

Brand Attachment: From profit to non-profit sector

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Cite as:

Trelohan Magali (2019), Brand Attachment: From profit to non-profit sector.
Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy, 48th, (8783)

Paper presented at the 48th Annual EMAC Conference, Hamburg, May 24-27, 2019.



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Abstract : Brand attachment shows significant effects on the adoption of behaviours in the profit domain. Surprisingly, however, this concept has not been tested in the non-profit context. Concepts such as brand image or brand personality have already been the subject of studies, but attachment to nonprofit brand remains a concept to be explored. This study proposes to fill this gap by testing the determinants and effects of attachment to the nonprofit brand on three pro-environmental behaviours. To this end, a study of 1160 supporters of an environmental NGO was carried out. This study leads to the identification of the formation of the concept of attachment to the nonprofit brand and the measurement of its effects. It also questions the effects of the concepts of nonprofit brand image and value orientations.

Keywords : *brand attachment ; social marketing; pro-environmental behaviours*

Track :Public Sector and Non-Profit Marketing

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People are more and more invited to adopt one behavior or another, especially behavior “for good”. In the fields of health, security or environment, many non-profit organizations try to make them adopt responsible behavior. These persuasive messages compete with each other and one way to be heard is to develop a strong brand strategy. Nevertheless, branding in the non-profit context is a concept which needs to be more analyzed as only few studies had considered it. Specifically, some concepts like brand image or brand personality have been shifted to the non-profit context but others like brand congruity and brand attachment don’t. This study conducted with 1160 supporters of a non-profit association aims at tackle this issue by proposing a model of the influence of several brand concepts (brand image, brand congruity and brand attachment) on the adoption of three PEB (waste collection on the beach, donation to an environmental association and petition signing).

1. Conceptual Background

1.1 Brand concepts: from profit to non-profit Sector

Branding, initially designed for physical goods, has gradually shifted to service markets and then to the non-profit sector (Gordon, Zainuddin, & Magee, 2016; Mort, Weerawardena, & Williamson, 2007). Recent works have therefore focused on the transferability of brand concepts to the non-profit sector. In particular, intangible elements of the brand such as personality or reputation have gained interest in recent decades (Mort et al., 2007). Nevertheless, other concepts such as brand attachment and brand congruity, even though they explain numerous behaviors in favor to the brand, didn’t shift to the non-profit context. So, on the one hand, the brand image has been studied to propose a definition and a conceptualization adapted to the context of associations (Michaelidou, Micevski, & Cadogan, 2015; Michel & Rieunier, 2008, 2012). Thus, non-profit brand image can be defined as the perception that different stakeholders have of an organization. It was highlighted that the brand image of associations explains the intention to commit to the association, the intention to donate money to the association (Sargeant, Ford, & Hudson, 2008; Stebbins & Hartman, 2013; Stride & Lee, 2007; Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005) and the intention to give time to it (Michaelidou et al., 2015; Michel & Rieunier, 2012). Other studies have shown that the concept of brand personality, which is very close to the concept of brand image, could be

also adapted (with some changes) for the non-profit context (Sargeant et al., 2008; Stebbins & Hartman, 2013; Venable et al., 2005)

On the other hand, other main concepts like brand congruity or brand attachment have not been studied in non-profit context even though they have shown interesting effects in profit contexts. Thus, brand attachment has been shown to have a significant impact on the adoption of purchasing behaviors of goods, regardless of cost (Whan Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). In the service sector, brand attachment also positively influences commitment to, trust in, and higher evaluation of an education institution (Dennis et al., 2016), and satisfaction and loyalty to a bank (Levy & Hino, 2016). In turn, the self-brand congruity is defined as a feeling of similar identity (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003) which means a feeling of fit between an organization and a person. It leads people to be appealed by brands which have similar values to them (Donavan et al. 2004; Schneider 1987). Previous research studies have shown that this concept is a part of the explanation of purchasing or not a brand but it depends on the product category. We assume that it could be a predictor of PEB in a non-profit context by mediating the relationship between the values and the brand image on one hand, and the brand attachment on the other hand. We are gong now to identify the values at work to explain PEB.

1.2 Values that Influence Pro-Environmental Behavior (PEB)

Researches based on Schwartz's values (Schwartz, 2006) have highlighted three orientation of values : biospheric, altruistic and egoistic (De Groot & Steg, 2010; Stern, 2000b; Stern, Dietz, & Kalof, 1993). Egoistic values are identified as based on personal benefits and costs when one's have to make a decision. Altruistic values are identified as decision-making based on the consequences of the behavior for others and, biospheric values leads to decision-making based on consequences of the behavior for the environment (Stern, 2000b). Thus, individuals whose values are oriented more towards biospherism will have more environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviours such as the recycling of newspapers, the purchase of products packaged in reusable or recyclable packaging, fuel economy through cycling or walking, while altruistic and egoistic values are not significantly correlated with these behaviours (Schultz, 2001) Biospheric values also influence energy saving behaviour (Ellen Van der Werff, Steg, & Keizer, 2013), the purchase of energy-efficient electrical equipment (Nguyen, Lobo, & Greenland, 2016). Research has shown an effect of altruistic values on pro-environmental behavior (PEB) (Stern, 2000a) but this relationship is weaker and not constant

in the various research studies. Egoistic values are homogeneously not a determinant of PEB, *except if the behavior can lead to strong personal benefits like saving energy (and so on, money)* (Steg, Bolderdijk, Keizer, & Perlaviciute, 2014; Steg, Perlaviciute, van der Werff, & Lurvink, 2012). Nevertheless, these studies don't take into account the source of the message and it could explain the non-congruent results, especially for the altruistic values. So that, the transfer of the concepts of brand (which often are the sources of the messages) from profit context to non-profit context could enhance the understanding of the mechanism of values and PEB.

2. Methodology

Thanks to these elements, we have developed and tested a model on three behavior (waste collection on the beach, donation and petition signature) promoted by a non-profit brand (Surfrider Foundation). The hypothesis were the following:

H1: Brand image influences positively the congruity self/brand. H2a: Biospheric values influences positively the congruity self/brand. H2b: Altruistic values influences positively the congruity self/brand. H3: The congruity self/brand influences positively the brand attachment. H4: The brand attachment influences positively the PEB. H5: Biospheric values influences positively the PEB. H6: Brand image influences positively the PEB

The survey was conducted with supporters of the association to be sure that they know it and that some could have created links with them. The survey was sent through a newsletter to the database of the association and on their Facebook page. Three surveys were constructed with a single difference: the tested PEB. Respondents were asked to commit in just one behavior to give them the feeling that they are really going to commit in it. We obtain 1160 responses. 200 were used to control the validity of the model. Then, for each behavior, 320 responses were obtained.

Before testing the research hypotheses, we evaluated for the three model (with the three different behaviors) the psychometric properties of the measurement scales. So that, we have performed a first-order confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity and goodness of fit parameters confirmed the goodness of the conceptual proposal of the research.

Concerning our dependent variable, we wanted to propose a simulation of the adoption of the promoted behavior rather than measuring a behavioral intention. Thus, at the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether or not to engage in the promoted behavior by

clicking on a “yes” button (“yes, I participate”, “yes, I sign”, “yes, I give”) or on a “no” button. As a result, our dependent variable is categorical and dichotomous. However, the standard maximum likelihood method appears to be inappropriate with this type of variable since they do not respect the Gaussian law (Kline, 2011). In our case, this dependent variable is not included in a set of variables, so the appropriate method is the weighted least squares (WLS), method initially developed by Muthén (1984) and more recently used in management sciences in a similar case (dichotomous dependent variable) (Dos Santos, Patel, & D’Souza, 2011). The weighted least square method has the advantage of weighing the variability of the variables while considering the non-normality of the data involved in the dichotomy. We processed our data on the R software using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012, 2014).

3. Results

The results show that brand image positively influences brand/self congruity and that this perceived congruity itself influences brand attachment, regardless of behaviour. Thus the H1 and H3 hypotheses are confirmed.

In contrast, differences are observed on the influence of the orientation of the values on the brand/self congruity according to the tested behaviors. Thus, for waste collection, the biospheric values positively influences the brand/self congruity between, while the altruistic values does not produce any effects. On the other hand, for the donation, the altruistic values have a positive influence on perceived brand/self congruity, while the biospheric values have no effect. Finally, for the petition signature, the biospheric values positively influences the adoption of the behavior while the altruistic orientation of values negatively influences it. The H2a and H2b hypotheses are therefore only partially confirmed.

Regarding the determinants of the PEB, brand attachment positively influences the adoption of the three PEB, confirming the H4 hypothesis. On the other hand, the H5 and H6 hypotheses are not confirmed: the brand image and the biospheric values do not have any direct effect on the adoption of the PEB.

4. Discussion

Brand image influences the perceived congruity between the individual and the brand. Thus, the more positive the image of the brand is perceived, the closer the individual feels to it. By this result, we validate in a non-profit context and for PEB the link between these two

variables that had previously been demonstrated in profit contexts but with incongruity according to the category of products (Verette,2008).

We also hypothesized that the biospheric and altruistic values influence the congruity of self/brand. The results show differences according to the behaviour promoted. Thus, for waste collection behavior, the biospheric values positively influence the congruity between self and brand, while the altruistic values do not produce any effects. On the other hand, for the donation of money, it is the altruistic values that influence the brand/self congruity. Finally, for petition signing, the biospheric values positively influence the adoption of behavior while the altruistic values negatively influence it. This difference according to the promoted behavior should not exist since the behavior was only proposed at the end of the questionnaire. Thus, when participants answered questions about value and brand/self congruity, they were not aware of the behavior promoted by the brand. As it stands, we can therefore see that the influence of value orientation on self-brand congruity is not stable. An explanation could be that these scales were developed in 2001, and that the perception of environmental problems has certainly changed over the past decade.

Then, we highlight that the more individuals feel a congruity between them and the brand, the more they are attached to it. This result also extends the results previously obtained in the profit context to the non-profit context (Lacoeuilhe, 2000; Malär et al., 2011; Whan Park et al., 2010).

We also made assumptions about the determinants of the adoption of the PEB. According to our hypotheses, brand attachment, brand image and biospheric values would have positive effects on the adoption of the PEB. The results are identical for all three behaviors and show that only brand attachment influence the PEB. This finding is consistent with the literature on brand attachment and, in particular, with research showing that this effect is valid for costly or not costly behaviors (Whan Park et al., 2010). Again, our results allow us to extend to the non-profit domain the results obtained in the profit domain.

On the other hand, the biospheric values do not appear to be a predictor of the adoption of PEB.. The literature had shown that PEB are influenced by the biospheric orientation of values (Schultz, 2001; Steg et al., 2014). However, as evoked previously, the scale may not be relevant anymore.

Finally, the brand image is not a predictor of PEB, which is in contradiction with recent research on the image of the associative brand, which shows effects on the adoption of behaviors promoted by it (Michaelidou et al., 2015; Michel and Rieunier, 2012). However, the previous work focused on humanitarian associations (La Croix Rouge, AFM-Téléthon,

UNICEF, Handicap International and Médecins sans Frontières for Michel and Rieunier (2012) and Barnardo's and BBC Children in Need for Michaelidou et al. (2015)). We can assume that depending on the sector of the association the effects could be different and that the results could be different for environmental associations. Another explanation could be that our respondents have already a relationship with the brand (which was not the case in the previous studies) as they follow them on Facebook or have subscribed to their newsletter. Consequently, we can assume that they are in a heuristically way to treat the persuasive message because they already know the association. In this type of treatment of the information, people based their judgment on cues rather than objective information because they process with a cognitive economy (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). So that, we assume that their behaviors are more led by affective (brand attachment) than cognitive (brand image) judgement.

5. Conclusion: theoretical and managerial implications

These results lead us to advice non profit associations to develop their brand strategy according to their targets. When the campaign is targeted for a large audience and especially people who are not supporters of the association yet, they should highlight a positive brand identity to convince people to adopt PEB. Then, for people who are already aware of the association and who have a good image of them, they should highlight the congruity between them and the brand by using common values. Finally, for the most committed people, communication should be based on the strong links of attachment between them and the brand.

To finish, further research should be conducted to confirm the effects of brand in different non-profit context with different kind of associations. Another huge point to analyse is the measure of values that influence PEB and which should make a feeling of congruity between the self and the brand. An interesting concept could be the concept of environmental self-identity (Schultz, 2001; Steg et al., 2014; E. Van der Werff, Steg, & Keizer, 2014; Ellen Van der Werff et al., 2013).

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