

The Impact of a Flagship vs. a Brand Store on Brand Attitude, Brand Attachment and Brand Equity

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Abstract

How can flagships and brand stores contribute to building brands? We inquire about the relationships between store image, brand experience, brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity using store intercepts. We find that flagships, due to the powerful brand experiences they allow, have a stronger impact on brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity compared to brand stores. We provide retail marketers with avenues to offer increased in-store brand experiences by appealing to consumers' emotions, senses, behaviors, and cognition.

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Keywords: Brand experience; Flagship; Brand store; Branding; Retailing

What makes flagships so special? Flagships are brandished as the apex of branding. An expanding number of brands are now offering consumers experiential retail spaces tailored to deliver powerful brand experience (e.g., *ESPN Zone*: Kozinets et al. 2004; *American Girl Place*: Diamond et al. 2009; *Niketown*: Peñalosa 1998; Sherry 1998). Retailers use in-store brand experiences as a way to differentiate themselves from their competitors, improve their brand image and build brand awareness (Pine and Gilmore 1998) and branding strategy (Kozinets et al. 2002). Previous research regarding flagships focused on brand narrative (Kozinets et al. 2002), sociocultural branding (Diamond et al. 2009), brand ideology (Borghini et al. 2009), and retail spectacle (e.g., Kozinets et al. 2004). These studies do not point out the differential impact of flagships vs. brand stores. Our study is the first to measure the capacity of both types of store for building brands. By doing so, we test the degree to which flagships provide an increased brand experience compared to brand stores. We also suggest that store image impacts three brand constructs (brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity) through brand experience. Our methodology allows us to provide information on effect sizes for these relationships, and to test them in a retail setting immediately following an

in-store brand experience. Finally, we address the limitations of previous studies on brand experiences (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Chang and Chieng 2006) by comparing different retail venues and introducing overlooked brand-related constructs.

Brand experience is defined as the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications and environments” (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009, p. 53). Our use of this concept contributes to deepening the understanding of experiential marketing and provides researchers with a concept central to modeling experiential phenomena in shopping venues.

In the next section, we propose our conceptual framework. We then present our methodology and measures, discuss our results, offer ways for retailers to provide increased brand experiences, and highlight the limitations of this study.

Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Our study focuses on the differential impact of flagships vs. brand stores. A flagship is a store “1) carrying a single brand of product, 2) owned by that brand’s manufacturer, and 3) operated – at least in part – with the intention of reinforcing the brand rather than selling a product at a profit” (Kozinets et al. 2002, p. 17, emphasis added). Only the first two characteristics of

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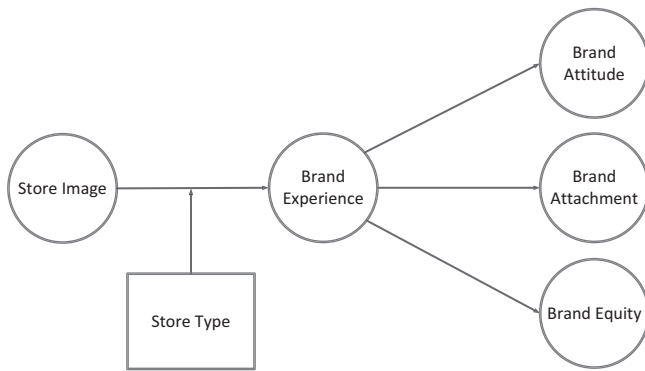


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model.

flagships apply to brand stores. In our conceptual framework (see Fig. 1), brand experience is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between store image and three dependent constructs measuring different aspects of a brand–consumer relationship, that is, brand attitude, brand equity, and brand attachment. We hypothesize that the relation between store image and brand experience is moderated by the type of store, that is, flagship vs. brand store.

Store image is the independent variable of our model. It is defined as “the total impression represented in the memory as a gestalt of perceived attributes associated with the store, which are both independent and interdependent in consumer’s memory, learned from current and previous exposure to stimuli” (Hartman and Spiro 2005, p. 1113). The link between store image and in-store experience has been argued for in the literature. Antecedents of store image, such as retail atmosphere, merchandize assortment and salespeople, can impact the in-store experience of consumers and therefore their brand experience (e.g., Verhoef et al. 2009). Similarly a “lavish décor, sleek finishes [...] interactive display, [...] trained labor force, [...] and high-profile, high-valued real estate [of a store] make an experience unique and individual” (Kozinets et al. 2002, p. 20). The combined effects of store environment, salespersons, merchandize variety, quality, and other antecedents of store image set the stage in which consumers create their own brand experience (Kozinets et al. 2002). This leads us to the following hypothesis:

H1: A more positive store image increases the brand experience.

Flagships are *designed* to provide powerful brand experiences (Borghini et al. 2009). They offer a dramatic stage that embodies the essence of a retailer’s brand (Kozinets et al. 2002; Sherry 1998) through “multisensory sensual opportunities” (Sherry et al. 2001, p. 466). Consumers place them in different mental categories from brand stores (Kozinets et al. 2002): they are not a place for solely buying products; they allow for play and fun (Kozinets et al. 2004), for the production of self-relevant brand meanings (Borghini et al. 2009), and for the consumption of spectacle (Peñaloza 1998). Their sales personnel are trained to convey the brand ideology (e.g., Borghini et al. 2009; Peñaloza

1998). Flagships provide more “anchoring points” (experiential offerings conveying the brand ideology) than brand stores (Borghini et al. 2009). Consequently, shoppers in flagships have more opportunities to experience the brand sensorially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, which facilitates more powerful brand experiences. Flagships act as a quilting point for a brand as they allow for the grouping of multiple brand meanings into a coherent whole (Diamond et al. 2009). The combination of a well-designed shopping experience, well-trained sales personnel, possibility for immersion and co-creation of the spectacle increases the impact of the store image on consumers’ in-store brand experience.

H2: Store type moderates the relationship between store image and brand experience, that is, the flagship increases consumers’ brand experience in comparison to the brand store.

The dependent constructs of our model capture three different facets of a brand: 1) brand attitude, 2) brand attachment, and 3) brand equity. We propose that both store image and brand experience affect each of these three brand constructs.

Brand attitude is defined as the general appreciation of a brand by a consumer (Mitchell and Olson 1988). Since the components of store image foster positive retail brand associations which are a major aspect of brand attitude (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000), we expect store image to impact brand attitude:

H3: A more positive store image increases brand attitude.

Experiences are pieces of information that convey symbolic and experiential benefits which can influence consumers’ brand attitude (Borghini et al. 2009). Positive brand experiences should stimulate consumers’ senses, and engage them through emotions, cognition and bodily experiences. As these dimensions converge toward a “feel good” experience, consumers should infer a positive brand attitude (Pham 2004). The more powerful the brand experience is, that is, the more emotions, thoughts, sensations and behaviors are elicited, the more positive the brand attitude should be (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). Kozinets et al. (2002, p. 21) argue that a brand experience “may well enhance the appeal of the brand”, pointing to an increase in brand attitude. Both experiential marketers (e.g., Pine and Gilmore 1998) and researchers (e.g., Borghini et al. 2009; Peñaloza 1998; Sherry et al. 2001) offer convincing examples, such as Niketown, the American Girl Place, and ESPN Zone, that in-store brand experiences contribute to brand building and positively influence the general evaluation of a brand. Thus, we expect brand experience to influence brand attitude.

H4: A more positive brand experience increases brand attitude.

Brand attachment is defined as “the strength of the cognitive and affective bond connecting the brand with the self” by Park, MacInnis, and Priester (2006, p. 195). They claim that the “aesthetics portrayed through various brand elements” such as stores offer resources to build brand attachment (Park, MacInnis, and

Priester 2008, p. 8). Moreover, in-store personnel, an antecedent of store image, have been shown to positively influence the emotional attachment of shoppers toward a retailer (Vlachos et al. 2010).

H5: A more positive store image increases brand attachment.

Brand experience also promotes the development of the cognitive and affective bond between a brand and the self (e.g., Borghini et al. 2009). Brand attachment may be built by enriching consumers' self through the experience of a brand "core ideology or values" and "enabling the consumer to pursue his [...] goals" (Park, MacInnis and Priester 2008, pp. 9–10). An in-store brand experience can be the quilting point linking different cultural facets of a brand and thus opens the possibility to experience a brand's ideology to its fullest (Borghini et al. 2009). A study of a brand museum shows that "participatory experiences [in a brand museum] extend the meaning of the brand as consumers are able to create and define their self-concept" (Hollenbeck, Peters, and Zinkhan 2008, p. 350). Experiential marketing builds consumers' emotional and cognitive connection with a brand by linking it to consumers' selves through memorable brand experiences (Schmitt, Rogers, and Vrotsos 2004; Thomson, Macinnis, and Park 2005). In-store brand experiences also lead shoppers to "create, revise, recover, and recycle" memories that enhance the brand-self connection (Borghini et al. 2009, p. 371). Thus, we expect in-store brand experiences to increase brand attachment.

H6: A more positive brand experience increases brand attachment.

Brand equity is the incremental value of a product due to the brand name (Yoo and Donthu 2001). It is a multidimensional construct composed of four dimensions: 1) brand loyalty, 2) brand awareness, 3) brand associations, and 4) brand quality (Yoo and Donthu 2001). Store image has been shown to impact these four dimensions. First, a significant correlation between store image and loyalty has been found by Bloemer and de Ruyter (1998), as well as a positive relationship between store image and brand awareness by Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000). Second, store image affects consumers' mental associations with a store (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000). Finally, there exists a link between store image and brand quality (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000). This leads us to hypothesize:

H7: A more positive store image increases brand equity.

Brand experience is also expected to influence the four dimensions of brand equity. First, brand experience affects brand loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). Second, because powerful brand experiences create lasting memories (Borghini et al. 2009; Keller 1993), we propose that brand experience affects brand awareness. Third, brand associations are driven by "sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation" (Keller 1993), which are components of brand experience. We then expect brand experience to affect brand associations.

Fourth, perceived quality should be influenced by the in-store brand experience. In Borghini et al. (2009), shoppers were overwhelmed by the perfection of the American Girl brand experience, which was translated to their perception of the brand as being "perfect". In summary, brand experience should impact the four dimensions of brand equity, thus:

H8: A more positive brand experience increases brand equity.

Academics and practitioners concur on the idea that consumers' brand attitude, attachment to the brand, and brand equity are not affected by how a store is conceived in a consumer's mind but by how it is experienced (e.g., Peñaloza 1998; Pine and Gilmore 1998). Nike Town may have been designed as a nice place to shop, with helpful salespersons and a pleasant environment, but what matters is how shoppers experience the brand; how they live the emotions associated with seeing a life-sized sculpture of Michael Jordan, the sensations that come to mind when having the impression of being underwater due to a video projection, or the thoughts evoked by the history of the Air Jordan (Peñaloza 1998). Store image impacts brand experience, which in turn builds the brand. This is more than an inference process where the global impression of a store is transferred to brands. We propose that brand-related thoughts, emotions, sensations and actions linked to an in-store brand experience engage consumers in actively constructing their relationship with a brand (e.g., Pine and Gilmore 1998). When experiencing the store, shoppers live embodied experiences (Kozinets et al. 2002), allowing them to use their body, senses, emotions, and intellect to co-create meanings from somatic, multi-sensorial experiences intrinsically tied with reason and emotions (Joy and Sherry 2003). This leads them to produce the meanings associated with the brand (Peñaloza 1998). For Peñaloza (1998), the *engagement* of the "consumer's motor and sensory activities" is central to the formation of cultural meanings and brand building. As sensations of smell, taste, sight, hearing, and touch are called through various triggers and linked to specific memories (Joy and Sherry 2003), experiential anchoring points in a store bring to life a powerful brand experience (Borghini et al. 2009). This leads to our mediation hypothesis:

H9: Brand experience mediates the relationship between store image and brand constructs.

Method

Overview of the method

A mid-tier fashion brand aimed at 25–45-year-old women was chosen for this study. The brand owns a flagship store and eleven brand stores in the same major North American city. Self-administrated questionnaires were distributed at the exit of two selected stores, that is, a brand store and the city's flagship store, over a 1-month period. A pre-test was conducted to confirm that the flagship was rated significantly higher than the brand store in terms of store image and in-store brand experience. The flagship selected for this study is located downtown in a three-story

building. It carries the whole product line of the brand. Its minimalistic decor is complemented with high ceilings and oversized pictures and mirrors providing a general feeling of grandeur. The brand collection and history are presented through an “informational museum-style” type of display (Borghini et al. 2009, p. 372) in the staircase connecting the three floors. It also corresponded to the description of a flagship by Kozinets et al. (2002). We used a methodological approach reflecting the one used in other studies in retailing (e.g., El Hedhli and Chebat 2009). All respondents were women, and more than 50 percent of them were between 25 and 45 years old. They all had had prior experience with the brand, from visits to the stores to the ownership of the brand’s products. Incomplete questionnaires were discarded resulting in 122 usable questionnaires (58 for the brand store and 64 for the flagship) out of 131 respondents.

Questionnaire and constructs measurement

The brand attitude construct was measured using a semantic scale. For all other constructs, respondents were asked to rate their agreement using a seven-point Likert scale, where one was “strongly disagree” and seven was “strongly agree”. All scales used in the present study have shown a high psychometric validity in previous studies. All standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended 0.5 threshold (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson 2005) and all Cronbach’s alphas were above 0.7 (Nunnally 1978): they were high for the store image (0.89), brand attitude (0.94), brand attachment (0.92) and brand equity (0.94) constructs, and adequate for the brand experience (0.73) construct.

The store image scale designed by Grewal et al. (1998) was used as a starting point; it was then reduced to four items (pleasant place to shop, good store image, good overall service, attractive shopping experience). Redundant items on service quality (overall service, helpful salespeople, and knowledgeable salespeople) were collapsed into overall service.

The brand experience scale by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) was used. This construct includes four inter-correlated factors: 1) sensory, 2) affective, 3) behavioral, and 4) cognitive, representing the dimensions of brand experience. Each dimension is measured by three items.

The brand attitude scale by (Mitchell and Olson 1988) was used. It is composed of four seven-point semantic differentials (positive/negative, good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, likable/dislikeable).

The brand attachment scale designed by Thomson, Macinnis, and Park (2005) was used. It comprises three correlated first-order factors (passion, connection, and affection) that are measured by three, three, and four items, respectively.

The brand equity scale by Yoo and Donthu (2001) was used because it adopts a consumer-centric perspective, congruent with the aim of the present study. It consists of four items.

Measurement model

Since both the brand experience and brand attachment scales are composed of twelve items, it makes the SEM analysis

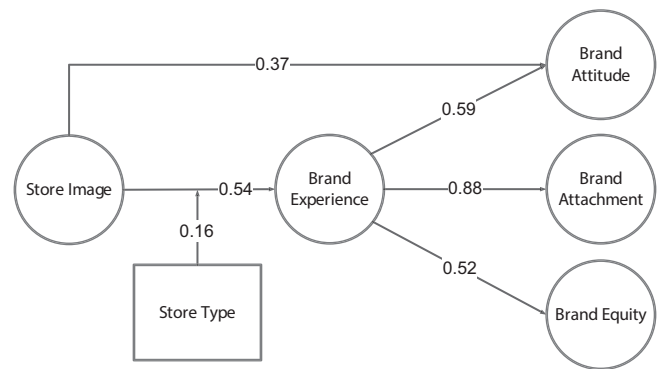


Fig. 2. Results: measurement model.

potentially problematic. Consequently, we disaggregated these two scales into subscales corresponding to their relative factors. We then used those factors as indicators for the latent variables (Little et al. 2002).

Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted from each construct, which were also well above 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Discriminant validity between each of the constructs was assessed as proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990). The correlation between each constructs was less than one by an amount greater than twice its respective standard error (Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990). Those statistical results are presented in Table 1.

Findings

We tested our hypotheses using structural equation modeling with the AMOS 18.0 statistical program (see Fig. 2). We followed the recommendations of Fan, Thompson, and Wang (1999) regarding relatively small samples and are reporting fit indexes that are the least affected by small sample sizes (RMSEA and CFI) in addition to the chi-square and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). We also used the Bollen–Stine bootstrap procedure, a bootstrap modification of the model chi-square adjusting for distributional misspecification. It was computed with 5000 re-samples.

Testing for the mediating effect of brand experience

We followed Holmbeck (1997) recommendations to test for mediation using SEM for our third hypothesis (H3). All the hypothesized relationships were confirmed, apart from the full mediation of brand experience for the relationship between store image and brand attitude. This led to a revision of our hypothesized model. We added a direct relationship between store image and brand attitude. H9 is thus partially confirmed: brand experience fully mediates the relationships between store image and brand attachment as well as store image and brand equity, and is a partial mediator between store image and brand attitude.

Table 1
Discriminant validity matrix.

Construct	Store image	Brand experience	Brand attitude	Brand attachment	Brand equity
Store image	0.819	0.482	0.483	0.5	0.325
Brand experience	0.232	0.639	0.294	0.695	0.454
Brand attitude	0.233	0.086	0.896	0.283	0.178
Brand attachment	0.25	0.483	0.080	0.889	0.537
Brand equity	0.106	0.206	0.032	0.288	0.922

^a Diagonal elements, in bold, represent the average variance extracted between the constructs. The number above this diagonal represents the correlations between the constructs, and those below, the shared variance (square correlation) among the constructs.

Accounting for the moderating effect of store type

H2 proposes that for a similar store image the flagship store leads to an increased brand experience when compared with the brand store. We followed Ping (1995) procedure for modeling interaction effects in SEM. The interaction term significantly impacts brand experience ($\beta_{\text{std}} = 0.16, p < .05$) indicating that the flagship store leads to a stronger brand experience than the brand store for a similar perception of store image, thus supporting H2.

Building the brand through in-store brand experiences

In regard to our final model, modification indices led us to identify the brand equity construct through three indicators. The model shows a good fit ($\chi^2_{162} = 211.9, p = .005; \chi^2/\text{d.f.} = 1.308; \text{CFI} = 0.972; \text{SRMR} = 0.0565; \text{RMSEA} = 0.05; p\text{-value for the test of close fit at } .471 > .05; \text{RMSEA confidence interval is } (0.029\text{--}0.068); \text{Bollen–Stine } p\text{-value obtained from the bootstrapping procedure is } .219 > .05$): the $\chi^2/\text{d.f.}$ ratio is below three (Kline 2005), the RMSEA is below the 0.06 desired cut-off, the CFI is over 0.95, and the SRMR is below 0.08 (Hu and Bentler 1999). The standardized path coefficients and variance explained are presented in Fig. 2.

Discussion and implications

Findings and theoretical implications

Our study contributes to the current literature in the three following ways. First, we demonstrate that store type moderates the relationship between store image and brand experience: the flagship allowed consumers to live an increased brand experience compared to a regular brand store. Second, we show that brand experience mediates the relationship between store image and three brand-related constructs; it is a central construct to capture consumers' shopping episodes that provides a novel way to model in-store consumer-brand interactions. Third, for both the flagship and the brand store, we establish that store image and brand experience strongly impact brand attitude, brand attachment, and brand equity. This study is the first to provide quantified effect sizes for these relationships. Not only does brand experience positively influence the general appreciation of a brand, but it also fosters a deeper attachment to the store and could command higher mark ups on products from a higher brand equity. Verhoef et al. (2009, p. 38) asked if customers would be willing to “pay more for an enriched

experience”. We propose that, as brand experience contributes to building brand equity, brands providing captivating in-store brand experiences could leverage this strength into a price premium. Pine and Gilmore (1998) argued that companies should think of charging consumers an entrance fee to access experiential retail spaces. Instead, we propose that this fee could be passed on in the prices of products because of the impact of brand experience on brand equity.

As a driver of brand attachment, in-store brand experience also contributes to brand loyalty, positive word of mouth and reduces the costs incurred to retain customers (Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006; Thomson, Macinnis, and Park 2005). Since brand attachment develops over time (Thomson, Macinnis, and Park 2005), the impact of a single in-store brand experience could be seen as a surprising finding. However, Hollenbeck, Peters, and Zinkhan (2008) note that brand museums, which are a type of themed flagships (Kozinets et al. 2002), contribute to the creation of a personal connection and strengthen brand attachment. Similarly, for Diamond et al. (2009, p. 132), the American Girl Place assisted in building multiple meanings converging in a brand gestalt which, through consumers' performance in the store, allowed “the brand to dwell in them”. In other words, shoppers develop a special emotional, sensorial, and cognitive attachment to flagships due to their extraordinary sensorial features (Kaltcheva, Patino, and Chebat 2010). Such a bond is less likely in the case of less spectacular brand stores.

Brand attachment is fostered by enabling consumers to pursue their goals, by gratifying them through esthetic and hedonic experiences, and by offering brand meanings that allow symbolic self-expression (Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006, 2008). Flagships are cited as one of the best ways to execute those activities (Kozinets et al. 2002), and are a powerful outlet to express a brand ideology (Borghini et al. 2009). Through participatory experiences in retailing, consumers create and extend their self-concept (Hollenbeck et al. 2008). For Park, MacInnis, and Priester (2008, p. 8), environmental branding has the potential to “delight the five senses” and this is “particularly important in eliciting the emotional connection between self and a brand”. They note that the symbolic representation of a brand can also promote brand attachment, as long as its ideology fits shoppers' identity. Moreover, the power and intensity of in-store brand experiences in the flagship might transform the relationship between consumers and the brand through a peak experience. A peak experience is an “ephemeral, yet powerful, personally meaningful, and potentially transformative experience” (Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig 2007, p. 357).

Such extraordinary experiences have been shown to favor attachment to a brand community, a product, and a brand (Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig 2007). Their effects have been found to be long-lasting and to facilitate the development of strong emotional ties.

We hypothesized the relationship between store image and brand attitude to be mediated by brand experience. However, our findings show a direct link between those constructs, which could be explained as follows. If consumers lack the motivation or the ability to evaluate a brand, they may infer their evaluation from “extrinsic cues” (Olson and Jacoby 1972), for instance, “product appearance such as color or scent” (Keller 1993). Keller’s (1993) explanation refers to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schuman 1983). It could be that shoppers were overwhelmed with sensory and informational cues during their shopping trips in multiple venues, and may not have processed them with the attention and involvement required by central processing. This could explain why store image, a peripheral cue, directly impacted brand attitude without the mediation of brand experience.

Managerial implications: new marketing strategies for new retailing realities

Our theoretical perspective reflects new marketing realities. The retailing landscape is changing dramatically. Manufacturers such as Apple and Microsoft are becoming retailers themselves in order to better control their brand experience. Other brands such as 3M, eBay and Vitaminwater, are making their entry in retailing by using temporary retail locations such as pop-up shops as a branding channel. Our findings provide a rationale for such strategies and suggest that flagships and brand stores should be seen as both a promotional tool and as a distribution channel.

Creating powerful brand experiences

Brands such as LEGO, Apple’s iPod, and Starbucks are strong experiential brands (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). They appeal to consumers’ senses, offering a wide array of feelings, as well as being a springboard for creative and analytical thoughts and behaviors. How can retailers create powerful in-store brand experiences? Pine and Gilmore (1998) recommend to theme the experience, create memorable impressions through specific cues, offer the purchase of memorabilia, and engage the senses. Retailing researchers (Borghini et al. 2009; Diamond et al. 2009; Hollenbeck et al. 2008; Kozinets et al. 2002, 2004; Sherry 1998) put forward the importance of creating an environment that leads to the co-creation of experience. This can be achieved, for example, through an environment that favors the interaction with a shopping companion (Diamond et al. 2009) or with the environment (Hollenbeck et al. 2008).

Brands in different segments have found ways to design an experiential environment tailored to their identity. For example, the Starbucks experience is typified by “prominent displays of visual art,” a sophisticated alternative musical background, a “hedonically rich menu,” a warm interior with a “distinctive

aesthetic flair,” and a “selection of art-oriented media and newspapers including prestigious dailies” (Thompson and Arsel 2004, p. 633). Other retailers took a places-within-places (Pine and Gilmore 1998) approach. Niketown, American Girl Place, and ESPN Zone all use distinct areas within their stores to articulate their brand ideology (Borghini et al. 2009; Sherry 1998; Sherry et al. 2001). Sherry (1998) offers an overview of the cues and affordances of Niketown Chicago for each of those distinct areas, providing a possible blueprint for other brands. Borghini et al. (2009) report extensively as to how each zone in an American Girl Place can elicit brand performance. ESPN Zone also offers a powerful brand experience through different areas (e.g., the Atrium, the Studio Grill, and the Sports Arena) all intrinsically tied in with the ESPN brand through “repeated unifying themes of densely packed [...] symbolic collage, video monitors, and branding” (Sherry et al. 2001, p. 497). These multiple areas offer anchoring points allowing consumers to link the brand with their selves (Borghini et al. 2009).

In-store brand experiences have to fit a particular brand identity. Retailers need not to follow a generic recipe. Setting up numerous TVs and presenting sports memorabilia is probably enough to be considered as a sports bar, but it is not enough to enact the ESPN Zone brand gestalt. Brand experiences have to deliver cultural meanings uniquely associated with the brand and help consumers to further their life projects (Diamond et al. 2009). This can be done through multifaceted brand stores and flagships attending to the brand ideology and the display of moral values through physical cues and storytelling (Borghini et al. 2009).

Limitations

This study suffers from some limitations. First, Verhoef et al. (2009) highlighted the reinforcing effect of customer experiences over time. Customers’ experiences cannot be understood as stand-alone events. We have not accounted for the continuity between current experiences and previous and future ones. Further studies should take into account the longitudinal aspect of experiences. However, the impact of a single powerful brand experience should be lasting over time. Ariely and Carmon (2000) point to two features that lead to the lasting effect of a powerful brand experience: the peak and end intensity of the experience and its trend over time. Since the in-store brand experience in a flagship should represent the most intense (peak) experience of this brand (Borghini et al. 2009), it should have a significant effect on the overall evaluation of the brand, both through a peak experience, as explained earlier, and because it is increasing the average evaluation of experiences (i.e., the trend over time) for that brand.

Finally, there are some measurement limitations due to the study design. The quasi-experimental design of this study does not allow for the gathering of information about store image, brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity of consumers prior to entering the store. Also, the immediacy of the measures of store image after the in-store brand experience might have led to a confounding effect between those two constructs.

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