

The Church of Mac: Exploratory examination on the loyalty of Apple customers

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ABSTRACT

The death of Apple's CEO Steve Jobs left many in the business world wondering if Apple would also face a decline in health. However, the subsequent release and over-whelming demand of the new iPhone and iPad showed the world how much this product brand is loved by consumers. Yet what exactly makes Apple consumers loyal to Apple products with an array of similar, yet less expensive, products on the market? Understanding what makes Apple users loyal is important to all companies striving to replicate the kind of brand loyalty that Apple generates. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the antecedents of Apple's brand loyalty including brand identification, brand personality congruence, and reputation using the theory base of social identity (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2010).

Data were collected using an online survey composed of questions regarding brand identification, brand personality, reputation, brand loyalty, and demographics. Respondents were strongly favorable to Apple's attractiveness, favorability, and distinctiveness. Results support the hypothesis that brand identity has a positive significant effect on reputation. It was also supported that brand identity is positively related to brand personality congruence, but there does not appear to be congruence between brand personality and an individual's persona. Results show Apple brand identity and brand personality congruence is positively related to Apple brand loyalty and although respondents expressed price sensitivity to technology a strong majority indicated they would buy additional products from Apple.

Keywords: Apple, brand personality, brand loyalty

INTRODUCTION

“I get asked a lot why Apple's customers are so loyal.
It's not because they belong to the Church of Mac!
That's ridiculous.”--Steve Jobs

The death of Apple's CEO Steve Jobs left many in the business world wondering if Apple would also face a decline in health. However, the subsequent release and an overwhelming demand of the new iPhone and iPad showed the world how much this product brand is loved by consumers. Yet what exactly makes Apple consumers loyal to Apple products with an array of similar products on the market? Is loyalty generated by Apple users having a high regard of the Apple company or just loyalty to one or more particular Apple products? Perhaps loyalty to Apple products is generated by a consumer's own social identity and who see an Apple product as an extension of who they are as a person. Understanding the answers to these questions is important to all companies striving to replicate the kind of brand loyalty that Apple generates.

Yet, to date, there have been no academic studies examining the loyalty of the Apple company. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide an exploratory investigation into the antecedents of Apple's brand loyalty including brand identification, brand personality congruence, and reputation using the theory base of social identity (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2010).

Brands and Brand Loyalty

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or groups of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (Argenti & Drunkenmiller, 2004 p. 368). A strong brand communicates to its customers that it is able to meet the customer's needs and will continue to be accepted by consumers during states of high competition (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008; Nandan, 2005).

Marketing literature has long recognized the importance of brand loyalty, yet what comprises loyalty is still debated (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Oliver (1999) defined brand loyalty as “A deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (p.34). For the purpose of this research, brand loyalty is defined as the integration of attitude, emotions, and behavior to continually purchase a brand based on a previous experience because the brand offers the correct image, price, quality, and attributes (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011; Oliver, 1999; Olson & Peter, 2010). It must be pointed out that brand loyalty is not to be confused with repeat purchasing or habitual buying behavior. Habitual buying behavior occurs when the consumer has no emotional attachment to the brand and buys the brand out of familiarity instead of brand conviction, but that this buying pattern can be broken if the availability of products has decreased or the price increases (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong, 1996). On the other hand, brand loyal consumers have a conviction and an emotional attachment regarding the brand characterized by affection, passion, and connection (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011; Knox & Walker, 2001; Nandan, 2004; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005).

Traditionally focusing on the functional attributes of a product, firms have recently started to examine the emotional attributes that users obtain from using its products. These emotional attributes can be defined as the consumer's behavioral response and internal response (feelings, sensations, cognitions) that they take away after encountering (directly or indirectly) the brand's design, packaging, identity, environment, and communication efforts (Brakus, Berndt, Schmitt, Zarantello, 2009; Klaus & Maklan, 2007) that may contribute to a consumer's overall brand experience. Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) found that a consumer's emotional attachment to the brand, the purchasing behavior, and the consumer's normative influences are three factors on which brand loyalty is dependent. Normative influences pertain to social influences others have on an individual. Depending on the level of influence a group has on an individual, the individual may consume products that will show others that they belong to a certain group or that a member of the group recommends. Research has shown that when consumers identify with a product or company, they will have more of a tendency for repeat purchases and emotions will be formed resulting in brand loyalty (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity has been studied largely in the psychological and sociological disciplines, with little research in the marketing discipline using this theory base. Social identity is when an individual identifies with a certain group or when the individual wants others to perceive him/herself as a part of the group. According to the social identification theory, belonging to a group can fulfill the need for social identity and self-definition or self-esteem (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010).

Social identity literature suggests three consequences are relevant to organizations. First, individuals tend to choose activities congruent with the most significant aspects of who they are, such as participating in alumni activities of their alma mater. Secondly, social identification affects the outcome that is usually connected with how groups form such as the same beliefs, age, gender, etc. An individual measures their belonging to a group based on measures such as goals and values, feeling of belonging, positive organizational membership, security, organizational support, to name a few (van Reil & Balmer, 1997). Lastly, social identification strengthens group practices, prestige, values, salience, etc (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) found that social identification was different from internalization. Social identification refers to oneself in terms of social categories such as "I am," whereas internalization refers to one's emotions, attitudes, and values such as "I believe." In other words, it allows individuals to define him or her in the social environment.

Recent research has found that social identity can be a helpful tool in understanding a firm's consumers as they may view goods as an extension of themselves (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Halliday and Kuenzel, 2008, 2010). Individuals often group themselves together socially when common interests are shared such as demographics, religion, employment, and psychological attributes. Individuals will then define themselves by their connections to these reference groups (Ahearne, Hu, Lam, & Schillewart, 2010). These groups will often form into communities that congregate around brands that communicate who they are collectively (Carlson & Donovan, 2008).

Characteristics that are expressed through a brand may be purchased to express the customer's actual or desired image and personality, to enhance their self-image, or to elevate social status (Carlson & Donovan, 2008; Han et al 2001). The prominent consumer behavior

researcher, Russell Belk, wrote the following regarding brands, “That we are what we have is perhaps the most basic and powerful fact of consumer behavior” (p. 139). In other words, brands are a way for individuals to express self-image. Consumers may also buy certain brands because the groups to whom they wish to belong also purchase that brand (Carlson & Donovan, 2008), which in turn, can be used to predict consumer purchasing (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2008).

Brand Identity

As competition has become increasingly intense, it is more important than ever for a firm to differentiate itself from other firms and to effectively communicate these differences to the public (Nandan, 2005). Consumers will then subjectively interpret the brand, thus forming brand identity (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004; Rajagopal, 2010; Nandan, 2005).

Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005) assert that customers identifying with a brand are more likely to be supportive and make recommendations about the brand through word-of-mouth communication. Han et al (2001) found brand identification through positive word-of-mouth communication has a positive effect on brand loyalty. They also found that the greater the attractiveness of the brand personality, the more consumers will identify with it. The attractiveness of a brand also has been shown to have a direct effect on brand loyalty.

A brand's identity can be better understood in terms of a brand concept. A brand concept is what the brand can do to satisfy the needs of the consumer. This concept is based on what the consumer needs and is divided into three categories: functional, symbolic, and experiential. The functional category is based on the consumer's utilitarian need. For example, if someone wants to clean their clothes but has no laundry detergent, then a functional need exists to purchase laundry detergent. A symbolic consumer need is when a brand will communicate a meaning for the consumer and to others. For example, a Rolex watch may signify to the consumer that he has a higher income and can afford to buy this very expensive watch, and may signify to others that the person who wears a Rolex is very wealthy. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Apple's brand identification has a positive significant effect on Apple's reputation.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Apple's brand identification has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand personality congruence.

Hypothesis 2c (H2c): Apple's brand identification has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand loyalty.

Brand Personality

Although personality is usually associated with humans, personality can also be associated with brands and can be used by companies to establish a good relationship with their consumers (Aaker & Biel, 1993). Brand personality can be said to be how an individual reacts to a product or label, somewhat consistently, and in a variety of environmental situations and can be tangible or intangible characteristics that are linked to the brand in the mind of the consumer, thus forming the brand's personality (Nandan, 2004; Plummer, 2000). Brand personality is mostly symbolic and is one of the principal drivers of brand identity, which was found to have a significant positive influence on brand loyalty (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Lin, 2010; Plummer,

2000). A clear brand personality can have value as it can reduce a consumer's information search, and help consumers distinguish it from competing brands (de Chernatony, 1999; Jung, Kim, & Sung, 2010). In short, a brand personality may make a brand stand alone (McEnally & de Chernatony, 1999).

When companies understand brand personality and image, they have the tools to successfully differentiate their brand (Jung et al 2010). Brand personality can be seen as the driving force in forming a positive attitude and preference for a brand (Biel, 1993). Sung and Yang (2010) say that brand personality ultimately affiliates with the brand by product attributes, brand name, category associations, advertisements, price, symbol or logo, and distribution channel. The brand personality or the characterization of the brand is mainly what the firm communicates to the public. Apple's "Think Different" campaign communicated to the public that when you buy an Apple product you are not conforming to others, you are being different (Plummer, 2000).

Lin (2010) noted that a brand personality can help product designers and marketers develop plans according to the product's features. Marketers should be able to take their target customers' personality and match it with their brand's personality (Plummer, 2000). Consumers buy brands that are in keeping with their own personality (Rajagopal, 2010). Aaker (1996) says that a brand with a distinct personality can be used by the consumer to express himself. Research has shown brand personality to be extremely relevant when explaining the relationship between a brand's personality and self-congruence. Research has shown that consumers consume products and brands to express their self-worth (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982; Ericksen, 2008; Solomon, 1983). When a brand's personality and a consumer's personality match, it is more likely that the consumer will have a favorable attitude toward the brand (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010), and has been shown to influence purchase intention (Han et al 2001). In regards to this study, self-congruence is when the consumer feels that a product is keeping with their self-perception (Eriksen, 1996). This process is explained by self-congruence theory (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010), whereas a brand's personality offers the functions of both self-symbolism and self-expression (Keller, 1993).

By using Aaker's (1997) five brand personality dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, Jung et al (2010) found significance on brand affect and brand trust resulting in brand loyalty. Lin (2010) says that brand preference is significantly influenced by personality traits. Research has shown that consumers consume products and brands to express their self-worth (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer; Ericksen, 2008; Solomon, 1983). When a brand's personality and a consumer's personality match, it is more likely that the consumer will have a favorable attitude toward the brand (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010), and has been shown to influence purchase intention (Han et al 2001). According to Levy (1981), products that are consumed will tell others something about the person who is consuming them. As such, consumers will buy products that are congruent with how the consumer perceives himself or how the consumer wants others to perceive him (Dichter, 1985; Ericksen, 2008; Levy, 1981).

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Apple's brand personality congruence has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand loyalty.

Reputation

Reputation and image are often used interchangeably without making clear the relationship between two distinct constructs (Chun, 2005). Davies, Chun, da Silva, & Roper (2004) differentiated between brand reputation and image by concluding that image is an opinion that is independent of an actual experience whereas reputation is dependent upon experience with the product or firm. Although having a strong brand reputation is not a tangible attribute of a brand, it can still communicate intrinsic values about the consumer without that consumer being specifically knowledgeable about the product in question. A strong brand reputation can make a brand more alluring, desirable, profitable, and can predict brand loyalty, as well as serve as the key determinant when choosing between similar brands (Ahearne et al 2010; de Chernatony, 1999; Ettenson & Knowles, 2008; Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Nandan, 2004).

Oliver (1999) found that a good reputation can strengthen buying behavior by rewarding consumers' choices and making the brand seem more desirable and alluring (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004). Bergami and Bogozzi (2000) found that when people align themselves with a well-regarded brand, a positive identification can come of it and therefore, consumers will experience enhanced self-esteem (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010). A good brand or reputation stimulates purchase by simplifying decision procedures for customers (Chun, 2005). Jacoby, Szybillo, and Busato-Schach (1971) found that when consumers are faced with choosing between several products, the brand is the most helpful piece of information when making a decision. Reputation was found to positively correlate with satisfaction and loyalty (Andreassen, 1994). Just as a good reputation can enhance a brand, a damaged reputation can result in damage to a brand on many fronts. A damaged reputation can impact management strength, innovativeness, stock prices, hurt employee and consumer loyalty, potentially harm the firm's financial stability and its viability, and/or cause a product boycott.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4a (H4a): Apple's reputation has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand personality congruence.

Hypothesis 4 (H4b): Apple's reputation has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand loyalty.

METHODS

Instrument Development

An instrument was developed to be distributed using an online survey. The survey was composed of five parts covering the areas of brand identification, brand personality, reputation, and brand loyalty (see Table 1), plus a demographic section. A question regarding Apple product ownership was also asked in order to screen Apple owners from non-owners.

The survey was composed of survey items measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. Brand identity questions were adapted from Apple's mission statement to understand respondents' perception towards the Apple brand (see Table 1). These questions were evaluated by consumer behavior experts to determine content validity, and subsequently Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability (71%) of these items.

Brand personality questions are adapted from Kim, Han, & Park, 2010) and Halliday and Kuenzel (2010) study investigating the effects of brand personality on brand loyalty

Sample

For the purpose of this study, a convenience sample of college-aged undergraduate and graduate students was deemed to be most appropriate because students are considered to be technologically savvy and Apple products are heavily marketed to institutions of higher education and their students (www.marketingapple.com). The students were contacted by using a department list serve for students enrolled in a large retail program in the southeastern United States. In order to answer specific questions in the survey, the respondent would have had to own or previously own an Apple product. Therefore, respondents who had not previously and/or did not currently own an Apple product, were eliminated from further analysis.

Results and Discussion

A total of 169 respondents enrolled in either undergraduate and graduate programs in the Dept. of Retail at a large southeastern university. Of those, 148 responded that they either currently or had previously owned an Apple product, a qualifying response to be considered valid for answering the survey. Therefore, analysis involved only answers from those 148 respondents.

As expected, the majority (87%) of the sample was composed of undergraduate female (86%) students between 18-23 years old as indicated in Table 1. Of those, approximately 78% of the sample were of Caucasian ethnicity, with 13% identifying themselves as African-American, 4% Asian-Pacific Islander, with another 4% identifying themselves as being of “other” ethnic background. As can be seen in Table 1, the mean responses of the four constructs measured—Apple Brand Identity, Brand Reputation, Reputation, and Loyalty were fairly strong across the board for all survey items.

Brand Identity

The survey had three items that measured brand identity. Over half of the respondent identified Apple as being dedicated to education (63% agreed or strongly agreed), the most innovative technology brand (87% agreed or strongly agreed), and the best brand for creative expression (77% agreed or strongly agreed)(see Table 1). All three questions elicited means that were close to or over 4.0 or in agreement with each statement.

Brand Personality

The survey had eight items that were designed to understand how the respondents perceive Apple’s brand personality. The questions that examine respondent’s attitudes about the Apple brand being attractive, favorable, and distinctive were strongly positive with means that ranged between 4.19 and 4.38 (sd =0.69-0.8)(see Table 1). Ninety percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the Apple brand is attractive, and 84% agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement that “I find the Apple brand favorable. Another 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Apple brand is distinctive. The strength of these responses suggest that Apple has done a good job of promoting these characteristics to their target market.

However, questions that link the Apple brand personality to the respondent's personality are not as positive. When asked for their level of agreement to the statements "I am interested in what others think about the Apple brand" and "When someone praises the Apple brand, it feels like a personal compliment" the means of both statements indicated that respondents were neutral. Responses were also largely neutral to the question about whether the Apple brand helps express themselves, reflects their personality, or enhances them. It may be possible that respondents are giving answers that they think they should express, rather than answering how they really feel, nonetheless the answers to these questions suggest that there does not appear to be congruence between brand personality and an individual's persona. This is important to note as one purpose of the present study was to examine components of brand loyalty using the theory base of social identity (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2010).

Reputation

Three items measured Apple's reputation (see Table 1). Nearly 78% of the respondents agree or strongly agree believe that it is important for them to buy a brand with a good reputation. Perhaps what was striking in the answers given by respondents was that there was not a single respondent who strongly disagreed that Apple has a good reputation, and only four respondents disagreed. Approximately 93% agreed or strongly agreed that Apple possesses a good reputation, and this question had a fairly strong agreement level with a mean of 4.43 (sd=0.69). Respondents also agreed (41%) or strongly agreed (37%) that the Apple brand has a good reputation, with a 4.04 mean (sd=0.99). The last question involving Apple's reputation was whether respondents know people who think highly of the Apple brand. Once again, this question also received strong positive responses with 49% agreeing and 41% strongly agreeing with this statement, and this had a mean of 4.28 (sd=0.75).

The answers to these questions show that the Apple brand has a strong and positive reputation, a construct that previous literature has found to be important in gaining loyalty (Argenti & Drunkenmiller, 2004).

Brand Loyalty

Seven items measured brand loyalty (see Table 1). Of the 149 surveys used for the brand loyalty construct, almost all of the respondents agree that they would continue to use the Apple brand because they are acquainted, and satisfied, with the brand (46% agreed and 45% strongly agreed, $\mu=3.87$, $sd=1.02$). However, when asked their level of agreement with the statement that "I will use the Apple brand in spite of competitors' deals," the mean was lower than the other loyalty questions, although responses were still relatively strong in their agreement level ($\mu=3.87$, $sd=1.02$). This may be indicative of the current recession and may show that consumers are price sensitive and may keep price as one of their top buying criteria when considering a new technology purchase. In spite of this, respondents answered that they would buy additional products from Apple with 48% agreeing and 45% strongly agreeing with this statement. Ninety-one percent also agreed that they would recommend the brand to their family and friends and 85% prefer the Apple brand to other brands.

Interestingly, there were very few respondents that disagreed or strongly disagreed to these statements. Overall, it can be said that it appears that the Apple brand has a strong

reputation, and that strong brand loyalty has been shown to promote repeat purchase patterns (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008).

Hypothesis Results

Hypotheses were tested using regression analysis with results outlined in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1: Apple's brand identity has a positive significant effect on reputation.

Result: H1 is supported.

Several hypotheses investigated the impact of brand identity. Hypothesis 1 that brand identity has a positive significant effect on reputation was supported. These results agree with Ahearne, Battacharya, and Gruen (2005) who found consumers are more likely to identify with a company that has a good reputation. Fawcett (1993) suggests using integrated marketing communications (IMC) to establish congruence between identity and image. IMC is responsible for coordinating promotions, and providing a uniform message through media outlets. Fawcett asserts that messages should remain consistent with the brand because that is what will maintain brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 2a: Apple's brand identity has a significant positive effect on Apple's brand personality congruence.

Result: Hypothesis 2a is supported.

Hypothesis 2b: Apple's brand identity has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand loyalty.

Result: Hypothesis 2b is supported.

Hypothesis 2a asserted that brand identity is positively related to brand personality congruence with results that were supported. These findings are also consistent with the Halliday & Kuenzel (2010) study. Hypothesis 2b investigating whether brand identity is positively related to brand loyalty was also supported. Halliday & Kuenzel (2010) also found that brand identification has a positive on brand loyalty. This is also consistent with the findings of Algesheimer et al (2005) who found that consumers are more loyal when they feel that they are a part of a group. According to Halliday and Kuenzel (2008) owning certain brands confirms a consumer's sense of identity. Hooenburg, Wieske, and Hoyer (2009) found that companies who have strong brand identities have customers who are willing to pay more such as the case with Apple. The Apple brand has higher price points than other brands with the same products such as Dell. Currently, the price difference between a standard MacBook and a standard Dell computer is \$1400, and the iPad is approximately \$500 more than an Amazon Kindle. Depending on the type of Apple product purchased, it is apparent that respondents would rather spend a substantial amount more on an Apple product than switch to a less expensive brand.

Communications play an important role in creating and maintaining brand identity and brand personality (Fawcett, 1993). Therefore, firms must have an effective communication strategy to tell their consumers what the brand stands for. Brand identity affects the building of a relationship between the brand and the consumer. When the brand personality seems attractive in the eyes of the consumer then brand identity is formed. Brand identification that is developed and maintained through brand personality will help consumers consider the brand as a companion. In addition to having strong communications other efforts such as strong community

involvement, sales promotions, social contributions, and public relations can help establish a strong brand personality. However, all efforts must remain consistent so the consumer will not become confused. Brand personality is not easily created, but once it is apparent to the consumer, it appears the effects are great (Kim, et al., 2010).

Hypothesis 3: Apple's brand personality congruence has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand loyalty.

Result: Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 investigated whether brand personality congruence has a positive significant effect on brand loyalty, which was supported. Because many brands, especially technology brands, have similar features, it may become more important to concentrate on emotional issues to clearly differentiate the company from others. This is where the investment in brand personality may make a difference. Self-congruence theory suggests that consumers prefer brands with meaning, thus driving brand loyalty through brand personality congruence (Halliday & Kuenzel, 2010). Sirgy, Grewal, and Mangleburg (2000) also found that consumers who experience a higher level of self-congruity to a brand are more likely to process the utilitarian attributes of a product more favorably.

Hypothesis 4a: Apple's reputation has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand personality congruence.

Result: Hypothesis 4a is supported.

Hypothesis 4b: Apple's reputation has a positive significant effect on Apple's brand loyalty.

Result: Hypothesis 4b is supported.

Hypothesis 4a stated that reputation has a positive significant effect on brand personality congruence (H4a) and brand loyalty (H4b). Both hypotheses were supported. . Belk and Tumbat (2005) conducted interviews with extremely loyal Apple users to explore the "the cultic quasi-religious aspects" of these loyal consumers and the Apple brand (p. 205). In regards to brand personality the same interviewees said that they buy Apple products for what the company represents and the emotional value that comes from owning and using Apple products. The interviewees said that Apple's arch-rival Microsoft is about corporate capitalism. They also indicated that Windows' products were seen as inanimate and Apple products were seen as alive.

Halliday and Kuenzel (2010) found in their study that when consumers perceive a brand as reputable, the higher the consumer's level of brand loyalty. The results of this study indicate that consumers who perceive a brand's reputation as good, they will have a higher regard to brand loyalty. A good reputation can mean less dissatisfied customers and more satisfied customers. This could result in more positive word-of-mouth communication, which may be helpful in converting PC users to Mac users.

Conclusion

In the age where brands have similar features, it is important for firms to focus on the consumer's emotions. A consistent brand concept is how consumers will remember what the brand stands for in the midst of their competitors. One of the ways that Apple has achieved this is through their multi-colored Apple logo. Jean-Louis Gassée, president of Apple products in

1999 says, “You couldn’t dream of a more appropriate logo: lust, knowledge, hope, and anarchy” (Linzmayr, 1999, p.6) about the Apple logo. This also goes with their corporate advertising campaign such as the 1984 campaigns “Big Brother,” “Lemmings,” and the most recent campaign, “Think Different.” The “Think Different” campaign tells consumers to be different in what they do and go against the status quo by buying an Apple computer (Belk & Tumbat, 2005).

In an interview by Belk and Tumbat, (2005), John, an Apple consumer, says that Microsoft’s goal is to make money. He also adds that Apple’s goal is to create “neat stuff” and “this neat stuff is seen as both the boom that restored the corporation to solvency and as the font of true beauty and wisdom in a world otherwise dominated by shallow corporate capitalism and hollow temptation meant to deceive and seduce”(p. 212-213). The Apple brand has a loyal following that most companies can only dream of.

This study is not without limitations. First of all, the sample is a convenience sample of college students and is therefore limited, especially given the sample size. Future research should include a larger and more diverse random sample. As this study was designed to specifically investigate attitudes toward the Apple brand and Apple brand consumers, to see if the results are generalizable to other product brands, additional research should focus on a wider variety of product categories and brands. Another limitation is that the model used accounts for a limited number of constructs of brand loyalty. Future research would be enhanced if other determining factors of brand loyalty were incorporated, such as customer satisfaction, brand trust, and brand affect. A limitation and an opportunity for future research is that level of involvement for the Apple brand was not investigated in this study. Future research would greatly benefit for being able to identify the level of involvement when buying this brand.

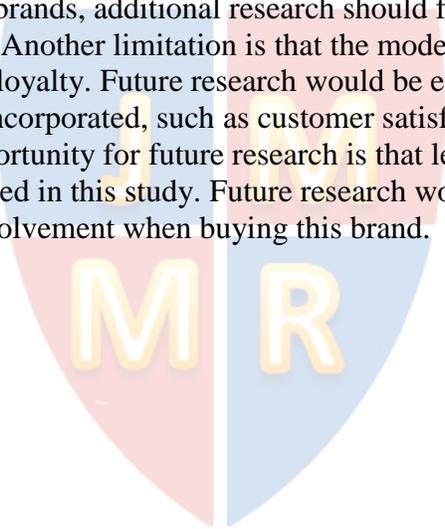


Table 1. Survey Constructs, Items, and Results

Survey Constructs and Items	Level of Agreement						
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA	μ	SD
Apple Brand Identity (from Apple's Mission Statement)							
Apple is dedicated to education.	0%	7%	30%	43%	0%	3.75	0.85
Apple is the most innovative technology brand.	2%	6%	8%	50%	37%	4.17	0.85
Apple is best company for creative expression.	0%	6%	17%	50%	27%	3.99	0.82
Brand Personality (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2010; Kim, Han & Park, 2010)							
I am interested in what others think about the Apple brand.	3%	14%	47%	26%	20%	3.27	0.92
When someone praises the Apple brand, it feels like a personal compliment.	12%	30%	36%	17%	8%	2.87	1.09
I find the Apple brand attractive.	1%	2%	8%	52%	38%	4.24	0.72
I find the Apple brand favorable.	1%	2%	13%	45%	39%	4.19	0.8
I find the Apple brand distinctive.	1%	2%	3%	48%	46%	4.38	0.69
The Apple brand helps me to express myself.	4%	17%	36%	31%	10%	3.26	1.0
The Apple brand reflects my personality.	4%	13%	41%	30%	11%	3.29	0.98
Owning an Apple product enhances my self-image.	6%	15%	28%	40%	11%	3.38	1.05
Reputation (Halliday and Kuenzel, 2010)							
It is important that I buy a brand with a good reputation.	2%	8%	13%	41%	37%	4.04	0.99
The Apple brand has a good reputation.	0%	2%	4%	41%	52%	4.43	0.69
People I know think highly of the Apple brand.	1%	2%	7%	49%	41%	4.28	0.75
Loyalty toward the Apple brand (Kim, Han, and Park, 2010)							
I will continue to use this brand because I am satisfied with the brand.	0%	2%	7%	46%	45%	4.34	0.7 %
I will use the Apple brand in spite of competitors' deals.	0%	0%	9%	46%	44%	3.87	1.02
I would buy additional products from Apple.	0%	0%	7%	48%	45%	4.38	0.61
I recommend the Apple brand to my friends and family.	0%	2%	7%	41%	50%	4.27	0.8
I prefer the Apple brand to other brands.	0%	4%	10%	40%	45%	4.27	0.82

Table 2. Regression Analysis Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>t</i>
Brand Identity--effect on reputation	0.384	0.069	0.421	0.178	5.595
Brand identity--effect on brand personality	0.256	0.025	0.646	.417	10.180
Brand identity-- effect on brand loyalty	.290	.040	.514	.264	7.219
Brand personality--effect on brand loyalty	0.842	0.095	0.591	.350	8.829
Reputation--effect on brand personality	.218	.031	.502	.252	6.981
Reputation--effect on brand loyalty	.335	.043	.541	.293	7.754

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