Chapter 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION
6. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview

In this chapter, the research findings, implications, contributions and conclusions of the present study are listed. The summary of the research finding is presented followed by the implications of this study to help the marketing managers to device strategies and also for enabling researchers to extend the scope of this study. Finally, the contributions made by this research and the conclusions have been highlighted.

6.2 Research Findings

The following are the major research findings:

1. Influence of demographic variables on different research constructs used in the research such as BPC, TRS, SAT and BRL was studied. It was found that the demographic variable age has a significant influence on BPC dimensions. The BPC scores of the age group 40 to 60 was much higher with respect to the other lower and higher age groups. However trust in the bank was not found to be significantly different across different age groups. In the case of SAT, it was revealed that there is a significant difference in the satisfaction levels across age groups. Similar to brand personality congruence, age group 40-60 years had higher levels of satisfaction compared to other age groups. Analysis of age group’s influence on brand loyalty reveals that there is a significant difference in the brand loyalty across age groups. As in the case of SAT and BPC, BRL also was highest for the age group of 40 – 60 years.

2. Influence of the demographic variable occupation on research constructs was also studied. All the research constructs was significantly influenced by the occupation of the individual. BPC of employed people was found to higher in comparison to unemployed/student and retired group. Among the respondents who were employed, the BPC was highest for government
employees. However, satisfaction was highest for private sector employees and students compared to other occupation groups. Analyzing brand loyalty with respect to occupation reveals that brand loyalty is highest for self employed/entrepreneur group than any other group.

3. Another demographic variable whose influence was analyzed is income of the respondents. It was found that BPC varied across income groups significantly. The same was true for TRS, however, SAT and BRL did not vary with respect to income (at 5% significance). The highest BPC was observed to be for the income group greater than Rs.500,000. However, TRS was highest for the income group of Rs 200,000 to Rs 500,000.

4. The hypothetical model proposed was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. In the context of the Indian Banking Sector, it was found that, BPC had a significant influence on BRL and TRS. Also, it was revealed that SAT has a significant influence on Brand Loyalty. Out of the six hypothesis proposed through literature review, two of them were not supported. BPC did not have any significant influence on SAT and TRS did not have a significant influence on BRL.
6.3 Mapping of the Research Objectives with the Findings

Table 6.1: Research objectives and findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objective 1</td>
<td>A scale consisting of 42 items consisting of Aaker’s five dimensions of BPC was developed and validated. This instrument was used to collect data for BPC from Banking customers. The relative importance of the five dimensions of Aaker’s Brand Personality Dimensions was analyzed and Excitement and Competence were rated as the most important dimension for the Banking Industry.</td>
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<td>Objective 2</td>
<td>The results of the study proved that the response to the dimensions of bank and self are correlated. The t test conducted proved that the difference in the mean of the response to the BPC dimensions with respect to bank and self is very low and not significant hence the dimensions of the brand of the bank and personality of the respondents are matching. Hence, it was noticed that there was a congruence between the bank and the customer, thus proving that Brand Personality Congruence of the respondents with respect to their banks.</td>
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<td>Objective 3</td>
<td>The results of the studies conducted proved that Age had a significant relationship with all the constructs except Age, Occupation had a significant relationship with all the constructs, Income had a significant relationship with all the constructs except Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty.</td>
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<td>Objective 4</td>
<td>Hypothesis testing resulted in the identification of the relationships between the variables of research interest, thus providing answers to the research questions. It is evident through the empirical study that Brand Personality Congruence has a significant influence on the dependent variables Brand Loyalty and Trust.</td>
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Satisfaction has a significant influence on the Brand Loyalty and Trust has a significant influence on the Satisfaction. However Brand Personality Congruence has a significant influence on the Satisfaction and Trust has a significant influence on the Brand Loyalty.

Objective 5  A comprehensive model was developed after the hypothesis testing (Banking Brand Loyalty Enhancement Model (BBLEM), with relevant suggestions implying the relationship between BPC and the constructs of Trust, Loyalty and Satisfaction.
6.4 Contribution

Based on the results of this research, Banking Brand Loyalty Enhancement Model (BBLEM) is proposed (Figure 6.1). Each dimensions of this model are explained in this section.

![Banking Brand Loyalty Enhancement Model (BBLEM)](image)

*Figure 6.1: Banking Brand Loyalty Enhancement Model (BBLEM) (Author*)
6.4.1 Brand Personality: All brands with their human characteristics make a certain promise to their customers. This in turn is conjured based on the activities of the organization. This is the foundation of the relationship between the bank and the consumer. It is absolutely certain that all brands have a personality. This research has provided empirical evidence to the fact that in banking sector Competence and Excitement constitute the main dimensions of Brand Personality. This is more or less in line with the studies conducted by Jafarnejad (2012) who found that the most relevant Brand Personality Dimensions for Banks in the Tehran Province was sincerity, followed by sophistication and excitement. Research in the past has proved that the best way to enhance excitement in the service industry is to focus on the tangibles. Whether it is personal banking or online banking, the online sites and the bank environment have to be designed to be contemporary, trendy and tech savvy. Automation of the Banking functions could greatly help in enhancing this dimension. In order to highlight competence, marketers should project the best assured performance and highlight their competitive costs of transaction. This could include the availability of professionally managed workforce to assure best of the services to the customers. One of the fundamental expectations from customers could also be the up-to-date and concise information that is provided by the bank on the latest facilities, new services, terms of payment and the like be communicated to the customer on a regular basis. This would also include providing competent interest rates without needless breakdowns. To highlight the sincerity dimension banks should stress on the relationship marketing promotions rather than any other quality.

An important factor in this aspect could also include the bank’s recruiting staff who are competent, have sound knowledge, modest and honest. To highlight the sophistication aspect,
the banks should focus on the reputation and the brand image. To highlight *ruggedness* banks would have to project the express service feature this could include services like Instant Money Transfer, Immediate payment services, internet banking and so on.

6.4.2 Brand loyalty: It is a strategy by which organisations strengthen the name and goodwill of the brand (Vitez, 2013), which ultimately leads to increased sales and a possibility of acquiring greater profit margins (Usman et al., 2012). Action Loyalty and affective loyalty lead to greater market share and even at higher prices for their services customers can be retained. Doney and Cannon (1997) suggest that action loyalty is a “calculative process” where the customer makes an assessment of continuing to stay in the relationship with a brand despite the gains through the competitor brand. Banks should find means and methods to keep their services reliable, safe and trustworthy and at the same time benchmark their services with those of the competitors. It was revealed in the hypothesis testing that trust need not necessarily lead to brand loyalty and hence the banks need to focus on strategizing to execute action loyalty and affective loyalty. During the informal interviews with the customers they had opined that *action loyalty* eventually led to trust in the bank. This is because; with the increase in the duration of the relationship with banks the customers could better predict the behavior of the service provider. The longer the relationship of the customer with the bank, the more likely will be the possibility of improvement in personal level interaction which in turn would result in reduced anxiety related to the brand. Thus, banks should to strategize new ways of developing brand loyalty and one significant way to do so would be by creating Brand Personality Congruence for the brands, as revealed in the hypothesis testing of this research. A significant method of enhancing affective loyalty could be by introducing Relationship Marketing and Customer Loyalty Building programs. During the unstructured interviews that were conducted, it was noticed that most customers who were participants of Loyalty programs of banks had affective loyalty and did not
have a tendency to change purchase behavior. These results are also consistent with the studies conducted by Benavent et al. (2000) who proved that promotional actions targeted at customers through loyalty programs enhanced the tendency to accept cross-selling and upselling options. Relationship may be built in phases, where it first begins with awareness, moves to commitment, then build loyalty and eventually build trust in the brand (Malhotra & Singh, 2007).

6.4.3 Customer Satisfaction: People’s personalities that are incongruent with the bank brand, eventually result in the generation of a feeling of inadequacy. However, this may not necessarily lead to dissatisfaction, as proven by the results of this study. Brand Personality Congruence does lead to a feeling of consistency, brand preference, creates trust, self-enhancement and consequently loyalty, but not necessarily build satisfaction. The arguments of the studies conducted by Caruana et al. (2000) suggested that the concept of customer satisfaction is more dynamic and this has tendency to fluctuate with intensity, time and circumstances. A positive evaluation of the brand may have a greater likelihood of the customer viewing the bank with a positive image. Again, this may not necessarily lead to customer satisfaction. Favorable evaluation of the brand could be enhanced by creating lasting relationships and by building a sense of identity and affinity with the bank. Strong brands create enduring values, deliver promises and also manage to spark an emotional bond with the customer. Service experience and service quality evaluation have a greater tendency to lead to customer satisfaction than Brand Personality Congruence. Banking being a highly sensitive industry, frauds and financial breaches are common. Transaction specific evaluation of the brand could be improved by just not delivering the basic services without any mistakes and in the most cost effective way, but also by offering the customer a choice of “tailoring” his experience. Big Data technologies could also provide reduced costs of screening frauds, mitigation of these frauds and optimize offers
and cross-selling which may be considered seriously by the Banking industry. These measures can be handy in enhancing the overall satisfaction with the bank.

**6.4.4 Brand Trust:** Brand Personality Congruence does lead to building of trust as revealed in the hypothesis testing. The best way to achieve it is for banks are to weave authenticity and communication so that it reaches the customer. One of the ways of building credibility through brand personality congruence is by giving the customer consistent positive experience. McKinsey survey of 20,000 respondents across 114 countries identified that customers had a tendency to attribute greater credibility to banks who maintained consistency in delivering those services 30% more than the trusted banks who did not maintain this consistency. During the course of the qualitative interviews with the customers of the bank it was reinforced that their trust on a brand also based on word-of-mouth. Creating customer testimonials or creating content that the customer would find it compelling to share with their peers could be a great way to building credibility. The benevolence trust can be generated by establishing an emotional connect with the customer. This could be strengthened through the advertising and marketing campaigns. While the power of a bank to create emotional connect with the customer may not replace good services and quality products, it however, does manage to create benevolent trust.

**6.5 Implications based on Empirical Study**

As a result of the empirical study on the effectiveness of BPC on post purchase evaluations the, the following implications may be listed down for Bank Marketing professionals, Branding researcher and practitioners:

1. Research has suggested that having a well-established brand personality could be a competitive advantage, particularly in sustaining brand loyalty. However, focusing on merely establishing the personality is not enough, it must be able to give consumers something they can relate to. This study can provide banking operations information on personality attributes as they
relate to the brand personality that they would like to project. The ability of a banking operation to clearly define its dominant brand personality may have practical implications in its managerial and operational decisions.

2. Existing banking operations can use results to modify their market positioning, services, or products to increase the congruence between their brand personality and their target market’s personality with the ultimate goal of increasing brand loyalty and satisfaction.

3. Results of this study imply the importance of brand management and positioning strategy because a differentiated brand is a means of achieving competitive advantage. Comparing across competing brands will have practical implications for brand management, particularly in determining if differentiation among brands in the banking industry is achieved. In addition, findings from this study provide future avenues for research to explore how to better assess brand personality congruence and address the gaps that may lead to deflated levels of satisfaction, trust, and ultimately, brand loyalty.

4. The instrument may be used not only as a benchmarking tool, but also as a means to determine market segmentation for targeted marketing. As banks make their global presence globally, companies can use the BPC scale as a component of their feasibility study to determine their personality fit with their prospective host. This will allow the company to better identify the target market that would most likely be a loyal customer base. Evaluations across the different attributes can help managers determine what is important for targeted segments of the customer base such as age groups, gender, or area of residence.

5. Aaker (1997) suggested that the brand personality dimensions of sincerity, excitement, and competence are most closely related to the Big Five dimensions of agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness, respectively. A study could be designed to explore the ability of the Big Five dimensions to predict what brand personality profile
customers are likely to choose. For example, would a customer who is high on the extroversion dimension be more likely to choose a brand that is evaluated highly on the excitement dimension? In addition, a comparative study can be done to see if the BPC framework presented in the current study is a better predictor of restaurant brand choice than using Aaker’s (1997) and the Big Five scales.

6. Although the previous researchers have identified brand personality as a significant factor in relationship marketing, there is very sparse empirical evidence to study the effect of brand personality on post-purchase evaluations. So there is scope to add to the body of research.

7. As this study has shown that BPC does affect brand loyalty, directly and indirectly, there is a great scope for future researchers to continue to explore the applications, antecedents, and consequences of establishing and strengthening brand personality congruence.

6.6 Limitations and scope of future research

Banking industry is service oriented; there are many variables that could not be controlled such as the consumer’s last experience in the bank, location, bank quality, and consumer’s pre-conception about banking. Since the constructs under study are global evaluations, the effect of these uncontrollable variables was minimized. Hence the future researchers can focus on the factors not considered in the present study and various other sectors unexplored for Brand Personality Congruence

6.7 Conclusion

Although the development of the brand personality congruence scale is exploratory in nature, it brings together two important areas of research that have been shown to be useful in business and marketing applications: brand personality and congruence. Moreover, marketing professionals will be provided information that may be useful in designing marketing strategies
to maximize the leverage that a well-established brand personality provides. When the personalities of the brand and the customer are congruent, the chances of a brand to succeed increase markedly (Temporal, 2001). Strong brand loyalty, trust, and high overall satisfaction contribute to competitive advantage, and thus warrant the need to study brand personality congruence as it relates to these constructs.

Sirgy (1982) expressed image congruence as the match between the brand’s image and the self-image of the target customer(s). For the purpose of this study, Sirgy’s (1982) framework is modified where congruence is operationalized as the level at which brand personality is congruent with customer’s personality traits as alluded to by Aaker (1999). This is measured as a gap score between the customer’s self-reported evaluation of his/her personality and their evaluation of the bank’s personality.

The rationale behind using brand personality congruence rather than the traditional construct of self-congruity is that self-concept can vary between the private and public selves (how the consumer sees one’s self and how others see the consumer), while personality is more enduring and stable. Helgeson and Supphellen (2004) concluded that brand personality and self-congruity are discriminant constructs; where the former is broader and the focus is the brand itself while the latter is more narrow and focuses on the self. It was also empirically proven that self-congruity and brand personality had independent effects on brand attitude. Most respondents feel competence as a more likely measure of Brand Personality Congruence and Confidence as a more likely measure of trust and pleasant experience as a more likely measure of satisfaction.

The constructs of the study have been subjected to meta-analysis and the appropriate indicators have been identified to serve the purpose of measurement. The higher values of Cronbach’s alpha (>0.8) justified the internal consistency of the items. The item reliability (IR)
measured as standardized factor loadings (FL) are in the range of acceptable values. The composite reliability values (>0.9) also ensured sound reliability of the scale. Also, the average variance extracted (AVE) proved adequate discriminant validity. So, it was evident that the measurement instrument measured what it was intended to measure and the data collected using the instrument was reliable to the desirable extent.

Hypothesis testing resulted in the identification of the relationships between the variables of research interest, thus providing answers to the research questions. It is evident through the empirical study that Brand Personality Congruence has a significant influence on the dependent variables Brand Loyalty and Trust. Satisfaction has a significant influence on the Brand Loyalty and Trust has a significant influence on the Satisfaction. However, Brand Personality Congruence has a significant influence on the Satisfaction and Trust has a significant influence on the Brand Loyalty.