all estimates to be both reasonable and statistically significant (P-value <0.001); all standard errors appear also to be in good order. Hatcher (1994) suggested a 0.60 as a cutoff standard factor loading for the convergent validity of indicator. All standard parameters are above this threshold. The feasibility of estimates, the appropriate standard errors and statistically significant parameters provide evidence for the adequacy of the parameter estimates.

Some estimates can be found in figure 10 and table 10 such as standardized parameters and correlations between the measures. Discriminant validity is assessed through correlations between constructs with a cutoff value of 0.85. Value of correlations from CFA model between variables show that all of correlation scores are lower than 0.85, which means all of these constructs are different from each other.

This section has presented the preliminary exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis of the measures of constructs in the study. Exploratory factor analysis as conducted to provide a preliminary guideline of each latent construct. Following the exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to confirm the measurement structure of all latent constructs. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that most of the factors followed the pattern suggested by the exploratory factor analysis, except brand association. The confirmatory factor analysis results only slightly deviated from the exploratory factor analysis results in that items were dropped in the model fitting process.

4.4. Structural equation model

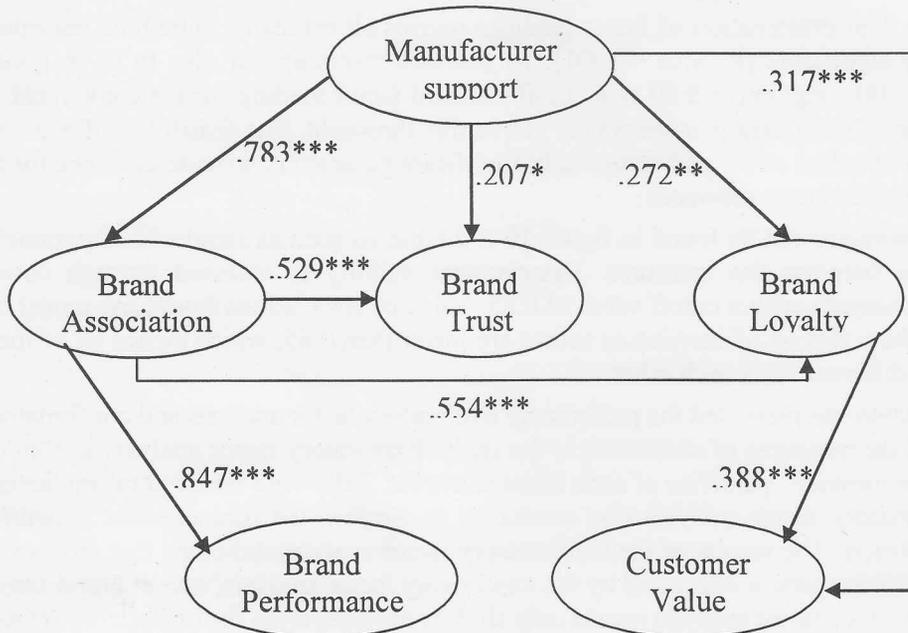
4.4.1 Full structural equation model

A full structural equation model is shown in figure 10 where specification is done and param-

Table 11: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standard estimate	Assessment of hypothesis
H1	BT <--- BA	.398	.072	5.491	***	.529	Supported
H2	BL <--- BT	-.001	.094	-.015	.988	-.001	Not supported
H3	BL <--- BA	.573	.103	5.549	***	.554	Supported
H4	BP <--- BA	.914	.147	6.199	***	.847	Supported
H5	BP <--- BT	.108	.106	1.020	.308	.075	Not Supported
H6	BP <--- BL	-.142	.097	-1.473	.141	-.136	Not Supported
H7	CV <--- BL	.314	.070	4.464	***	.388	Supported
H8	BA <--- MS	.774	.065	11.924	***	.783	Supported
H9	BT <--- MS	.154	.068	2.276	.023	.207	Supported
H10	BL <--- MS	.278	.089	3.141	.002	.272	Supported
H11	BP <--- MS	-.022	.098	-.228	.820	-.021	Not Supported
H12	CV <--- MS	.262	.069	3.793	***	.317	Supported

Figure 11: Results of direct effects and standardized coefficients



*** Significant at 0.001 level, ** Significant at 0.01 level, * Significant at 0.05

eters are estimated.

Although Chi-square (333) of 868.7 with P-value of 0.000, exhibits inadequate fit. The RMR of 0.185 presents a not good fit and GFI of 0.830, NFI of 0.868 also. As shown in Figure 4.9, indicated that the model provided acceptable fit to the data, with CMIN/df = 2.609 (<5) (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) as well as CFI=0.914, IFI (0.914), TLI (0.902), PRATIO (0.881), PNFI (0.765) and PCFI (0.805) and RMSEA=0.072 which satisfied the threshold of 0.08. In short, the structural model is considered to fit the sample data reasonably.

4.4.2 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesized model examines the direct effects of variables. Standardized parameters of direct effects are presented in the full structural equation model. Standardized parameters are of most concern. However, hypothesis testing is based on unstandardized results where C.R and P-value are reported to test whether the hypotheses are supported or not.

Under study, since the sample is large (N=315) and the presumption of multiple normality is made for maximum likelihood estimation techniques, t-value (denoted by C.R in Amos output) is z-value. Thus a C.R value exceeding 1.96 represents a level significance of 0.05. In addition, p-value help to identify to which extent the parameters are statistically significant. The assessment hypothesis is based on results in table 11 where standardized estimates and their significance levels are provided. A positive sign of parameter estimates indicates a positive direct effect.

Results of hypothesis 1 to hypothesis 12 can be depicted graphically in the figure 7, which reports the standard coefficients estimated for each path of model.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of finding

Based on attitude theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) as well as consumer based brand equity theory (Aaker, 1991; Feldwick, 1996), brand association is proposed to be positively related to brand trust, which was depicted through hypothesis 1. Moreover, brand trust was argued to be positively related to brand loyalty, presented in hypothesis 2, based on relationship quality theories (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Finally, brand association was also proposed to be positively related to brand loyalty. The findings demonstrated that hypotheses 1 and 3 were supported by the data while hypothesis 2 was not supported. This means that if retailers are satisfied with doing business with the brand manufacturer and perceive this brand as providing good value for their consumers, a positive image of the brand will be imprinted in their minds.

The more positive an image of a brand that retailers have, the more trust the retailers have in that brand (H1). Furthermore, retailers tend to have a longer-term commitment (or loyalty) to the brand if they have a positive association with the brand (H3). These findings were consistent with previous consumer-based brand equity studies conducted in a consumer context (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2003). However, the results of the theoretical model derived from the structural equation modeling showed that there was no significant relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty. This means that whether retailers trust a brand or not, there was no influence on their loyalty to that brand (H2).

There are two possible explanations for this unusual finding. Firstly, soft drinks can be considered a low-involvement product frequently purchased by retailers; therefore, trust is not an important factor influencing their loyalty. As there is little risk associated with purchasing low involvement products, and given that the soft drinks respondents were considering were already stocked by the retailer, it is plausible that a strong degree of trust already existed in the brand chosen. This is consistent with the brand equity model of a low-involvement product from the consumer perspective (Holden & Lutz, 1992). Secondly, this finding may be caused by the measurement scale, in which brand trust was proposed as comprising two components, benevolence and honesty. In Glynn's (2004) study, honesty was deleted from the measurement scale on trust. The other trust measurement could be more suitably related in the retailer context, to reliability (Delgado-Ballester, 2004), or trust in the sales person (Papassapa, 2005).

Another gap in the literature on branding investigated in the current study was the effect of brand equity on brand performance from the retailer's perspective, i.e. the outcome or consequences of the consumer-based brand equity model (Kim & Kim, 2004). The second research question therefore investigated the relationship between retailer-based brand equity and the brand's performance in the retail store with the focus on the relationship between the three dimensions of retailer-based brand equity, as related to brand performance. Based on previous research, each of the three dimensions of retailer-based brand equity was proposed to have a positive relationship with brand performance (Baldauf et al., 2003). The findings showed that hypothesis 4 was supported by the structural equation modeling result but hypothesis 5 and 6 were not. This means that if manufacturers want to improve the performance of their brands at retail outlets, they have to build a strong association with the brand in the retailers' minds by increasing retailer satisfaction and the value of the brand to consumers.

Moreover, brand association has the strongest effect on brand performance. The retailer's loyalty to the brand plays a more important role in Baldauf et al.'s (2003) model in affecting brand

performance than it appears to do in the current study. This result may be due to the fact that different products were tested, as tile brands were chosen for investigation in Baldauf et al.'s (2003) study. This explanation is consistent with the finding that whether retailers trust a brand or not, there is no influence on their loyalty to that brand, presumed to be caused by testing a low involvement product. On the other hand, the retailer's main concern is still the trust that consumers have in the brand, rather than their trust in the manufacturer. This suggests that consumer based brand equity is a major factor influencing the retailers' perception about brand associations. Further investigation needs to be undertaken to confirm this issue as will be discussed in future research recommendations. Hypothesis 6 was rejected as the results show that improving retailer's trust in a brand will not necessarily lead to an increase in the brand's performance. Brand loyalty should positively impact customer value. Loyal customers recognize the favorable benefit/cost opportunity. Hypothesis 7 was supported as the results show that improving retailer's loyalty in a brand will necessarily lead to an increase in the customer perceived value.

Hypothesis 8, 9, 10 and 12 were significantly supported by the data while H11 was rejected. This means that the higher the manufacturer support given to a branded product stocked by the retailer, the more positive an image of that brand the retailer will have, and the higher the retailer trust in the brand's manufacturer will be. In addition, manufacturer support also had a direct, positive, short-term benefit of customer value but all effects are quite weak. Hence, building strong retailer-based brand equity and focusing customer perceived value are the better ways to improve brand performance at the retail outlet, in the long-term.

5.2. Implications of the study

The study also found that only brand association in the current retailer based brand equity model effect significantly on brand performance. This means brand association necessarily leads to improved brand performance, as ultimately it is the consumer who purchases the product. In the Vietnamese market, it has been shown that local brand manufacturers tend to focus their branding efforts on gaining the trust of retailers in their brand (Tran, 2002). In other words, local brand managers have tended to believe that if a retailer feels positive about a particular local branded product, this will lead to increased brand performance. As a result, they tend to focus more on providing manufacturer support, especially via trade promotions, to improve retailers' trust. However, the results of this study and the local brand model in particular, suggest that they should first focus directly on convincing consumers directly of the value of their brands (i.e. strengthening consumer based brand equity) to draw customers to the store and induce purchase. When this occurs, the retailer then develops a stronger impression of the value of that brand which will flow on to more positive brand associations and commitment to the product in the retailers' eyes. Retailers will not work to encourage the purchase of local products to their customers unless they perceive that consumers value the products they produce. In addition, a higher perceived quality, for many people, is the reason to buy a product, and some would also be willing to pay a price premium. Brand loyalty positively impacts customer value.

This research has also confirmed that brand association is comprised of two dimensions from the retailer's perspective - brand satisfaction and consumer based brand equity. This again shows that the key concern of retailers when dealing with brand manufacturers is how the consumer views the product. This in part explains why advertising, sale promotion and other forms of manufacturer support do not have a strong direct affect on brand performance; however, they do improve the retailers' brand association.

The measures of retailer-based brand equity can be used to check the health of a brand from the retailing perspective. This will identify the strengths and weaknesses of a manufacturer's brand. It is the objective of brand managers in setting up marketing plans to build a strong brand in both the short-term and the long-term. This contribution is meaningful not only for product brand manufacturers but also for marketing research companies wanting to improve the measurement of brand equity from the retailing perspective.

5.3. Further empirical research

To overcome the above-mentioned limitations and to extend the current body of knowledge in the literature on brand equity, future research is recommended in the following areas.

Firstly, a larger sample for pre-test is needed to test the validity for the measures before coming up with the final instrument. Larger final sample with other designs can be conducted to reduce the bias and achieve higher representation. Limited area can be solved by extending the survey over Hue to other provinces of Southern or Northern Vietnam. On the other hand, although soft drinks are one of the most popular product categories in the fast moving consumer goods, the study of one product chosen from a retail store may limit the generalization of the findings to industries other than fast moving consumer goods. There is therefore a need to replicate and extend this study to other product categories. Future studies of retailer-based brand equity need to involve bundled products, to test the reliability and validity of the current study.

Secondly, this study has measured brand trust by the two dimensions of benevolence and honesty, based on Kumar et al. (1995) and Glynn (2004). As these measures have produced non-significant results in this study, this might suggest that the most important aspects of brand trust (from the retailer's perspective) have not been effectively tapped into. Further research would be useful to test other measures of brand trust, e.g. creditability and reliability (Delgado-Ballester, 2004) to confirm whether brand trust does in fact play an important role in the retailer-based brand equity model.

Thirdly, this study has only examined independent retailers' perceptions of brands. This type of retailer has significantly different structures and characteristics when compared to larger retailers. Consequently, their buying behavior and attitudes cannot be generalized to the whole population of retailer buyers. It would therefore be useful to conduct empirical research on different types of retailers to make further improvements and refinements on the retailer-based brand equity model.

Fourthly, the examination of other related factors can be addressed in future research. This study attempts to build a model which depicts the relationship of retailer based brand equity to predict brand performance and customer perceived value. However, some variables were not included in the model or some of them were not supported by data. So, future research can take more factors into consideration and improve fit level of variables.

Finally, manufacturer support is only mentioned in the overall evaluation of marketing strategies. Further investigation needs to be undertaken to analyze the varying effectiveness of the elements of the marketing mix on retailer-based brand equity and brand performance by marketing strategies with the concepts of price, store image, distribution intensity, advertising spending, and price deals. The impact of marketing strategies on retailer-based brand equity needs more investigation, to guide the development of marketing plans. For instance, trade promotions, sales promotions, and advertising campaigns should be considered in relation to different concepts. □

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