

Abstract

Creating emotional attachments to brands is identified as a key branding goal in today's marketing context as strong emotional bonds lead to strong brand loyalty and repurchasing behavior. In achieving this goal, marketers are adopting different marketing strategies. In this study, it is suggested that self-congruence or self-concept connection between a consumer and a brand as a one way of creating emotional attachments to brands. Thus, in this study, actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence were considered by the researcher. Specially, the relative importance of actual self-congruence versus ideal self-congruence on creating emotional attachments to brands was also studied. Further, the study has identified the moderating role of the nature of the product; hedonic versus utilitarian nature; on the relationship of self congruence and emotional brand attachment. Based on the existing literature, the study was conceptualized.

Further, the study was conducted among young smartphone consumers belonging to the age category of 19 - 45 in Western Province, Sri Lanka. The researcher used smartphones as they are providing both hedonic and utilitarian benefits for consumers. Also, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of four hundred (400) respondents. Researcher used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and regression analysis in testing hypotheses.

According to the findings of the study, it was identified that self-congruence; actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence; have positive impacts on emotional attachment to brands. Further, it was found that ideal self-congruence is having a stronger effect on emotional brand attachment than actual self-congruence. Also, with regard to moderating effects of hedonic and utilitarian benefits of products, utilitarian benefits and hedonic benefits moderate the relationship between actual self-congruence and emotional brand attachment. Thus, it can be indicated that self-concept connection as a key determinant of creating emotional attachments to brands. Importantly, the study has done significant theoretical and managerial contributions for researchers and practitioners in the area of self-congruence and emotional brand attachment in Sri Lankan context.