

CONSUMERS TRUST IN THE GLOBAL BRANDS: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze and explore factors that influence consumers trust in the global brands. Summarizing relevant scientific articles and academic literature on brand trust, it was found that there is a need to conduct research which will be dedicated to the consumer trust in the global brands. Until now there is lack of study in this field of trust in the context of global brands and this will be research based in the scientifically way which will shed light in the existing discipline but new way of treatment of case. To be much scientifically this study we'll use hypotheses in order to have relevant results from the consumers' perspective. However, in this study survey methodology will take place, in terms that later to explore deeply significance influence of factors that have impact in the global brand trust. The results that we'll get will have one positive impact in the field of branding, respectively in the field of global brand trust. A total of 2010 questionnaire responses were used to empirically test the consumer trust for global brands. This study found that the brand trust has a significant influence in the customer loyalty. In addition, Brand trust has a positive impact on the consumer preference. As well as, the reliability scale for all variables that has been used in this study were .802 (Cronbach's Alpha = .802)

Keywords: Brands, global brands, trust, brands trust

Introduction

In the context of consumer perspective we can say that we all live in the era of brands, respectively this century is century of global brands. However, even if today's economy can be seen as being in a global era, cultural differences are still important and widely impact

consumers' behavior. Consumers reinterpret the brands according to their cultural backgrounds and own perspectives which can lead to that the brand perception by the consumers can differ from the brand expression communicated from the company. The proximity between local culture and local brands is important for companies because it allows them to build better relations to their consumers and also to better respond to and meet their needs. (Ghantous, 2008)

Several studies have been carried out in the past few years in the field of brands. In these studies authors have revealed important finding that in one way are good source of information for manager and for researchers. Such types of research have attracted new scholars to present their work due to the fact that trust plays an important role in the marketing field. Let's first define brand in order to go further in the brand trust. There are different interpretations of the term brand in the academic literature. The American Marketing Association (2011) provides a classic definition of the term brand:

'A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name.'

On the other side, Kapferer (2008, p.12) stated'' *A brand is a name that influences buyers''* which captures the essence of a strong brand, a name with the ability to influence buyers. Kotler *et al.*, (2001) argued that it's well documented that a brand is name, term, sign, symbol or combination of them for the reason to distinguish and identify one product from another. Brand has been viewed as a powerful entity and its success depends on its positioning in the market among consumers (Punj & Moon, 2002). Basically it is different from patents and copyright (other assets), which have expiry date (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004) This concept of study is important for the reason that consumers build relationship with brands due to the trust that consumers has created during the buying and consuming them. Hiscock (2001, p.1) argue that ''the ultimate goal of marketing is to generate an intense bond between the consumers and the brand, and the main ingredient of this bond is trust''.

Theoretical Review

Global brands

Going global seems to be the dominant theme of modern marketing as researchers have found that many consumers prefer global brands over local competitors because global brands are associated with superior quality, worldly knowledge on consumption trends, and higher social prestige (Pitta and Franzak, 2008). According to Ayshegil and Altaras (2008)

the globalization of markets has put global brands on the center stage. The evidence is everywhere: on the streets, in stores, in the media. Global brands are exerting their power and influence within various domains. In economic terms, consumers meet the high price premiums such brands command with negligible resistance. In the psychological domain, global brands are perceived as creating an identity, a sense of achievement and identification for consumers, symbolizing the aspired values of global consumer culture. Based in the opinion of Dimfote, Johanson and Ronkainen, (2008) global brands are available across international markets and enjoy high level of recognition across the world.

The term global brand has been used to refer to brands where at least 20 percent of the product is sold outside their home country or region (Johansson, 2005). In one research made by Holt *et al.*, (2004) they identify four main features of the global brands such as: quality signal, global myth, social responsibility and American value. As well, from the 16 global brands they found that (44 %) of respondent stated that quality is the main reason for preferring global brand, global myth is represented by 12 % and social responsibility followed by 8 %. In another words, global brands carry one brand name and /or logo. In one research conducted by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2011) they proposes that because of prestige and status global brands will receive higher esteem scores than local only brands, other things being equal. Global brands are typically larger than local or domestic brands and therefore are also likely to be perceived as stronger and more powerful (Claudiu V. Dimofte, Johny K. Johansson, and Ilkka A. Ronkainen, 2008). From a cultural point of view, consumers consider global brands to be symbols of cultural ideas (Holt *et al.*, 2004), using brands to participate in a perceived global identity that they share with other people worldwide. In the process, some of these brands have attained the status of global icons, becoming cultural systems in their own.

Erdogmus *et al.*, (2010) argue that the most important challenges when it comes to standardization of branding include decisions on three matters:

1. *Brand positioning and core values* – this includes unique and distinct values that are specifically emphasized in brand positioning to differentiate the brand from competitors.
2. *Visible brand elements* – which are name, logo, package, label, product design and features
3. *Brand peripherals* – which is aspects of branding strategy that relate more closely to general marketing strategy such as warranties and after-sales services

Erdogmus *et al.*, (2010) continue to argue that it is importance to note that core values and visible elements of the brand is more likely to be kept standardized across countries than

brand peripheral is. Brand peripheral is more frequently localized and adapted to domestic differences. It is shown that core essences of brands are generally standardized while the executions of brand benefits through the marketing mix elements are largely adapted.

Consumers in the different countries might interpret and perceive global brands in the different way. As well, global brands are distinguished due to their characteristics. Samuel and Douglas (2000), explains that global brands are those brands that have the following characteristics:

- Extensive geographic reach: available in all major markets and most minor ones.
- Perceived by consumers as global: awareness among consumers that the brand is sold throughout the world.
- Uniform positioning and image worldwide: brands such as, Coca-Cola, Rolex, Nike, Gucci, McDonalds, Mercedes-Benz, Marlboro, and Sony.

Brand trust

Based in the many academic literature trust has receive attention from scholars in the field of marketing, management even nowadays in psychology, economics and others applied areas. Brand trust is defined as “*the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function*” (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). On the other hand, Aker (1997) argued that measures trust under the dimension of sincerity, which is one of the five brand personality dimensions. This dimension as part or overall brand personality dimensions is made up of traits such as down-to-earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful. Davies *et al.*, (2004) measures trust under the dimension of agreeableness with their measure for corporate image or character. So, in this case traits, like warmth, empathy, and integrity are used to represent trust. According to Urban *et al.*, (1996) brand trust is one of the strongest tools of making the relationship with the consumers on the internet and companies dominant marketing tools. Mitchel *et al.*, (1998) argue that before a consumer can trust a brand there must be an element of satisfaction with the brand. However, in this context there need to be a relationship or mutual trust between parties, respectively between consumers, organization and CEO (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Sometimes consumers are satisfied from global brands, but this doesn't mean that satisfaction in the key point to mean that consumers trust in the power of global brands. Meantime, Hess and Story, (2005) point out that satisfaction is necessary but is not sufficient for the formation of brands and not all satisfied consumers trust the brand. Additionally, research demonstrate that brand trust can reduce the consumer's uncertainty, because consumers not only knows that brand can be worth trusting, but also they think that dependable, safe and honest consumption scenario as well is the

important link of the brand trust (Ajrun and Morris, 2001). On the other hand, Delgado *et al.*, (2003) stated that brand trust refers to consumer to contain explicit expectation to brand's credibility and intention. The most recent literature on trust generally is very omnipresent concept and scholars have divided in many filed to be much clear for readers of students. They have scrutinized trust in the different dimensions such as trust in the relationship between buyer and seller, trust in the marketing, trust in products, trust in the producers, trust in a brand. All these concepts of trust are different in the context of explanation and the role that takes in the consumer perspective.

Let's first give some clarification between trust as a general concept and brand trust. Searching for these definition researchers will find many articles that explain the essence of this concept. Some authors define brand trust as a factor that makes an average user believe that brand will perform its stated purpose whatsoever (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), as well, brand trust is important because they create customer relationship (Urban *et al.*, 2000). One important issue regarding brand trust is also the components of trust. According to Delgado *et al.*, (2003, p.3) definition of brand trust reflects to distinctive components: brand reliability and brand intentions. The collection of the comprehensive above-mentioned brand trust, the consumer is usually placed in the product scenario of numerous brands and likeness. When the consumer has the brand consciousness, it was worth trusting, dependable, security of and honesty that considers to purchase the brand's merchandise in the future.

In summary, brand trust is defined as addressed by Delgado *et al.*, (2003): The trusty expectations of the brand's reliability and intentions. Brand trust is therefore conceptualized as having two distinct dimensions that express different perspectives from which a brand may be considered trustworthy. Symbolic brand in markets with high perceived risk need to provide trust which is achieved through developing perceptions of consumer-brand intimacy and emotional investment (Richard and Larry, 2007).

Purchase loyalty

Purchase loyalty has attracted widespread attention among many marketing scholars in recent years (Heiner *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Breugelmans, 2012; Liu, 2007; Stern and Hammend, 2004; Shugan 2005; Russell and Sneath, 2006). Much of these researches are directed to the consumer loyalty and to the loyalty program to the companies. According to Heiner *et al.*, (2012), company loyalty influences a consumer's choice to visit a particular provider and to prefer it over competitors, but it is not a strong predictor of purchase behavior. Meanwhile, program loyalty is also important driver of purchase behavior. Also, Yi and Jeon, (2003) divide consumer loyalty into program loyalty and brand loyalty. Program

loyalty has a positive attitude towards the benefits of the loyalty program and brand loyalty having positive attitude toward the company brand.

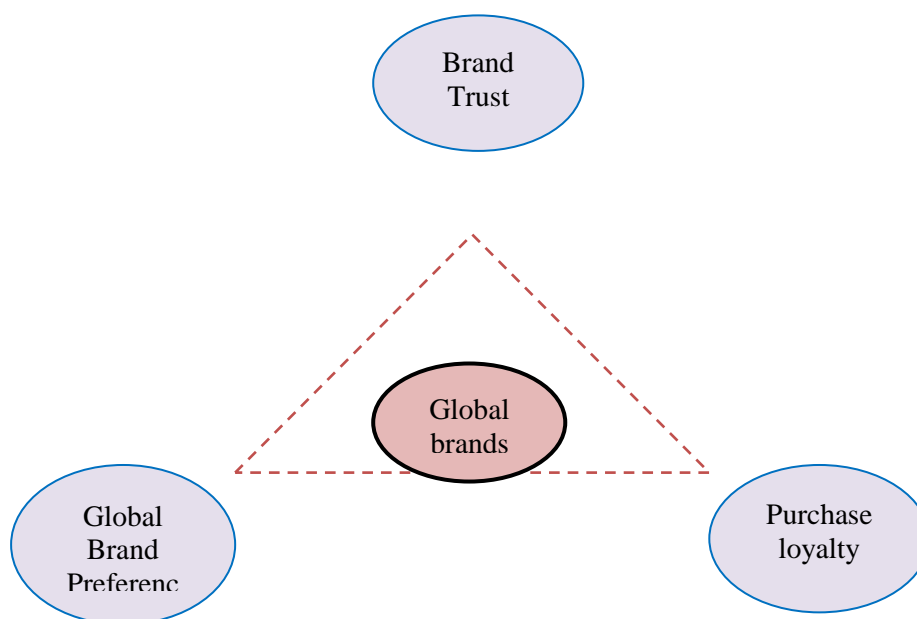


Figure 1: Framework of global brand trust (Source: authors)

In order to explain and clarify better this research we have build theoretical model that we have presented above. In the center of model we have positioned global brands which are surrounded by brand trust that is main issues of this research and is the main goal in this paper. Meantime all the rest of components are the strong part of global brands and brand trust that fulfill the gap between all components in the model.

Methodology

Measuring consumer brand trust is not easy issue. To be clear and understandable for our research we tried to find relevant literature which are dedicated to the brand trust. In the different literature we found many suggestions related to the many scales and models with multi dimensions construct. Based in this context Morgan and Hunt (1994) developed a scale to measure brand trust using a seven point liker scale. However, this scale is based in a number of statements with different traits describing trusting relationships, like faithful, integrity, honest and truthful. Compare to the Morgan and Hunt model of consumer brand trust, Hess (1995) has proposed a special brand trust scale, defined as a multi-dimensional construct containing honesty, an altruism, and a reliability dimension. The instrument adopted in this research was a self administered questionnaire, comprising Mainly of Liker-type five item scales with end-anchors (**1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree**). The questionnaire consists of three main variables, as we have presented in the theoretical model like brand dimensions with the subgroup variables, as we have explain in table number.1, 2

and tab.no.3. The four hypotheses have been tested using t-test or independent –sample t-test and ANOVA.

In order to validate all variables, we first have analyzed the reliability of all variables in this questionnaire. The overall reliability for all item (N= 24) was .80 (Cronbach's Alpha = .802) which means that all variables that we have selected in this case are reliable and this is good point to continue with further quantitative analysis. The value of this indicator ranges from 0 to 1 and a guideline in research, based on Nunnally (1978) as cited by Hinkin (1995, p.979), is that for a scale, the value of at least 0.7 is required. However, despite the reliability of all variables we have measured, as well reliability for three main components. So the reliability, for brand trust, brand preference and brand loyalty is showed below in the table:

Empirical findings

Table no. 1

Global Brand Preference
I like global brand better than any other local brand
I would use global brand more than I would use another local brand
Global brands are my preferred brand over any other local brand brands
I would be inclined to buy global brands over any other local brands

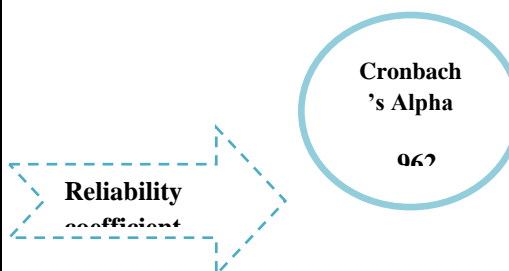


Table no. 2

Global Brand Loyalty
I am willing to rely on this brand in the future.
I intend to keep on purchasing this brand
I will recommend to my friends this brand
I will continue to be loyal customer for this brand

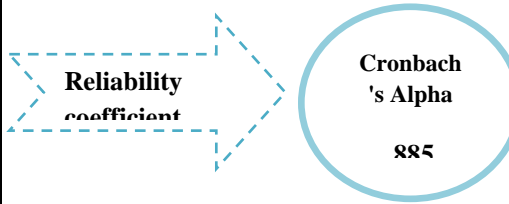


Table no. 3

Global Brand Trust
I trust this brand
I have no doubt this brand can be trusted.
This brand is trustworthy
I feel that I can trust this brand completely
Anyone could completely trust this brand.
There are brands in this world that you can completely trust.
I feel secure when I buy this brand because I know that it will never let me down

Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha
.809

Based in the table 1, 2, and 3 above we can conclude that there is strong positive reliability analysis in all three dimensions. The overall reliability for global brand trust is .809, for global brand loyalty is .885 and a global brand preference is .962. Based in the reliability rules that the minimum point to accept or reject the reliability of one variable or group variables is .70 (Nunnally, 1978). Analyses show that Cronbach’s Alpha is higher than .070 for all variables presented above in the tables, so we can conclude that all variables in research model are reliable.

Table 4 Correlations^b

		Brand Trust	Brand Preference	Brand Loyalty
Brand Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.868**	.805**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
Brand Preference	Pearson Correlation	.868**	1	.904**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
Brand Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.805**	.904**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

b. Listwise N=210

According to Kline (1998), correlation matrix is defined as ‘ ‘ *set of correlation coefficients between a number of variables*’’. As in the table (4), the correlation matrix indicates that brand trust is highly correlated with brand preference and brand loyalty. The highest coefficient of correlation in this case between brand trust and brand preference variable, is .0868 and the correlation between brand trust and brand loyalty, is .805 which is below the cut- off of 0.90 for the collinearity problem. However, multicollinearity occurs in this case, respectively in the correlation between brand preference and brand loyalty, which the correlation is .904 and is the same correlation between brand loyalty and brand preference.

H1: *The brand trust has a significant influence in the customer loyalty.*

ANOVA

Brand Trust

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.970	5	1.394	91.832	.000
Within Groups	3.097	204	.015		
Total	10.067	209			

Results in the ANOVAs table provide evidence for the second hypothesis. Based in this evidence null hypothesis is rejected because p - value is less than alpha 0.05, respectively $0.000 < 0.05$ and we can conclude that there is significant influence relationship between brand trust and consumer loyalty, respectively consumers loyalty is influenced by the brand trust.

H2: *Brand trust has a positive impact on the consumer preference*

ANOVA

Brand Trust

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.629	5	1.526	127.672	.000
Within Groups	2.438	204	.012		
Total	10.067	209			

Findings based in the ANOVAs table provide support for the second hypothesis, we can conclude that null hypothesis is rejected because p - value is less than alpha 0.05, respectively the level of significance is $0.000 < 0.05$ and there is significant positive relationship between self-image congruency and brands preference.

H3: There is a difference between genders in the brand trust

Group Statistics					
	Gender of respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Brand Trust	Male	132	4.8268	.23684	.02061
	Female	78	4.8736	.18416	.02085

Independent Samples Test										
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Brand Trust	Equal variances assumed	5.841	.017	1.497	208	.136	-.04679	.03125	-.10840	.01482
	Equal variances not assumed			1.596	192.807	.112	-.04679	.02932	-.10462	.01105

In the group statistics table between male and female there is not any mean differences, they are close each others. Total number of male were 132 and female 78, in the context of number they are different. Regarding the independent simple test, between male and female in the context of brand trust the hypotheses is rejected because the p - value is greater than alpha 0.05 respectively 0.136, we can conclude that there is not a statistically significant difference between gender in the brand trust.

H4: There is a difference between male and female in brand loyalty

Group Statistics					
	Gender of respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Brand Loyalty	Male	132	4.7936	.39134	.03406
	Female	78	4.8686	.30346	.03436

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differen ce	Std. Error Differen ce	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	7.852	.006	-	208	.147	-. .07503	.05160	-	.02670
Brand			4					.17676	
Equal variances not assumed			-	193. 093	.123	-. .07503	.04838	-	.02039
Loyalty	1	.17045							

Based in the group statistics box the total number of respondent were 210, of them 132 were male and 78 female. From the table of independent simple test got these results. Hypothesis number four is rejected because the p –value is above 0.05 respectively greater than alpha 0.147, we can conclude that there is not a statistically significant difference between male and female in the brand loyalty.

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the finding this study provides interesting data from the reliability analysis and hypothesis testing. In all three important dimension of theoretical model seems that exist strong positive reliability, on the other hand the study model is significant. Moreover, we can conclude that there is not a statistically significant difference between male and female in the context on brand trust and brand loyalty. On the other hand, all variables are highly correlated each other, between three main components is high correlation. Based in the analyses, we can conclude that global brands are trusted from consumers despite their gender, age, income and education level, respectively demographic factors. Important part, are consumers preferences for global brand, which is related with significant relationship with brand trust. Due to the importance of this study we have several recommendations to the readers and for further researchers. First of all, this study is dedicated only with the consumers in the Republic of Macedonia and consumers are difference in the different countries, some variables that are important for consumers in our study couldn't not be

important in others countries or consumers perceive in different point of view. Second, the number of brands that we have selected are limited we have not included all brands, but only some of them based in the best world brands. Last but not least, we have incorporated variables that we think that could lead us to the relevant information and results.

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