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## **A Study on Apple Smart Phone Self Branding Connection**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Through the rise of the smart phone phenomenon, consumers are ever looking towards the brand that changed the game. Apple has introduced the concept of the smart phone and has created an entire market with huge potential because of the ever increasing benefits of a new phone every year.

When out shopping for a new smartphone, most consumers simply choose the brand with the model that has the attributes that they require. However, the authors of this project have observed a special scenario where something unique occurs – the consumers of Apple’s iPhone have a special loyalty towards the brand, compared to that of other brands.

This research paper seeks to understand the relationship between the consumers of Apple’s iPhone, and what is different to the consumers of other brands. With a research question of, the role of a self-brand connection in relation to the brand and consumer, the authors aim to grasp how the identity of the consumers relates to the identity of the brand and to understand this relationship. This problem will be addressed with a questionnaire made by the authors and certain hypotheses will be used to test if there is any evidence of the assumption that iPhone consumers have a special relationship compared to those of other brands. It was found that most of Apple’s consumers do in fact possess a self-brand connection and that this group is also targetable by other brands if they follow two important determinants. A relatable brand vision, and as few products as possible.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Companies will always face the risk of decreased sales and or not gaining any sales at all. Different things can impact a brand of a company or its product and thus the sales. Therefore, a company must be assertive on how their brand is portrayed to consumers. The brand of a company is most of the time the most valued asset – the brand binds the values that the company send its customers through its message and hence it tells the story of what the company is and how it operates.

Therefore it is important to distinguish between habitual purchasing and brand loyalty - a repeat purchasers choose a brand because they know it, however if the price increases they will more than likely choose a different brand. A brand loyal customer is a customer that chooses a particular brand, even though the price might increase or is higher than that of a competing product - this is because the customer likes it more - how this liking and brand loyalty is built is of particular interest.

An example of this is the use of shampoo. Most shampoo companies do not associate with a certain lifestyle and simply portray most the same thing companies between. Therefore, if some consumers are frequent user of Head & Shoulders shampoo, it is because they know the brand but have no other reason to buy it other than that they like the product. However, if the price of a bottle of the shampoo suddenly increases, it is most likely that the consumer will suddenly choose to try other shampoos and buy this new brand’s product from then on. This is an example of the difference between brand awareness and brand loyalty – within brand awareness customers choose certain brand’s product because they know the quality of the brand – within brand loyalty customers choose the same brand even though competing companies might be superior to the price.

#### ***Importance of self-brand connections for companies:***

Companies spend huge amounts of money in a bid to attract potential customers and make them loyal towards their brand. The reason for such effort is that if the customers are in a positive relationship with the brand, the company experiences not only repeat purchases of its products, but the satisfied customers also help to spread their good experience by positive word of mouth, henceforth WOM (Kwon, 2015). Furthermore, a positive relationship ensures more customers willing to spend more money for a product than may have the same or lower performance than the competition brand (Kwon, 2015).

An example of this is the purchase of Beats by Dre headphones - customers are more likely to buy them because they portray their identity, even though there are superior products at a lower price. As a consequence of establishing positive relationships towards the brand, the number of brand loyal customers

rises. This relationship is caused by making self-brand connections between the brand and the customer's self-identity. The more the brand represents the customer's self-identity, the stronger relationship is being built (Kwon, 2015). The self-brand connection is born when brand associations help to create and define consumer's self-identity (Sicilia, 2015). Establishing a self-brand connection, henceforth named SBC, must therefore be one of the most important goals for the company that seeks to have brand loyal customers. SBC is an indicator of how much the brand is "enrooted" in the customer's self-concept – so it is in every company's interest to evoke SBCs in consumers so they establish positive and strong relationships towards the brand and therefore repeat their purchases and spread positive WOM as a desired consequence. (Kwon, 2015).

In order for a product to invoke a SBC, the product must be something that can be used or shown in an external way. Therefore, for a brand to have a SBC it must be something that can either be shown or told to one's peers to attain the effects of positive WOM. An example of this is the current popularity of mobile phones – the functions of a phone are no longer as significant as before; nowadays, the aesthetics, brand, and the typical lifestyle of a user are of greater importance. In general, almost all brands can establish a SBC, but it has its catch: the company must give the customer a reason to invoke a connection. To transcend this barrier, the brand must be associated with something that the customers can relate to their or their peers' lifestyle. Therefore a product that seemingly might not be able to cause a SBC can indeed establish this connection.

### ***Choosing the Smartphone industry:***

For this specific area of invoking a self-brand connection, many product categories are available – however, few of them have the potential for big sales numbers and are something that almost everyone uses. The authors believe that choosing a product that is used by many, but is also expensive, so the consumers evaluate their choice carefully – is important. The choice of product category therefore lies on the Smartphone market. Total year on end sales of smart phones in 2015 were 1.4 billion (IDC, 2016) and most people buy a new phone every few years, so the potential is huge.

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### **NEED FOR THE STUDY:**

Apple Inc. is a pioneer of product hype. With the advent of the Apple Keynote, Steve Jobs has promoted products in an extraordinary manner – by delivering the right amount of information to make the consumers want more. When a new iPhone arrives in stores, people line up in long queues, sometimes days in advance – however, the uniqueness of Apple's iPhone does not lie in the functions of the phone, which are just as good as the competitors.

Apple's iPhone is unique in a sense that the competitors cannot achieve the same level of hype coming from the consumers.

Companies spend a lot of resources on their products, branding strategies and execution trying to outcompete their competitors and get brand loyal customers. Consumers evaluate different brands, products and subconsciously or intentionally construct their self-identities by using or endorsing branded products in their lifestyle. The purpose of this project is to investigate the relationship between the brand and the customer.

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### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

#### **Primary objective:**

To study the role of self-brand connection of apple's iPhone among Smartphone users (for better and worse).

#### **Secondary objective:**

To find the role of self-brand connection in the relationship between the brand and the consumer.

To find the brand loyalty among Smartphone users

To analyze the role and affects of a self-brand connection between a consumer and a particular brand – with Apple's iPhone as the main brand of which others were measured.

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### **SCOPE OF STUDY:**

The purpose of this research paper was to analyze the role and affects of a self-brand connection between a consumer and a particular brand – with Apple's iPhone as the main brand of which others were measured. Furthermore it was sought to understand what influences the self-congruity between the consumer and a brand – who a typical consumer with an SBC is and why it is important to seek these SBC's • Throughout this report it has been evident that the most of the consumers that acquire an iPhone will most like keep the same brand, for when they need a new phone, as opposed to most other brands. It was found that this is because of the unique brand personality of Apple and their compelling quest of being the best. They are unique because they have very few products and those that they have are made with the best materials and quality – whereas other brands also have mid and low-tier phones

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## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The purpose of this project is to investigate the relationship between the brand and the customer.

The customers are unique in the sense that they have something not everyone can afford that is different in looks and function.

To evaluate different brands, products and subconsciously or intentionally construct their self-identities by using or endorsing branded products in their lifestyle.

Apple is committed to bringing the best personal computing experience to students, educators, creative professionals and consumers around the world through its innovative hardware, software and internet offerings

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

There are various statistical tools which are used in analyzing data. The following tools are used for representing and analyzing data.

Descriptive research is used in this study in order to identify the lending practices of bank

and determining customer's level of satisfaction. The method used was questionnaire.

### Data Representation

- Table
- Percentage
- Charts

### Sampling Unit:

The Study population includes the of customers of GST and Sampling Unit for Study was entrepreneurs.

**Sampling Size:** 77 Respondents.

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## COLLECTION OF DATA

### Primary data:

Here, the data are collected by me through the Questionnaire.

### Secondary data:

- Books
- Articles and research paper
- Internet

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## LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

- It is important to mention all of these factors that could be a limitation of this research and therefore endanger the reliability of the results.
- When conducting the primary research, there are limitations in relation to the geographical scope. The survey did not affect all consumers, it was mostly oriented to knowledge of the environment and difficulty to spread the questionnaire to more distant countries in a short period of time. Therefore, the respondents do not represent the entire population.
- Time is the next limitation; the project had a limited scope of time to be worked on.
- The limitation lies also in the type of survey; the questionnaire is just one way how to come to results, there are also other types of research that could be used, such as qualitative one .
- There lies another limitation; the particular tests chosen to study certain phenomenon may not reveal the same results as a different test could.
- Another limitation is contained in the used case study. Choosing a particular product such as Apple's iPhone as a benchmark for the further analysis may not represent the problem as a whole; it just shows an example of how a certain phenomenon occurs and cannot be simply generalized.

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## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- Loureiro, Ruediger & Demetris,( 2012). Brand love is the product of many factors, where one of them is brand attachment – furthermore brand love is greater for brands that are self-expressive and thus help the consumer define their self-identity.
- Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel (2013). Brand loyalty is a phenomenon that many companies seek in order to keep customers as repeat purchasers. However, the term is widely defined and has many researching what the term is and what effects manage the loyalty.
- Rauschnabel and Ahuvia, (2014). Brand love is a referral towards a consumers love for brands and a branded product. However, when established, brand love is a powerful indicator of the presence of brand loyalty, word-of-mouth and resistance towards negative brand influence .If a brand image is positive and it reflects the current and ideal self of the consumer, a bond can arise, much like a love affair.
- Wong, 1996, as cited in Pinson and Brodahl, (2014). There are certain factors that can limit the sales of a product that the company cannot control - be it natural disasters, price increase of raw ingredients or something else - however the goal is always to sell products. This is not always possible if the price increases, because even though a consumer is aware of it and is a repeat purchaser of a certain brand - he/she might not prefer it if the price increases.
- Yao, Chen and Xu (2015) suggest about brand attachment that when a consumer is attached to a brand, the connection becomes one, where the self and the brand become one with cognitive links defined. They talk of this connection as an emotional self-brand connection and as a strong indicator purchase intention, brand loyalty and purchase share. They argue that brand personality is a determining factor in establishing brand attachment, where one's image and / personality matches that of the brand. The more the two matches up, the stronger the potential bond is.
- (Schultz and Block, 2015). Argue that sustainable brand growth is the product of brand loyalty and is a result of loyal customers who show other people why, they enjoy the brand that they own

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## FINDINGS:

- Based on the responses collected the following are made:
- PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS:
- The majority 89.6% of the respondents belong to 19 - 26 category.
- The majority 61% of the respondents are male.
- The majority 96.1% of the respondents belong to unmarried.
- The majority 87% of the respondents are students.
- The majority 88.3% of the respondents belong to undergraduate.
- The majority 77.9% of the respondents are below RS 30,000 income category.
- The majority 45.5% of the respondents prefer to the iPhone.
- The majority 53.2% of the respondents consumed Samsung within 3- 5 years.
- The majority 37.70% of the respondents selected for better features.
- The majority 27.3% of the respondents are iPhone as their current brand.
- The majority 42.9% of the respondents say they want to try it out.
- The majority 90.9% of the respondents say yes for comparing the products with others.
- The majority 76.6% of the respondents say yes. For still buying the same product in case lost or stolen.
- The majority 77.9% of the respondents say yes for considering their brand as best.
- The majority 41.6% of the respondents chose option 4 for rating the smartphone.
- The majority 35.1% of the respondents say its neutral for making the product unique.
- The majority 35.1% of the respondents are neutral for apple is a wonderful brand.
- The majority 39.0% of the respondents are neutral for the brand making them happy.

- The majority 39% of the respondents consider neutral for passionate about the brand.
- The majority 32.5% of the respondents both agree and in neutral respectively for identifying of the brand.
- 32.5% of the respondents both agree and in neutral respectively for the brand contributes to their image.
- The majority 35.1% of the respondents agree and being neutral respectively for very attached to the brand.
- The majority 35.1% of the respondents agree to continue the relationship with the brand.
- The majority 35.1% of the respondents are neutral for definitely buying the same brand again.
- The majority 41.6% of the respondents agree for the brand being reliable and trustworthy.
- The majority 84.4% of the respondents say yes for recommending the brand
- The majority 52% of the respondents say maybe for apple service better than others.
- The majority 41.6% of the respondents are neutral for having best user experience.
- The majority 39% of the respondents consider good for treating their customers.

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### **SUGGESTION:**

Based on the responses collected the following suggestions are made:

Compared to some of the android -centric competition out there, the iPhone's mAh (milliamp-hour) rating is somewhat low, and Apple should change that. Despite how economical iOS can be regarding power consumption, this seems like a poor excuse to justify a smaller battery. Just imagine the potential benefits of a power-sipping operating system paired with a ginormous battery; you'd be away from the charger for extended periods and could be more confident in your battery throughout the day. Apple could even take things a step further by making the battery removable such that it can be serviced more efficiently by the end user instead of needing to schedule an appointment with an Apple Authorized Service Provider

The iPhone is no slouch in the camera department, but the front-facing face time camera could do with some improvement. As you might recall, the front-facing camera system in the iPhone XS/XS Max received heaps of criticism shortly after launch for making people look like porcelain dolls in selfies . Apple later resolved the issues by toning the skin-softening down in a software update, but Apple could undoubtedly integrate optional beauty mood feauters into iOS if they wanted to.

The front-facing camera could also be improved with more standard camera features, such as zoom, which appears to be shamelessly absent from the selfie-centric Camera app interface.

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### **CONCLUSION :**

The purpose of this research paper was to analyze the role and affects of a self-brand connection between a consumer and a particular brand – with Apple's iPhone as the main brand of which others were measured. Furthermore it was sought to understand what influences the self-congruity between the consumer and a brand – who a typical consumer with an SBC is and why it is important to seek these SBC's

Throughout this report it has been evident that the most of the consumers that acquire an iPhone will most like keep the same brand, for when they need a new phone, as opposed to most other brands. It was found that this is because of the unique brand personality of Apple and their compelling quest of being the best. They are unique because they have very few products and those that they have are made with the best materials and quality – whereas other brands also have mid and low-tier phones. Having lower tiered phones does not send the same unique message and would even confuse some consumers in believing that a cheap phone is equivalent of the iPhone, which isn't the case.

The necessity of acquiring SBC's is because of the loyalty and stable sales over longer periods – without having consumers shopping around for the best current product – brands can make the best of their ability for the specific customers with an SBC.

Other brands have the possibility of acquiring the same group of consumers that were seen as the most susceptible towards establishing an SBC with the two important antecedents of an SBC.

The group, which was found as the most susceptible, were the consumers below 26 years of age with no other defining factor – and is therefore also a defining factor when deciding on a relatable vision for a brand.

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