

Research Article

THE CUSTOMER PERCEIVING CONSUMER BASED BRAND EQUITY AND
INTENTION TO BUY MOBILE PHONE: COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN
GENERATIONS IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The global economy and the technology development in the twenty first century have been changed all the time, perception of consumers based on customer brand equity is very important. This research sought to explore the dynamics governing roles of brands and consumers' behavior toward the formation of Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) based on the concepts of cognitive psychology view. Previous researches relied mostly on concept and thought, used the survey-based valuation on consumer factors to explore source of brand equity. To date, there have been no empirical researches examining effects of CBBE dimensions in the model. Brand equity as brand stimuli was tested with consumer product stimuli, mobile phones, within the CBBE measurement construct, the structural model was fit with data. That is, all four dimensions derived from the conceptualization of cognitive psychology view comprising brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and attitudinal brand loyalty were held strong in consumers' minds in every generation. It is necessary to create and maintain effectively strong brand equity for the future which affects to intention to buy.

Keywords: marketing, consumer-based brand equity, generations

INTRODUCTION

Facing the twenty first century, the power of digital age and the growing trend of technology development have influenced on empowering consumers to access information about the brand from firms and through other sources more conveniently and rapidly (Brown, Pope & Voges, 2003). In this sense, brands play many roles in consumers' minds when making a decision of brand choices (Kotler, 1996). The iPhone may be the first brand the customer think of when wanting to buy a new phone because its brand shows high class profile. And also for firms, brands have been growing both online and offline (Hoffman & Novak, 1996), in response to the social media development to marketing brand in focus point, example Facebook.

This study aims at the value of the brand as reflected from the perspective of the individual consumer as a result of the differential effects of brand knowledge when consumers respond to the marketing mix elements of the brand which is the basic of branding but consumers are likely to react more favorably to a brand with high consumer-based brand equity rather than it is an unnamed product or service (Keller, 1993). This differential effects lead to consumer greater preference and purchase intentions (Cobb, Ruble & Donthu, 1995) and also

market performance. A firm with good market performance subsequently drives financial performance (Hong-bumm, Woo Gon, Jeong A., 2003)

As the eventual goal of any marketing program is to increase sales so without understanding how consumers respond favorably to marketing mix elements of the brand (Keller, 1993), it is difficult to manage a brand in the changing marketplace. Hence, understanding the measures used in CBBE measurement scale at an individual level for brand equity formation such as demographic data, generations which are different age, life style, perception attitude, it will enable a manager to segment the market on the basis of customer profiles and also consumers' insights so that a manager can understand how to respond to the gap of brand equity formation effectively (Keller, 1998). In addition, it will help enrich the strategic brand management discipline particularly in a global marketplace as the majority of today's brands prosper simultaneously online and offline (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

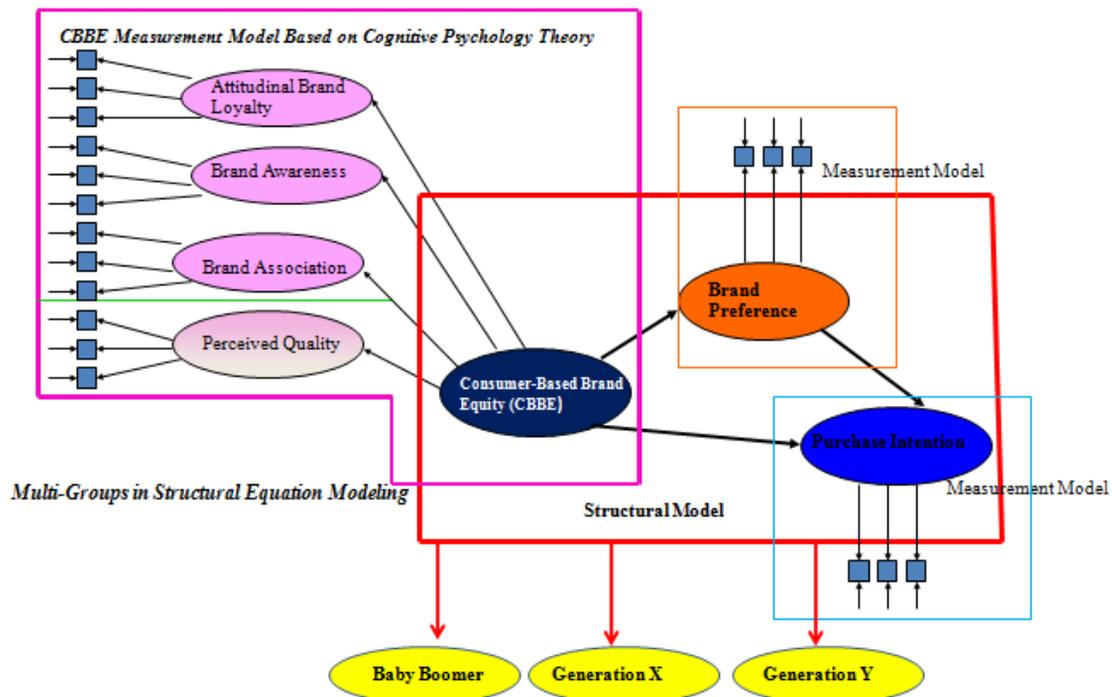
1. To explore a gap of knowledge how consumers formed a strong brand equity by using frameworks of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) derived from conceptualization

of cognitive psychology view and signaling theory view in a multidimensional scale of CBBE in the integrated model for purpose of the refinement of consumer-based brand equity measurement scale.

2. To examine the relationship in structural model, CBBE, Brand preference

and purchase intention using multi-group analysis to examine its CBBE measurement effects in its structural relations with brand preference and purchase intention to gauge the power of the refined integrated model of CBBE reflected in the market performance at the consumer level.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Items of each CBBE dimension and all dimensions of CBBE have been defined and developed, adopting previous researches from the past literature review and also from the theoretical framework based on two paradigms: cognitive psychology view and signaling theory view in information economics (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2004). The

cognitive psychology view has been used as the dominant framework of research focusing on memory-based association structure (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Following this concept, a brand is a chunk of information which has been developed and constructed of multiple aspects of the brand over time by each consumer. It is a powerful way of

summarizing information about a product's quality, reputation, and other meaningful factors (Glazer, 1998).

Contribution to Knowledge

1. The enhancement that brand managers can employ effective strategies for creating and maintaining brand equity when using a multidimensional scale of CBBE to manage their customer profiles in the international marketing environment in the global economy more effectively.

2. The understanding of each segmentation such as baby boomer, generation X, and generation Y will contribute companies to marketing in which more effectively.

Research Scope

Following the category of "shopping product", mobile phones were selected because the product has a potential impact on human life, especially in the digital age with the rapid technology development. The significance of mobile phones was remarkably seen in the global market. As at the end of 2016, it was estimated that there were 2,649 million mobile subscriptions in Asia Pacific, compared with 880 million in the America and 741 million in Europe as quoted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Asia Pacific was forecast by Informa Corporation, by 2015 to be the largest market.

Thailand was the base country of this qualitative survey study because the country has become a fast growing market of mobile phones in Asia-Pacific, the region of which has outstanding ranked the world's high sales growth, outperforming other regions in the world's mobile phone market (Euromonitor, 2009). The changing market environment affected by globalization and also the digital age in a developing country as Thailand would be a case study to understand more about consumers' behaviors in other developing countries, especially in ASEAN countries of about 600 million citizens, the people's values and beliefs of which has been culturally interlinked, as evidently seen in their unified spirits of ASEAN to be embraced for ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 and also Single ASEAN by 2020.

Literature Review

Concept of Consumer-Based Brand Equity

Consumer-Based Brand Equity which was to measure the strength of consumers' attachment or association-based memory to the brand. One of the most commonly cited consumer-based brand equity was defined by Aaker (1991) It was also defined as "the differential effects of brand knowledge" consumer's response to the marketing of that brand (Keller, 1993). Consumers have

some certain strength of the attachment to the brand, depending on how strong of the brand can build its brand equity in consumers' minds. In addition, the definition of brand equity was also adapted from an information economics view as the value of a brand as a credible signal of a product's position to consumers (Erdem & Swait, 1998). In this sense, a credible brand helped to increase information symmetry and decrease uncertainties in consumers' minds when perceiving expected utilities of the product and/or service. A high degree of Consumer-Based Brand Equity is considered to have the power to hold a larger market share and likely to gain greater trust, acceptance and preference from consumers (Kotler, 2012). In addition, strong brand equity would be beneficial to the firms, in the long term as a potential source of revenues for the future operations. Regarded as the critical asset, firms should create and maintain the brands properly and effectively to create competitive edge in the market.

Dimensions of Brand Equity based on Cognitive-Psychology View

Dimensions of brand equity based on cognitive-psychology view include brand awareness, brand association, attitudinal brand loyalty, and perceived quality (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Park & Srinivasan, 1994;

Yoo & Donthu, 1997, 2001; Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000; Singka & Lesczyzc, 2000; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Kim & Kim 2004).

Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness was defined as consumers' ability to retrieve a brand from his or her memory by recognizing a focal brand when given a brand name as a cue or recall a brand when given the product category when there is a need of the product category (Aaker, 1991). Aaker (1991), Keller, (1993), and Yoo et al. (2000) have indicated that Brand Awareness is an important component of brand equity because it reflected the level of strength of a brand in a consumer's mind. Keller (1993) said that conceptualization of brand equity, Brand Awareness provides a foundation to support the formation of a salience image comprised of positive associations of the brand to be followed (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995). Consumers can recall a brand based on the strength of brand awareness he or she has about the given brand with or without exposure to certain cues associated with the brand such as advertising, word of mouth, and promotional materials (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995).

Brand Association

Brand Association is another dimension of CBBE (Aaker, 1991). By definition, Brand Association is "anything

linked in the memory to a brand” (Aaker, 1991), and it contains various meanings about the brand for the consumers (Keller, 1993). The associated link could be a product (Bullmore, 1984), country of origin (Pappu et al, 2006), company competitor (Biel, 1993), retailers or users with particular demographic or lifestyle characteristics (Yoo et al., 2000 ; Aaker,1991) categorized brand associations into eleven types, including “product attributes, intangibles, customer benefits, relative price, use/application, user/customer, celebrity/person, lifestyle/personality, product class, competitors and country/geographic area”.

Perceived Quality

Perceived Quality was not the actual quality of the product (Zeithaml, 1988). It was the customers’ perception or subjective evaluation of the overall quality about a brand’s excellence or superiority (Aaker, 1991; Yoo et al., 2000). Perceived Quality is based on underlying characteristics of the products to which the brand is attached (Garvin, 1987). The underlying characteristics of perceived quality will depend on the context such as performance, features, conformance, reliability, durability, serviceability, fit and finish (Garvin, 1987).

Attitudinal Brand Loyalty

Attitudinal Brand Loyalty is defined as an antecedent of behavioral loyalty which focused on subjective predetermined disposition and appraisal of a brand (Pritchard et al, 1999) or consumers’ commitment to brands and repurchase intention (Aaker, 1991; Dorsch et al., 2000). Researchers have found that brand loyalty consists of two components: purchase loyalty or behavioral brand loyalty and attitudinal brand loyalty (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996; Chaudhuri, 1999; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Brand Preference

Brand preference is defined as consumers’ actual loyalty to the brand as reflected in purchase choices, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having potential to cause switching behavior» (Oliver, 1999).

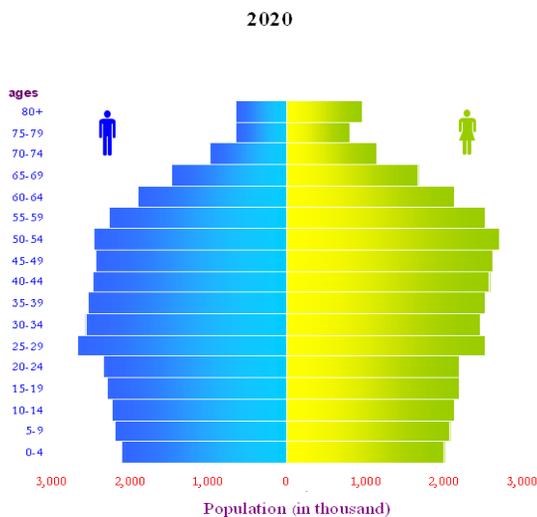
Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as consumers’ actual loyalty to the brand as reflected in purchase intention. Purchase intention referred to intention to buy the same brand over the future period of time by not switching to other brands, even encountered with different purchase situations (Swait et al., 1993; Park & Srinivasan, 1994).

Relations of CBBE with Brand Preference and Purchase Intention

The relations of CBBE with brand preference and purchase intention is in line with an approach to assess the added value of brand (Farquhar, 1990; Keller, 1993). Agarwal & Rao (1996) proposed that understanding the potential sources of brand equity is more managerially useful because they can be controlled. In this study, brand preference and purchase intention are used as latent variables, considered as consequences of having high brand equity, as a result of its effects from the brand equity measurement model.

Multi-generation in CBBE



Source: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.

Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomers also are referred to people who were born during 1946-1964 and are in the 48-66 age range as of 2012. Boomers have increased discretionary income and time. They are well known for their predilection for excess and have had a see-how-fast-I-can-get-rich materialism. They are busy people who are overloaded, overworked, and filled with high expectations. (Coleman, et al., 2006; Musico, 2008)

Family responsibilities are important to Boomers. Many are becoming Empty Nesters in that children are leaving home, marrying, and having grandchildren. Many are caregivers of their aging parents and children, and are caught in the sandwich generation. (Dietz, 2003)

Generation X

Generation X is referred to also as the Baby Bust. They were born during 1965-1977 and are in the 36-47 age range as of 2012. They experienced the high divorce rate of their parents, e.g., 40% spent at least some time in a single-family household before age 16. These latch-key children grew up quickly, experiencing rising divorce rates and violence (Dietz, 2003; Hawkins, et al., 2010; Himmel, 2008). Generation X has experienced the increasing impact of personal computers and produced the 1990's dot-com business (Cranston, 2008).

The characteristics, lifestyles, and attitudes of Generation X include valuing family first. Generation X have a broad view of family including parents, siblings, stepparents, half siblings, close friends, live-in lovers, etc. They tend to leave home later and return home to live with their parents. Generation X want to balance family, life, and work. In addition, they date and marry cautiously and tend to delay marriage. Approximately 63% of Generation X households are now families with children under 18 (Lager, 2006). Information and technology are important to them. They see technology changing their world and highly value technological literacy. They are a more visual generation, read less, than other generations. Diversity and thinking globally are core values of Generation X (Cranston, 2008; Francese, 2004; Ritson, 2007)

Generation Y

Generation Y also is referred to as the Millennial, Nexters. They were born during 1977-1994 and are in the 18-35 age range as of 2012. They were born into a technological, electronic, and wireless society, e.g., the Internet, Google, eBay, cell phones, GPS, etc. As a result, global boundaries are becoming more transparent via the Internet. (Hawkins, et al., 2010; Cranston, 2008; Eisner, 2005; Dietz, 2003; Gerritsen, 2008) They are self-absorbed and self-reliant with a strong sense

of independence and autonomy. It seems that more major media figures are scamming, cheating, lying, and exploiting than ever before. They are notoriously selfish, live for today, and spender (Eisner, 2005; Novak et al., 2006)

They have a greater need for peer acceptance with their peers often guiding their product and brand choice. Interestingly, unknown peers often are trusted more than experts. Teens like the social aspects of shopping with friends. They are more likely to switch brands quicker than other segments. Some keywords for Generation Y are collaborate, connect, co-create, and control mostly with their peers. Because they value fitting in and connecting with their peers, social networking is prominent (Gerritsen, 2008). According to Huntley (2006), Generation Y demonstrates the characteristics of being brand conscious but not brand loyal and are exceptionally tech savvy. While baby boomers and generation X tend to stay loyal to their brands most of their lives, generation Y keeps on changing its loyalties whether it is with the brands or their employers (Stern, 2008).

Human personality is considered as the preliminary point regarding the research on brand personality based on personality trait structure (Louis & Lombart, 2010).

Therefore, brand personality is defined as: “all personality traits used to characterize a person and associated with a brand”. Aaker (1991) further suggests that a brand is a source of self-expression and reflection of their generation. Consumers tend to compare their self-concept with the image portrayed by the brand and their preference depends on how much that brand is consistent with their self-concept (Arora & Stoner, 2009).

Population

As characteristics of target population were defined along the definition of consumers as consumers who are buyers, payers and users/consumers. Thus, the sample group

of this study was defined as those of brand users who has purchased a mobile phone during the past three years in Thailand, paid for the mobile phone by his or her own money and had it for his or her own use.

Sample Size

The estimated sample size of SEM was calculated by ad hoc rules of thumb requiring 10 times per indicator in setting a lower bound for an adequacy of a sample size (Nunnally, 1967; Hair et al., 1998). In this regard, the estimated sample size was at the minimum 540 observations (20 times x 27 indicators). This research was collected 1,256 observations.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Data Analysis

Table 1 Characteristics of Sample' Profiles

	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
Gender			Income		
Male	618	49.2	equal or Below	244	19.4
Female	638	50.8	than 25,000 Bath		
Age			25,001–50,000 Bath	302	24.0
18 – 29	438	34.9	50,001–75,000 Bath	258	20.5
30 – 46	477	38.0	75,001–100,000 Bath	238	18.9
47 – 55	341	27.1	More than 100,000 Bath	214	17.0

Frequency Percentage			Frequency Percentage		
Occupation			Education		
Government Officer	135	10.7	High School Below	199	15.8
Company Officer	271	21.6	Bachelor Degree	763	60.7
Government Executive	166	13.2	Master Degree	265	21.1
Corporate Executive	257	20.5	Doctor Degree	29	2.3
Business Owner	252	20.1	Generation		
Independent Worker	175	14.0	Baby Boomer	438	34.9
			Generation X	477	38.0
			Generation Y	341	27.1

n = 1,256

Table 2 Average Mean of Items of CBBE dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach Alpha
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty (ABL)	6.28	2.18	-0.80	-0.49	0.95
Brand Awareness (BAW)	6.74	1.76	-0.84	-0.19	0.83
Brand Association (BAS)	6.66	1.66	-0.88	-0.02	0.91
Perceived Quality (PQU)	7.65	1.00	-1.39	2.41	0.86
Brand Preference (BPE)	5.67	2.40	-0.59	-0.92	0.97
Purchase Intention (PIN)	5.76	2.18	-0.56	-0.80	0.94

n = 1,256

Model Testing

The hypothesized model was tested by structural equation modeling (SEM). Maximum Likelihood estimation was used to estimate the model fit. The multi-group overall model moderate fit indices comprising

chi-square (CMIN)/degrees of freedom (<5), goodness of fit index (GFI) (close to 0.9) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (<0.5), Hoelter .05 (>200) indicated acceptable model fits, as shown in Table 4. That is, the refined consumer-based brand

equity measurement scale in a multidimensional brand equity measurement model has an acceptable validity to explain a context of consumer's behavior relating to the formation of consumer-based brand equity.

Table 3 Model Fit Summary

CMIN (Default Model)		RMSEA (Default Model)	
CMIN	2,375.78	RMSEA	.040
DF	795		
P	0.000		
CMIN/DF	2.988		
CFI,GFI(Default Model)		HOELTER (Default Model)	
CFI	0.965	HOELTER.05	457
GFI	0.877		

Table 4 Effects of CBBE Dimensions within the Structural Model between Generations

CBBE Measurement Construct	Dimensions	Standardized Coefficient Weight			
		Latent Variables	Baby boomer (rank)	Generation X (rank)	Generation Y (rank)
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty (ABL)	<--- CBBE		0.987***(1)	0.979***(1)	0.988***(1)
Brand Awareness (BAW)	<--- CBBE		0.952***(3)	0.957***(3)	0.971***(2)
Brand Association (BAS)	<--- CBBE		0.958***(2)	0.973***(2)	0.969***(3)
Perceived Quality (PQU)	<--- CBBE		0.886***(4)	0.885***(4)	0.901***(4)
Brand Preference (BPE)	<--- CBBE		0.850***	0.831***	0.873***
Purchase Intention (PIN)	<--- CBBE		0.453***	0.433***	0.410***
Purchase Intention (PIN)	<--- BPE		0.525***	0.543***	0.584***

P value at sig. <.01 = ***, <.05 = **

As this study explored some of the consequential attributes which may have on brand equity such as behavioral loyalty defined as brand preference and purchase intention. This reflected the power of measurement effects of brand equity in the brand equity measurement model, developed from conceptualization of cognitive psychology view comparing between generations.

The relations of CBBE with brand preference and purchase intention was in line with an approach to assess the added value of brand (Farquhar, 1990; Keller, 1993), following the notion that brand loyalty was consisted of two comprising purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996; Chaudhuri & Holdbrook, 2001). In this study, brand preference and purchase intention were used as latent variables, considered as measurement effects of a CBBE measurement model of strong brand equity.

It was found in this study that CBBE measurement effects, as an exogenous variable had positive causal relationships with Brand Preference directly. (P value at sig. <0.01) and Purchase Intention directly (P value at sig. <0.01). As Brand Preference was defined as consumers' actual loyalty to the brand as reflected in purchase choices, (Oliver, 1999). Meanwhile, Purchase Intention

was defined as consumers' actual loyalty to the brand as reflected in purchase intention. Purchase intention referred to intention to buy the same brand over the future period of time by not switching to other brands, even encountered with different purchase situations (Swait et al., 1993; Park & Srinivasan, 1994). From the result of the study, CBBE has effects on Brand Preference strongly rather than on Purchase Intention. However, there are certain effects of CBBE through Brand Preference to Purchase Intention. As such, it can be said that measurement effects of CBBE have more influenced on Brand Preference which leads to Purchase Intention than have influenced directly to Purchase Intention.

Qualitative Survey

In order to refine the results from the hypotheses testing, the qualitative survey was conducted by making in-depth interviews with four experts who are mobile phone/telecommunication expert, brand and marketing specialist, consumer behavior specialist, information economics specialist. Their opinions relating to dimensions of cognitive psychology view are as follows:

"As cognitive psychology view is rooted from the mental processes including how people think and feel, it is close to the nature of consumers for forming perception, memory, and the creation of emotions. Especially, when purchasing a product of

high brand equity value, consumers are already aware of the brand and have positive attachment before making a purchase decision so consumers tend to use their emotions in their making decision process and in retrieving knowledge and information accrued from their past interactions with friends and those in their surroundings. Brand Awareness and Attitudinal Brand Loyalty are dominant factors in creating the brand equity” by Consumer Behavior Specialist

“Attitudinal Brand Loyalty is definite for creating brand equity. For example, if we have admired some brands, we will support this brand not only for this product but for other product extensions under this brand” by Brand and Marketing Specialist

“Brand Awareness is very important to creation of brand equity because it is the foundation for consumers to attach the meaning with it. For example, Apple has made itself to be a worldwide recognized brand. Their past and present marketing success has paid off as we can see people queuing up to own their mobile phone in advance of others” by Brand and Marketing Specialist

“Brand Association is an extended value of the brand. It is necessary because it helps consumers recall the benefits of the product under the particular brand name. Each brand needs to convey some distinctive

meanings to create their value linked to their brands” by Mobile phone/telecommunication expert

In conclusion of the experts’ opinions in the qualitative survey, relating to the conceptualization of cognitive psychology view, Attitudinal Brand Loyalty (ABL), Brand Awareness (BAW), Brand Association (BAS) and Perceived Quality (PQU) have laid the strong foundation for creation of brand equity. The phenomenon was expected especially for a high brand equity value because of its successful past and present marketing mix elements and consumers’ awareness and positive attachments to the brand.

Discussion

The study indicated a composition of remarkable model which can be postulated as characterizing brand equity in a changing globalization environment such as generations which consumer behavior is difficult to predict. That is, all four-dimensions derived from the conceptualization of cognitive psychology view comprising Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Perceived Quality, Attitudinal Brand Loyalty were held strong in consumers’ minds showing clear evidences of affecting the CBBE model, indicating its factor loadings at the significant level ($p < .01$).

As a result, for academic contribution and managerial implication, the recommendations are proposed for

academicians and managers in three perspectives:

1. No Difference of CBBE between Generation in Thailand

The mobile phone in Thailand will close into saturate stage meanwhile every brands try to motivate consumer in term of integrated marketing communication to provide win-win strategy. This research found that baby boomer, generation X and generation Y are not difference in CBBE model; however, perceived quality of generation Y usually easily to switch brand depends on quality of product. Furthermore, Thai consumers buy mobile phone cause of brand loyalty, brand association, brand awareness rather than perceived quality. The companies should encounter in any events to established brand awareness and brand associate such as customer relationship management or silver bullet marketing.

2. Trend of Consumers' Behavior toward Twenty First Century

The growing trend of technology development has empowered consumers to access information through multiple resources more conveniently and rapidly (Brown, Pope & Voges, 2001). Taking into consideration the significance of communication indicated the cognitive psychology view, it is necessary for managers to consider the quality of information to serve both imagery and rationality perhaps

to avoid asymmetric information. For imagery, it is referred to association-based memory in consumers' minds and for rationality, it is to send a credible signal, to reduce consumers' uncertainties, including clear messages and the firms' commitment to invest resources to assure the promises will be delivered. With effective communication strategy, it will help managers create and maintain strong brand equity effectively. As such, it will help consumers connect the benefits of the brand even without ever touching it (Baek, et al., 2010).

3. The Need of Human Spirit Perspective toward Marketing 3.0 Era

According to Philip Kotler's statement in Asia Marketing Federation – AMF (2010), he made a remark that toward the twenty first century, in the years to come, Asia will be seen with a dramatic growth in term of market expansion and technology development. Governed by the dynamic environment, Marketing 3.0 is the paradigm for the new marketing concept which has been changed from legacy marketing in the proposition of functional value (Marketing 1.0), emotional value (Marketing 2.0) to trust-based marketing concept which aims at human spirit. In this sense, brands need to connect with consumers' heart and soul by demonstrating their credibility and commitment to help consumers reduce

uncertainties in their minds and realize the benefits of the products from the firms.

Limitations

As there are some factors which may be considered limitations of these findings. Dimensions used in this study were based only on the concepts of cognitive psychology view and potential consequences of consumer-based brand equity were brand preference and purchase intention. This possibility for other dimensions of CBBE and other consequences may therefore be an appropriate subject for more research in the future.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study was conducted with brand stimuli and consumer product stimuli with mobile phone brands in Thailand only. This possibility may therefore be an appropriate subject with other brands and product categories. Moreover, this finding will serve as the baseline for future researches, to explore more roles of brands as influenced by a credible signal and also about consumer behaviors in other developing countries of ASEAN where they are cross-culturally linked with Thailand to expand the scope of knowledge about consumer behaviors of developing countries through the transitional

period, in responses to the global economy and the accelerated trend of technology development.

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