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The Effects of Selected Marketing Mix Elements on Customer-Based Brand Equity: The Case of Coffee Chains in Vietnam

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Abstract

Although marketing mix elements have been frequently applied among international marketers and practitioners, there has been little research effort to explain the nature linkage between marketing mix elements and Customer-based Brand Equity in emerging markets. Drawing that notion on marketing mix elements, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which six marketing mix elements, included: Price, Store Image, Distribution Intensity, Monetary Promotion, Nonmonetary Promotion, and Advertising Spending have been selected to investigate the significant level of influence on three dimensions of Customer-based Brand Equity, composed of: Brand Awareness/ Brand Association, Brand Loyalty, and Perceived Quality. Data was collected from 310 consumers in four coffee shops ò leading brands in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, namely: Phuc Long, Starbucks, Highlands, The Coffee Bean and Tea Leafs. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique has been used to reflect the relationship between latent constructs. The finding indicates that the higher price, higher distribution intensity and higher non-monetary promotion, the higher Customer-based Brand Equity while frequent used of monetary promotion may result in lower Brand Equity on customers. This study generates new insights for practitioners operating in Vietnamese coffee shops.

Keywords: Marketing Mix Elements, Customer-Based Brand Equity, Price, Distribution Intensity, Nonmonetary Promotion.

Introduction

Vietnam has been famous for its long-standing coffee culture. From the time coffee first came to country through French colonial, nowadays enjoying 'a cup of coffee' becomes not only a vital role but also traditional style in daily lives of most Vietnamese people. Taking this national trend, coffee shops of many brands coming from both domestic and foreign countries have sprung up all around the country to satisfy the overwhelming coffee demand of Vietnamese people. Recent years, it could be easily to recognize the harsh competition between foreign brands coffee shops (e.g.: Gloria Jean's Coffee - Australia, The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, NYDC Coffee, Starbuck – USA, Angle in Us – Korea, etc.) and domestic brands ones (e.g.: Trung Nguyen, Highland, Urban Station, Phuc Long, Legend Revived, Passio, etc.). As a result, building strong brand equity has been ranked as one of a marketing priority strategy for companies because the benefits it brought are hardly listed down all. However, there is little empirical studies conducted in the area of brand equity in developing/emerging coffee shop chains market. Therefore, this study aims to identify and estimate factors impacting on Brand Equity of leading coffee chains in Vietnam coffee market.

Literature Review

Customer-based Brand Equity

Brand Equity is one of the crucial concepts in management, as well as in business practice and academic research

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(Aaker, 1991). The various concepts of brand equity are resulted from different approaches: company oriented and customer oriented (Fayrene & Lee, 2011). Comparing Brand Equity based on company, which is the asset value of brand using in financial market data or balance sheet report (Feldwick, 1996, as cited in Tong & Hawley, 2009), Customer-based Brand Equity (CBBE) is defined as the evaluation of customer's perception toward a specific brand (Keller, 1993) based on customer knowledge, awareness, and associations with respect to the brand (Washburn and Plank, 2002, as cited in Tong & Hawley, 2009), and thus if the brand has no meaning to customers, none of its marketing mix elements is valuable.

Customer-based Brand Equity is confirmed as a complex concept that has been composed of multi-dimensionality (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Along the extensive literature review, there has been uncountable research conducting to measure the concept of Customer-based Brand Equity. Aaker (1991) lists five dimensions to measure the concept, namely: (1) Brand Awareness, (2) Brand Association, (3) Brand Loyalty, (4) Perceived Quality, and (5) other proprietary brand assets (e.g.: patents, trademarks, and channel relationships. On the other hand, Keller (1993) proposes one additional new dimension to measure the concept, which is Brand Image. In the latest empirical studies of constructing Customer-based Brand Equity, Yoo & Donthu (2001) have developed and validated the multi-dimensional scale, composes of (1) Brand Awareness/ Brand Association, (2) Brand Loyalty, (3) Perceived Quality. Taking the outstanding and updated of Yoo & Donthu (2001), this study will adapt the multi-dimensionality scale as mentioned.

• Brand Awareness/ Brand Association

Brand Awareness is a key determinant identified in almost all Brand Equity models (Aaker 1991, Keller 1993, Na, Marshall and Keller 1999, Mackay 2001). Keller (2003, as cited in Hamid et al., 2012) defines Brand Awareness as the customers' ability to recall and recognize the brand as reflected by their ability to identify the brand under different conditions and to link the brand name, logo, symbol, and so forth to certain associations in memory.

Brand Association is described as the information nodes linked to the brand node in memory that results in the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller 1993). Aaker (1991) defines Brand Associations as "anything linked in memory to a brand". An association could influence the processing and recall of information, provide a point of differentiation and a reason to buy. According to Aaker (1991), high Brand Association is resulted from high recognition and recall consumer's ability toward a brand, which is represented by high Brand Awareness. The concept of Brand Awareness and Brand Association are closely related and highly correlated, and thus are combined in this study.

• Perceived Quality

Perceived Quality can be considered as the customers' perception of the overall quality or performance of a product or service compared to competitive alternatives (Aaker, 1991). In other studies, Perceived Quality is defined as the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived Quality contributes to brand value in various ways: higher profit margin, larger market share, higher perceived value, which all strengthen the reason to purchase. Therefore, Perceived Quality has been confirmed as an essential part of major Customer-based Brand Equity models (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

• Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1991, p. 39) defines Brand Loyalty as "the attachment that a customer has to a brand". Further, Oliver (1997) describes Brand Loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior". Brand Loyalty is another crucial element of Customer-based Brand Equity because if consumer is actually truly committed to the brands, it will support retaining current ones, which is considered as a more economical strategy than attracting new ones (Tuominen, 1999).

Marketing Mix Elements

Yoo, Donthu & Lee (2000) have carried out an investigation about the influence of selected marketing mix elements on Customer-base Brand Equity. The study has found that marketing mix elements, which are advertising and promotion are positively related to the Customer-based Brand Equity dimensions (e.g.: Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty, and Brand Association combined with Brand Awareness). However, the study's subjects are athletic shoes, camera film, and color television sets, and thus the two selected marketing mix elements (e.g.: advertising and promotion) would receive higher interest. Other studies conducted in different product categories might be interest in other elements since researches on marketing mix are product-by-product, and market-by-market.

Buil et al., (2013) has explored the role of Advertising and Sale Promotions (e.g.: monetary and non-monetary) on Brand Loyalty. What has been found is that Advertising will lead to higher Brand Awareness and Perceived Quality, and this in turn will result in higher Brand Loyalty.

Isabel (1993) processes that individuals' attitudes toward advertisements can develop higher Brand Awareness and positive perception of brands. In addition, finding also indicates that monetary promotions have a negative impact on the Perceived Quality of the brand, consequently, reduce level of Brand Loyalty. On the other hand, non-monetary promotions could enhance Brand Loyalty through positive impact on Brand Awareness and Perceived Quality.

In order to integrate elements of marketing mix and validate previous results in other product market, this study focuses on a few selected key elements of the marketing mix. Specifically, Price, Store Image, Distribution Intensity, Advertising Spending, and Sale Promotions are picked as representatives of the traditional 4Ps marketing activities (e.g.: price, place or distribution, promotion, and product). Although these variables do not cover the full domain of marketing program, they could serve as typical marketing actions (Yoo et al., 2000).

• Price

Pricing is among one of the most important marketing mix decisions because price being the only marketing mix variable that generates revenues for the organization. Indeed, pricing is a very strategic decision as it has strong influence on demand for the product and also on the profitability of the firm. On the contrary, in consumer's perspective, price is used as an important extrinsic cue and indicator to predict product quality or benefits (Yoo et al., 2000).

• Store Image

Parente (2000, as cited in Giraldi et al., 2003) defines store atmosphere as the psychological feeling that the retailer develops for consumers when they come the store. It is one predictor of store personality. The Store Image could be built by through the light, smell, sense, and other customer's sense, layout, aisle space, furniture, style of displays, design, using of colors, presence and volume of in-store music, and temperature. The Store Image is important to retailers because (1) it is one strategy that retailer could control the situational influences and create the environment having on customers in store, and (2) it helps shape both the direction and duration of consumers' attention as well as generate particular emotional reactions (e.g.: arousal, happy, cosy, comfortable, etc.) (Giraldi et al., 2003). Thus, building good-image stores attract more attention, contacts, and visiting from potential customers (Yoo et al., 2000).

• Distribution Intensity

Yoo et al. (2000) defines that distribution intensity is measured by how many retail stores carry the brand in the consumer's perception. Distribution is marked as intensive if stores are placed in the large number to cover the market. Consumers will be happier when a product is available whenever they want it and wherever they are (Smith, 1992). According to Yoo et al. (2000), intensive distribution reduces the time consumers spend on searching the store's location and coming to the stores, and hence provides convenience point in purchasing.

• Sale Promotion

There are two types of sale promotions, which are monetary promotions and nonmonetary promotion. Monetary (price-related) sales promotions (e.g.: coupons, cash refunds, cents-off deals, premiums, allowances and discounts) are often used by retailers in consumer promotional offers (Köksal, 2014). On the other hand, nonmonetary sales promotions (e.g.: free gifts, free samples, or sweepstakes) are still little used (Palazon and Delgado-Ballester, 2009), even they can appeal people toward the brand by providing positive emotions and feelings and also provide subsidies for improving Cutomer-based Brand Equity hereby (Köksal, 2014). Therefore, it is suggested that both types of promotion should be equally taken into consideration by researchers as well as practitioners.

• Advertising Spending

Advertising is considered as an important signal for quality of company's guarantee to its customers. Spending on advertising shows the investment as well as the confidence on superior product quality (Boulding, Lee, and Staelin 1994; Chay and Tellis 1991; Johnson 1984; Lindsay 1989; Maxwell 1989; as cited in BOBEIC). In this study, Advertising Spending is defined as the consumer's subjective perception of advertising spending for the focal brand (Yoo et al., 2000).

In sum, this study has proposed the conceptual framework, which is showed in Figure 1.

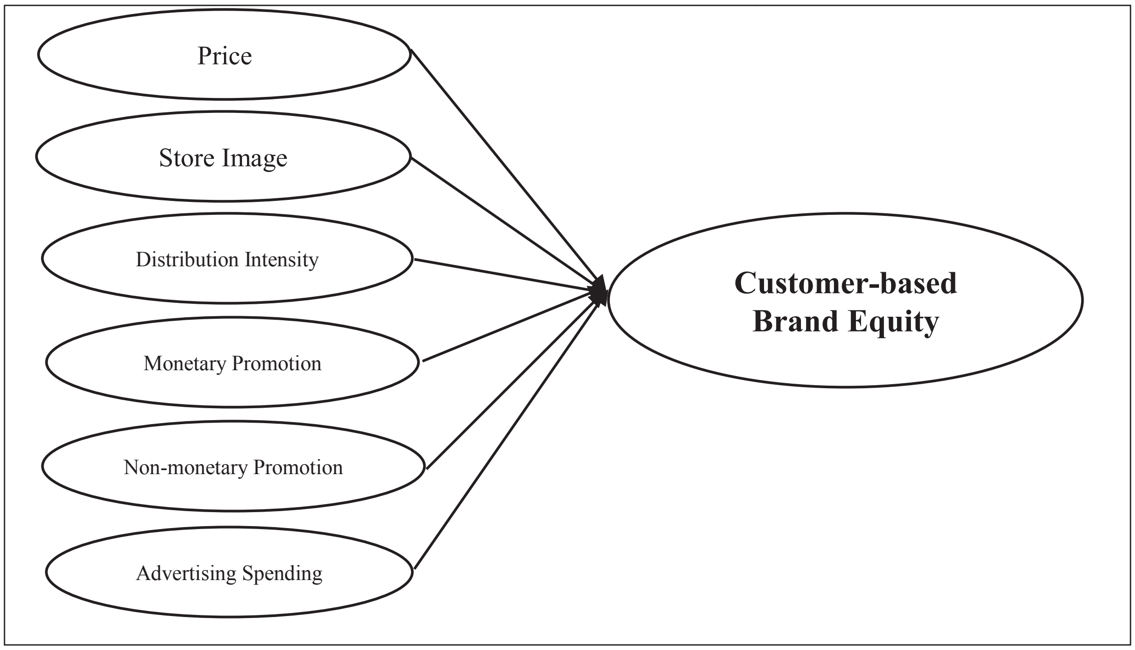

Fig. 1: The Study Model

Methodolody

Measures

The adapted scale measurement from are summarized in Table 1. All items have been evaluated based on five-point Likert scale with ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). They have been translated into Vietnamese and gone through pilot test to revise misunderstandings in the questionnaire.

Table 1: Measurement Scale

Factor	*Item measured*	*Encryption*	*Sources*
Price	The price of X is high	P1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	The price of X is low (reverse-scale)	P2	
	The price of X is competitive	P3	
	X is expensive	P4	
Store image	The coffee shops where I can buy X carry products of high quality.	SI1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	The coffee shops of X would be of high quality.	SI2	
	The stores where I can buy X have a pleasant atmosphere	SI3	Dodds et al. (1991)
Distribution intensity	X has more coffee shops, as compared to its competing brands.	DI1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	I can buy products of X anywhere I want	DI2	
	I can buy products of X in places where I usually go around	DI3	

Sale promotion (Monetary promotion)	Brand X frequently offers price discounts	MP1	Buil et al., (2013)
	Brand X often uses price discounts	MP2	
	Brand X uses price discounts more frequently than competing brands of café	MP3	
Sale promotion (Non-monetary promotion)	Brand X frequently offers gifts	NPM1	Buil et al., (2013)
	Brand X often uses gifts	NPM2	
	Brand X uses gifts more frequently than competing brands of café	NPM3	
Advertising spending	X is intensively advertised.	AD1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	The ad campaigns for X seem very expensive, compared to campaigns for competing brands	AD2	
	The ad campaigns for X are seen frequently.	AD3	
Brand awareness/ Brand association	I can recognize X quickly among other competing brands.	BA1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	Some characteristics of X come to my mind quickly	BA2	
	I know what brand X looks like	BA3	
	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of brand X	BA4	
	I have difficulty in imagining X in my mind.	BA5	
Perceived quality	Brand X offers very good quality products	PQ1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	Brand X offers products of consistent quality	PQ2	
Brand loyalty	I consider myself to be loyal to X.	BL1	Yoo et al., (2000)
	X would be my first choice	BL2	
	I will not buy other brands if X is available at the store.	BL3	

Sample and Data Collection

The survey has been distributed to respondents from four coffee shops, namely Phuc Long, Starbucks, Highlands, and The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf in Ho Chi Minh City. A total of 400 questionnaires were given out to respondents and 310 questionnaires were qualified for analyzing. Table 2 provides a summary of the sample demographic distribution.

FINDINGS

Demographic Distribution

Among 310 respondents, there were 138 males and 172 females which constitute the proportion of 52.6% and 47.4%, respectively. The sample mainly distributed at the age 19 – 35 (taken up 72.3%), single (taken up 64.8%), have occupations as students (taken up 38.7%), officer (taken up 19.4%), and supervisor/manager (taken up 26.5%), and get monthly income less than 5 mils (taken up 57.4%). Table 2 provides a summary of the sample demographic distribution.

Table 2: Profile of Respondents (number of respondents)

	Gender		*Age*		*Occupation*		*Income*	
	Male	Female	15-24	>=25	Student/ Officer/ Supervisor/ Manager	Others	<US$435	>=US$435
Vietnamese respondents for	138	172	139	171	262	48	225	85

Note: US$1= VND23.000

The reliability has been analyzed for all items of each determinants by the measuring the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha in SPSS software (version 21), which is shown in Table 3. However, factor store image has been dropped out due to the unacceptably poor Cronbach's Alpha (0.018). Thus, there are only eight remaining factors in the research model.

Table 3: Reliability of Factors

Factor	*Item Measured*	*Encryption*	*Cronbach's Alpha*
Price	The price of X is high	P1	**0.714**
	The price of X is low (reverse-scale)	P2	
	X is expensive	P4	
Distribution Intensity	X has more coffee shops, as compared to its competing brands.	D1	**0.730**
	I can buy products of X anywhere I want	D2	
	I can buy products of X in places where I usually go around	D3	
Monetary Promotion	Brand X frequently offers price discounts	MP1	**0.865**
	Brand X often uses price discounts	MP2	
	Brand X uses price discounts more frequently than competing brands of café	MP3	
Non-monetary Promotion	Brand X frequently offers gifts	NMP1	**0.935**
	Brand X often uses gifts	NMP2	
	Brand X uses gifts more frequently than competing brands of café	NMP3	
Advertising Spending	X is intensively advertised.	AD1	**0.884**
	The ad campaigns for X seem very expensive, compared to campaigns for competing brands	AD2	
	The ad campaigns for X are seen frequently.	AD3	
Brand Awareness/ Brand Association	I can recognize X quickly among other competing brands.	BA1	**0.777**
	Some characteristics of X come to my mind quickly	BA2	
	I know what brand X looks like	BA3	
	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of brand X	BA4	
	I have difficulty in imagining X in my mind.	BA5	
Perceived Quality	Brand X offers very good quality products	PQ1	**0.605**
	Brand X offers products of consistent quality	PQ2	
Brand Loyalty	I consider myself to be loyal to X.	BL1	**0.847**
	X would be my first choice	BL2	
	I will not buy other brands if X is available at the store.	BL3	

Measurement Validation

The Kaiser-Meyser-Olkin (KMO) was measured for multivariate normality before conducting further factor analysis. The KMO scores significantly at 0.846 as shown on Table 4.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		*.846*
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3806.340
	Df	210
	Sig.	.000

Initially, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the model fit as well as well as the latent construct. The CFA results suggested the measurement model for Vietnamese respondents received an acceptable fit of data: χ2[]= (p <.001), χ2/df = 2.33, CFI = 0.942, GFI= 0.899, AGFI= 0.856, RMSEA= 0.066. All model fit indices are within the range of recommended values (Bollen, 1989; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Byrne, 2001). Factor loadings of all items were sufficient (> 0.54) and significant (p< 0.001). Table 5 shows the number of each latent construct and its factor loading. The findings also supported the convergent validity and discriminant validity between items and constructs, respectively (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988) which was presented in Table 6, included: Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVEs), Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), and Average Shared Variance (ASV).

Table 5: CFA Result

Vietnamese respondents		
Constructs	*Items*	*Factor loadings*
Price	P1	0.953
	P4	0.857
Distribution Intensity	D1	0.777
	D2	0.854
Advertising	AD1	0.79
	AD2	0.913
	AD3	0.831
Monetary Promotion	MP1	0.847
	MP2	0.865
	MP3	0.766
Non-monetary Promotion	NMP1	0.918
	NMP2	0.928
	NMP3	0.889
Brand Awareness/ Brand Association	BA1	0.833
	BA2	0.729
	BA3	0.593
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.731
	PQ2	0.595
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.857
	BL2	0.826
	BL3	0.770

Table 6: Validity Test

	CR	*AVE*	*MSV*	*ASV*
Brand awareness	0.765	0.526	0.319	0.171
Price	0.760	0.626	0.319	0.124
Distribution Intensity	0.800	0.667	0.315	0.142
Advertising	0.883	0.716	0.618	0.234
Monetary Promotion	0.866	0.684	0.075	0.026
Nonmonetary Promotion	0.937	0.831	0.618	0.227
Brand Loyalty	0.859	0.670	0.331	0.190
Perceived Quality	0.613	0.444	0.235	0.082

CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted; MSV: maximum shared variance; ASV: average shared variance

Structural Equation Modeling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been conducted after the CFA to investigate the relationship between determinants. The SEM results demonstrated the accepted fit between the data and the proposed structural model: $\chi 2/df = 2.783$, CFI = 0.924, GFI= 0.893, AGFI= 0.850, RMSEA= 0.076, which is shown in Table 7. The confirmation of the hypothesized paths have been examined and the structural parameters, p-value, and testing results are shown in Table 8.

Table 7: Goodness of Fit Measures for the Pooled Measurement Model

Name of category	*Name of index*	*Level of acceptance*
Absolute fit	Chi-Square= 1	P-value > 0.05
	RMSEA= 0.076	RMSEA < 0.08
	GFI= 0.893	GFI > 0.90
Incremental fit	AGFI= 0.850	AGFI > 0.8
	CFI= 0.924	CFI > 0.9
Parsimonious fit	Chisq/df= 2.783	Chi-Square/ df < 3.0

Table 8: Standardized Structural Paths in the Proposed Model

Hypotheses	*Casual path*	*Estimate*	*P*	*Test result*
H1	Price → CBBE	0.104	0.034	Supported
H3	Distribution Intensity → CBBE	0.155	***	Supported
H4	Monetary Promotion → CBBE	-0.160	***	Supported
H5	Non-monetary Promotion → CBBE	0.101	0.034	Supported
H6	Advertising Spending → CBBE	0.101	0.079	Not supported

Note: *** indicates p-value < 0.001

H1 demonstrated that price has direct and positive influence on Customer-based Brand Equity (γ = 0.104, $p<0.05$). H3 posited that distribution intensity has direct and positive influence on Customer-based Brand Equity (γ = 0.155, $p<0.001$).

H4, H5 determined that monetary promotion has direct and negative influence on Customer-based Brand Equity (γ = -0.16, $p<0.001$) while non-monetary has direct and positive influence on Customer-based Brand Equity (γ = 0.101, $p<0.05$)

H6 was not supported, which mean that advertising spending did not significantly influence on Customer-based Brand Equity (γ = 0.101, $p>0.05$).

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this research is selected marketing mix elements' influence on Customer-based Brand Equity of leading coffee chain brand in Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam. The major contribution of the study is the confirmation of positive and direct relationship among Price, Distribution Intensity, and non-monetary promotion on Customer-based Brand Equity. In other means, setting higher price, placing intense distribution, and using of non-monetary promotions (e.g.: free gifts, sweepstakes, etc.) will lead to higher Customer-based Brand Equity. Furthermore, frequently used of monetary promotions might result in negative impact on Customer-based Brand Equity, and hence marketing managers should take into consideration the use of sale promotion since monetary and non-monetary promotion have different impact on the building of Customer-based Brand Equity. These finding are consistent with other previous empirical studies (Yoo et al., 2000; Built et al., 2013). Moreover, the relationship between Advertising Spending and Customer-based Brand Equity is not supported so it is recommended that Vietnamese coffee shops managers should be very careful before deciding to invest in advertisement since the effectiveness is not clear in this research.

However, this research is failed in drawing the impact of Store Image on Customer-based Brand Equity, which is contradict with Yoo et al., (2000). The inconsistency varied depended on the context.

Furthermore, this research has confirmed the multi-dimension of Customer-based Brand Equity, which composed of: (1) Brand Awareness with Brand Association, (2) Perceived Quality, and (3) Perceived Quality. Therefore, improving Customer-based Brand Equity, marketing managers should pay attention to increase each of its dimensions, and the deficit of any dimensions could cause the low Overall Brand Equity.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

This research suffers few limitations that set direction for future research. Firstly, the research is just investigated some familiar selected marketing mix elements (e.g.: price, distribution intensity, promotions, advertising spending) on Customer-based Brand Equity and also the relationship among these elements. Later research should take into account other new marketing mix elements and investigate the interrelationship among examined marketing mix elements. Secondly, the study is conducted with customers of four coffee chains in Ho Chi Minh City (e.g.: Phuc Long, Starbucks, Highlands, and The coffee bean and tea leaf), and hence the result may not be generalized for all coffee chains in Vietnam application. Moreover, the research is just focused on medium to high income target customers. Thus, the result again might be appropriately applied for coffee chains which have similar characteristics and features with these four selected brands. Future research should take into consideration of context since researches on marketing mix elements can be context-dependent.

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