



The Role of the Brand in Achieving Customer Loyalty From the Perspective of Identity Consumption

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Abstract :

The profound and radical shifts in consumer behavior led to a reconsideration of the culture of consumption. After the consumption process was based on the functional and utilitarian dimension of products, it has become integrating other dimensions related to the emotional and hedonistic aspect to meet a certain aspect of needs represented in the need for self-actualization.

In this article, we will try to highlight the role of the brand as a primary partner and an effective mechanism in stabilizing the relationship with consumers and achieving their personal and social identity within what has become called identity consumption, as this new approach has become recognized on the one hand as a system of excellence if it is linked to personal identity, and on the other hand, a demand Membership to an influential group is linked to social identity, whereby consumers tend to identify themselves with the brand they are in contact with, and then prefer and be loyal to it.

Key Words: Brand, Distinction , Identification, Identity consumption, Loyalty.

JEL Classification : M31

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Introduction:

Recent studies have begun to pay attention to the term identity as a new and indispensable method in brand management, as a result of the radical transformations that characterized consumer behavior and the decline in the relationship between them. Accordingly, it has become less loyal and reliable in the brand due to its lack of credibility, which has become a necessary requirement in building consumer confidence and gaining loyalty. The strength of the relationship with the consumer should be based on new rules that integrate the elements of participation and transparency. From this point of view, many recent studies have emerged that have reconsidered consumer activities from another perspective and within a new approach based on the idea of identity building for individuals when consuming and using brands as modern mechanisms to restore customer confidence and achieve loyalty.



The problematic of the study: From the foregoing, we decided to pose the following problem: To what extent does the brand contribute to build the identity of the individual and achieving his loyalty within the approach to identity consumption?

Research Methodology: In this study, the researchers used the exploratory approach to determine an appropriate amount of knowledge that sheds light on the problem under study. The descriptive approach was also used to describe the study theoretically by collecting data from its various secondary sources.

Importance of research: The importance of the article lies in highlighting the importance of identifiable consumption away from the functional and utilitarian dimension to enable the relationship between the brand and the consumer to achieve greater loyalty.

Research objectives: This study aims to:

- Determine the dimensions of identity consumption.
- Highlighting the importance of branding as a tool in Identity construction of individuals through the process of consumption.
- Sensitizing the importance of identity as a new and indispensable method of brand management.

I. Theoretical Approach to Identity Consumption:

1. Conceptual framework for consumption:

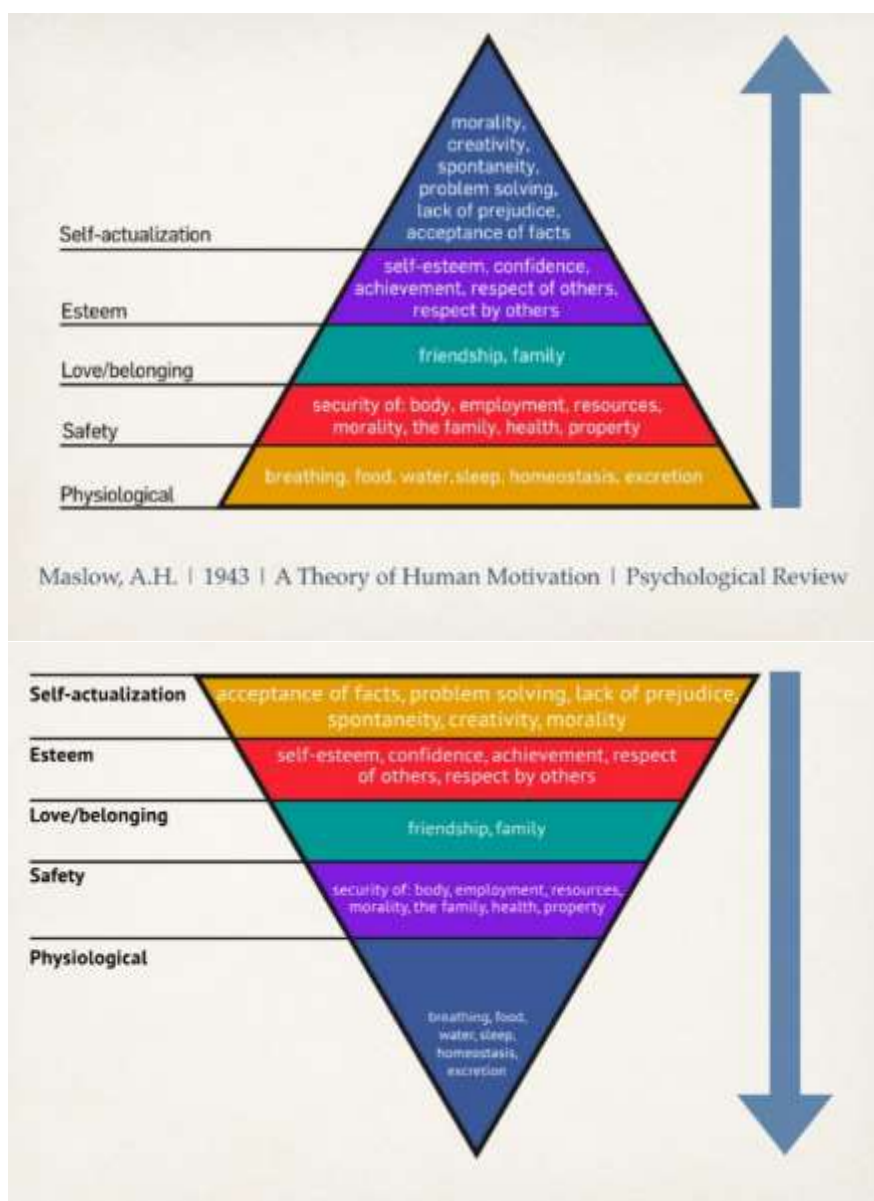
It is difficult to give a general concept of consumption, as it is a complex process, in constant transformation, and analyzed from different points of view.(Ladwein 2003). Researchers in the field of sociology and psychology explain the phenomenon associated with consumption as a combination of several diverse elements, such as gaining a benefit, achieving distinction, or feeling pleasure (enjoyable consumption)..(Langlois 2002/1)basing on thisConsumption may take on a functional dimension through the value that the product or service confers upon its use The emotional aspects are greatly affected by the consumption process, as indicated by both (Holbrook, Hirschman, 1982),.There are many products that generate emotional excitement, and entertainment. Consumption may take an experimental nature related to cultural and hedonistic consumption, such as reading a story or visiting a museum... The process of consumption can also be evaluated as contributing to building the identity of individuals, whether personal or social, through what has become called identity consumption.(Coutant 2007). They are multi-dimensional consumer situations, but in the context of this last approach, how can the term identity, which is more related to the personality of the individual or groups, be also related to the consumer process?



1.1. From functional consumption to identity consumption:

In the past, the focus of marketing concerns was confined to economic analysis to explain the phenomenon of consumption. From this point of view, purchasing decisions are at the heart of this model based on the rationality of the consumer. But it is possible to analyze consumption methods from other approaches related to other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology (Ozcablar 2005). That is why many researchers have suggested that we look in depth at the nature of the relationship that binds consumers to brands, by passing tangible values, because things can take different values, depending on how the consumer perceives the world of things that surrounds him, and how it is determined in this world. Our purchasing decisions, no matter how important they may be, are no longer based on criteria of rationality, but are bound by deeper motives of a psychosocial nature. (Hetzl 1996).

The reconsideration of the term rationality for the behavior of dealers that comes from the neoclassical model, opened the way for a better understanding of the formation and arrangement of consumers' needs, through the contribution of other fields and disciplines to the phenomenon of consumption that take into account psychological and social criteria that result in the creation of connections and identities when using goods and services as mediators in social relations (Laville, 2011). In the same context, the concept of need has begun to take on several meanings as a result of technological innovation and the multiplicity of products offered (Langlois 2002). Therefore, when we try to explain the hierarchy of needs among consumers in recent decades, especially in the category of younger generations, the hierarchy of needs can be used to: (Maslow) But in reverse, and the following figure illustrates this. As this category has become more dominant in its choices, the needs of achievement and self-realization more than its appreciation of the physiological needs. (Hebel 2009). Thus, it allows them to build dynamic relationships with their selves (Ladwein 2005).

Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs is inverse

Source : Hébel P et al, le consommateur va-t-il changer durablement de comportement avec la crise ? *CAHIER DE RECHERCHE N°268*, 2009, CRÉDOC

1.2. Theoretical foundations of identity consumption :

Characterized by the end of the century period²⁰ With a deep and radical change in consumer habits, the emergence of a more intelligent consumer, knowledgeable, increasing his experience in the purchasing process, and adopting a complex and volatile behavior. just(Hertzel, 1996) It indicates that the consumer searches, as a first stage, for the most appropriate relationship between quality and price, and as a second stage, to gain experience and pleasure in order to meet consumer needs with



an emotional dimension.(*Holbrook, Hirschman, 1982*). The process of consumption, with its intangible structure, has become an important tool for individuals towards achieving (*Hebel 2009*)Contribution to social and humanitarian issues, as well as being vulnerable to the brand, which is responsible for achieving transparency and legitimacy for it. Thus, the relationship between the consumer and the brand has taken on another dimension, which is represented in the set of associations that allow him to be permanently identified with the brand, but more than that, his attachment to it is the presence of a strong identity of the brand.(*Michon 2006*).

a. The role of consumption in building customer identity: Consumption is not just about acquiring products, but buying a certain identity"(*Gabriel, Lang 2008*) In other words, their choice of brands expresses who they are? And what do they want to be? In this case, the process of consumption allows the creation of a distinct identity for the consumer, as he confirms his identity through his consumption or ownership of trademarks, as they convey a certain mental image.(*Belk 1998*). But how can the concept of identity be defined in the field of marketing?

1.3. The concept of identity:

In order to understand the meaning of this important term in the management of the brand, it is necessary to refer to the various possible uses of it. Sometimes we talk about the "identity card", which represents a personal document that answers in some lines about: Who am I? What is my name and surname? What are my privacy signs?(*Kapferer 2002*). The term identity associated with the personality of the individual is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, which can be summed up as "self-knowledge" through what he referred to.(*Licata 2007*):

- It indicates that each person is unique by virtue of his genetic traits.
- It has other subjective or personal meanings, which are manifested in the following:
 - It gives a sense of solitude.
 - distinguish it from others.
 - Continuity in space and time, meaning that I am the same person through time.
- It also has a sensory and physical dimension.

We also talk about the "opinion identity" that brings together several people who have a common opinion and who combine the same points of view. But the construction of an individual identity is no longer based almost on the traditional systems known as profession, religion, political opinions and family, ..., but now the areas of commercial activities that determine to a large extent the identity of the individual and his way of thinking and actions(*Ladwein 2003*). The things we consume, especially strong brands, create reassurance, provide us with social recognition, and help us build our identity.(*Rio 2009*), and represent an essential



partner in self-building. As it is said, I buy, therefore I am, and consumption has also become based on the imaginary dimension, as he who is keen on the imaginary side controls perception. For example, we do not buy clothes only to wear them, but to achieve recognition, admiration and acceptance by others, as this imaginative and social component called him(*Rochefort*)B "intangible component"(*Bing 2010*), That is why it is important to clarify the term identity to better understand how this process of self-concept may be relevant to consumer practices. We have used the concepts of identity and singularity to enrich the term consumption.

a. Identity construction in marketing: There are many studies in the field of marketing about consumer behavior, where they explained the role of consumption in building their identity, so the brand we use appears as an extension of the self and that its presentation is a confirmation of the identity of its owner. It transcends utility and rationality(*Belk 1998*). Today we are witnessing a transition from consumption that is based on satisfying basic needs to consumption based on experience, where the experience of consumption is defined as "a conscious personal state accompanied by a variety of connotations or symbolic meanings, hedonistic responses, and aesthetic standards."(*Holbrook, Hirschman, 1982*). Thus, the process of consumption appears as a personal experience charged with emotions based on interaction with the stimuli that manifest from products, especially brands, as the consumer becomes the main producer of his consumer experience. where . indicated *Holbrook* It is neither the brand nor the product that brings value to the consumer, but the experience of the individual that brings him value(*Ladwein 2003*). In this context, the transition of individuals from mere buyers to consumers allowed them to develop their personalities and abilities and establish social relationships.(*Trentmann 2008*).

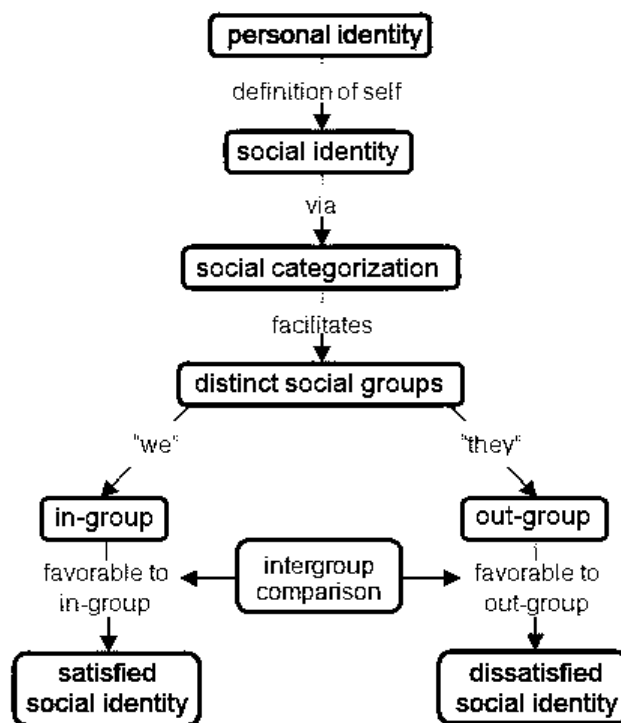
1.4. Social identity and its impact on consumption:

Just as the individual has a personal identity, he also has a social identity. The personal identity, as we have already mentioned, combines the special features of the individual, making him separate from others. As for social identity, it forms part of the individual's self-image resulting from the process of belonging to a social group.(*Giroux 2001*). The process of consumption is now realized as a system of differentiation and membership. The recent literature of consumption that integrates the emotional dimension determines the extent of the existing homogeneity between self-identity and social identity. The concept of social identity was defined by(*Tajfeel,1972*) As follows: "It is part of the individual's self-concept resulting from his awareness of belonging to a social group and also the value and emotional importance he attaches to this membership."(*Ozcablar 2005*). The idea inherent in this definition, that society consists of social groups based on nationality, race, class, profession, gender, religion, and others, the social identity theory suggests that individuals form social identities based on these elements that in turn affect behavior. Social identity theory also supports the idea that individuals go beyond their personal identities to develop social identities in the formulation and construction of their



sense of self.(Hornsey 2013).Once a person belongs to a particular group, it is possible to speak of identification or similarity(*identification*)and that during the moment when he is considered a member of the group with the assumption that his social identity is attractive, he seeks to act in a way that is consistent with the general pattern that they predominate within the group(*ingroup*) And he has behaviors contrary to others, i.e. outside thegroup (*Mercier 2010*)(*outgroup*). Many researchers have been interested in studying the relationship between self-identity and social identity by means of the phenomenon of identification. and Figure No.2) Summarize the content of both social identity theory and social classification theory.

Figure 2: Summarize the content of both social identity theory and social classification theory



Source: Figure courtesy of the researcher

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figure-2411-Social-Identity-Theory_fig8_324201481

1.5. Identity consumption and customer loyalty:

According to the initial ideas about social identity theory, a number of researchers have begun to realize the gap observed in the writings on social identity theory by applying it in an organizational field. These writings have contributed a lot to understanding the organizational behavior of the organization(Ashforth, Mael, 1989). Any organization can be considered as internally structured and stable groups within complex networks of intertwined relationships characterized by differences



in power, status and prestige. This definition is based on the assumption that organizations include reciprocal sets of relationships, it follows that organizations can be the object of identification just like other social groups based on nationality, race, class, occupation, gender and religion which are the basis of identification (Hogg, Terry, 2000).

In other words, organizational determination is a specific form of social determination. Individuals identify with organizations to enhance self-confidence (self-esteem), and as a means of expressing themselves or their own and get On social compatibility (Ashforth, Mael 1989). But what are the psychological benefits that individuals derive from their association with a famous organization? Organizational thought theorists focus on the fact that individuals define themselves in terms of what their organization represents for them, and therefore it is said that organizations are used as part of their social identity, or as the term ego in terms of the importance of their connection as members of the organization (Mercier 2010). Some concepts such as identity and determination have become widely spread in the social sciences and are starting to form a mainstay in managerial research in order to understand how a person can acquire a sense or feeling of "being part of an organization" or what we mean by precisely that gain Some characteristics or a specific identity.

According to (Fiol 2001) Organizational identity (or the answer to the question: Who are we?) may constitute a unique and inimitable resource in creating competitive advantage. There is also a lot of research that focuses on the positive effects of organizational determination to allow for the strengthening of social cohesion and cooperation, and even the creation of loyalty within the members of the organization. (Fiol 2001). but regarding Bhattacharya , Sen)) It is suggested that identifying the consumers of the organization is one of the essential elements in building the relationship between the customer and the organization to achieve strong and meaningful relationships. Brands can also act as prominent social groups for consumers to claim membership and affiliation with them and thus develop relationships with them. Bhattacharya , Sen 2003,)).

Studies on what has been termed a "collective" or "a group of marks" (*la communauté de la marque*) She believes that the participation of consumers in it, can enhance or strengthen the position of the brand and the relationships of customers with it. Where consumers have a great tendency to identify the brand they are in contact with, and this is of course if the latter has a strong identity in terms of being distinctive, attractive or prestigious compared to other brands Bhattacharya , Sen 2003,)) Because the distinctive identity of the brand helps customers to achieve the needs of expression and self-enhancement, which in turn helps in developing meaningful relationships and creating unilateralism and then choosing and consuming the brand. The perspective of the social identity of the relationship between the customer and the brand indicates that the consumer adheres to the behavior of the defender of the brand because it determines through it who is in



contact with it, which is widely issued from the identity of the brand(Ahearne,et autres 2005)

Conclusion:

Our purchasing decisions, no matter how important they may be, are no longer based on the criteria of rationality, but are bound by deeper motives of a psychological nature. Consumers nowadays prefer fulfillment needs and self-actualization needs before estimating physiological needs, as a result of the deep and radical change in consumer habits. And that the consumer's relationship with the brand took another form within the so-called relational marketing, especially through the interactions resulting from the process of consuming the brand and the positive or negative feedback resulting from that. The ideas, images, or feelings emanating from the signs must be commensurate with the individual identity of the consumer, because the signs help consumers to confirm their uniqueness and express their identity.

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