Northumbria Research Link

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

University Library

Exploring the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment in China

Ike-Elechi Ogba and Zhenzhen Tan

Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Abstract

Purpose – Whereas there is a growing recognition of the relevance of brand image to the success of market offering and organisation, as indications suggests that a good brand image can enhance customer experience and satisfaction for long-term commitment. Evidences suggest limited study on the impact of brand image on key marketing and organisational components, including the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to examine how brand image can influence customer loyalty as well as impact on customer commitment to market offering within Chinese mobile phone market.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative approach was employed, using 26-item, 7-point Likert scaled questionnaire administered to 250 participants with 40 percent usable response rate. Data was analysed using exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach α internal consistency, ANOVA and correlation analysis for scale suitability, usability, reliability and test of association.

Findings – The outcome from the study was the reduction of 26-25 scale items and high reliability of scale items at 0.942αs for further studies. Further behavioural analyses show that brand image have positive impact on customer expression of loyalty and commitment to market offering.

Originality/value – The outcome from this study concludes that brand image can positively influence customers' loyalty to a market offering and possibly boost customer commitment. The study identifies the degree of the relevant of brand image and its impact on organisations and their market offerings. The study suggests that good brand image should positively impact on customers' loyalty, which at long run should also influence customer perceived quality, enables satisfaction and should also influence to a greater degree the extent to which customers are willing to express commitment to such offering for sustainable profit. The limitations of the study are also explored in terms of the generalisation of the study, with the implications of the study further identified.

Keywords China, Brand image, Quality, Customer satisfaction, Customer loyalty

Paper type Research paper

Research background

This study is a follow up on a previous study that explored the impact of brand image on customer perceived quality and satisfaction in China. The study seeks to extend on existing researches examining brand image and its impact on customer behaviour like brand image impact on customer perceived quality and satisfaction among others. In specific terms, the need for this study arose as a result of the identified issues from studies on the impact of brand image on customer perceived quality and satisfaction. While evidences from similar studies show that brand image has strong impact on customer perceived quality and satisfaction, there are however lack of extensive empirical studies exploring the implication and outcomes of customer perceived quality and satisfaction. Although theoretically it can be argued that perceived quality and customer satisfaction will lead to customer loyalty as brand image is considered to represent the aspect of market offering that enables organisations create associations

in the minds of the customers and add extra value in form of emotional benefits, which extend beyond product attributes and functional benefits (Martensen *et al.*, 2004; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). This assumption is, however, yet to be substantially tested across Western and Non-western markets.

It is, therefore, relevant that further study is carried out to explore the behavioural outcomes of customer perceived quality and satisfaction to conduct a study that explores the impact of brand image on other antecedents of consumer behaviours like commitment and loyalty. Whereas such a study will be significant in both Western and Non-western environment, its urgency seems greater within the Non-western environment due to the limited available empirical knowledge on the subject. For example, China being one of the fastest growing economies in the world requires focused study that will provide extra knowledge on such sensitive and useful issue as how brand image can influence customers' expression of loyalty and or commitment to a product (market offering or even organisation). Whereas it is possible to find such a study within Western environment where most of the knowledge on brand image originates, same may not be said of China, even though the Chinese economic impact affects every other developed, developing and under-developed economy.

In line with the above, this study will focus on exploring the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment within the Chinese Mobile phone sector. A brief analysis of the mobile phone sector in China, shows there were over 3,000 million mobile phone service subscribers in China in the year 2005, and has now increased to around 6,000 million (almost 50 percent of the population) (BBC, 2007; Sohu, 2007). Amongst these subscribers are customers loyal to well-known brands like Nokia, which controls about 40 percent with 48.1 percent market preference, followed by Motorola, Sony Ericsson, and Samsung with 15.90 percent, 10.20 percent, and 9.10 percent preference for Sony Ericsson, Motorola, and Samsung, respectively, (ZOL, 2007; Sohu, 2007).

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to conceptualise and measure brand influence on consumers by examining the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment in Chinese mobile phone market and to assess possible association between brand image and these variables using the most suitable research approach for a study of this kind.

Literature review
Brand image
Brand image represents an important aspect of marketing activities; branding and market offering with varied definition and approaches to its conceptualisation (Burleigh and Sidney, 1955; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Martinez and Pina, 2003). A widely accepted view is that brand image represents customers' perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory (Herzog, 1963; Keller, 1993a, b). Keller (1993a, b) argued that these associations could originate from customers direct experience or from information obtained on a market offering or due to the impact a pre-existing associations with an organisation had on consumer. Brand image is, therefore, the mental picture or perception of a brand or a branded product or service and includes symbolic meanings that consumers associate with the specific attributes of a product or service (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Padgett and Allen, 1997; Aperia and Back, 2004).

Brand image represents "the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to specific brands" (Low and Lamb, 2000, p. 352) a set of beliefs held by customers about a particular brand, based upon some intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of a market offering resulting to perceived quality, and customer satisfaction (Aaker, 1994; Garcia Rodriguez and Bergantinos, 2001). Where perceived quality refers to the customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives (Zeithaml, 1988; Aaker, 1991; Keller and Davey, 2001).

While customer satisfaction although subject to debate as there are dichotomies to its definition, can be likened to customer feeling of pleasure or disappointment as a result of experience or the act of comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to a customer's expectations. It is, therefore, the degree to which customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with a business, product, or specific aspect of a product or service provided by a business. Customer satisfaction can be explained as the outcome of a comparison between perceived product performance and pre-purchase expectations. An outcome argued in Fornell *et al.* (2006) as leading to long-term customer loyalty. Fornell *et al.* (2006) developed a model called the Customer Satisfaction Index aimed at encouraging organisations adaptation of market-orientation and to recognise that the outcomes of perceived quality and brand image could be customer satisfaction. Fornell *et al.* (2006) study concludes that brand image impacts on customer perceived quality and satisfaction with the result of strong satisfaction being possible customer loyalty.

Brand image and customer loyalty
Whereas the linking of customer satisfaction to and with loyalty is a useful development, there remains uncertainty to what customer loyalty truly is. The concept of loyalty has diverse views in terms of its conceptualization and measurement. Various researchers tend to view the concept from different perspectives. For example, loyalty to Ehrenberg (1988) and Jacoby (1971) represents customer repeat purchase a view that if interpreted may suggest that customer loyalty only exist whenever customers embark on a do again (second buying journey) on a market offering. Whereas there is a connection between repeat purchase and loyalty, in that for a customer to be seen as loyal, it may be expected that such customer will continue with the act of buying a market offering repeatedly. It is, however, necessary to note that such view does not provide one with deep practical understanding of the concept as a customer may repeat purchase not necessarily because of a continues feeling of satisfaction or as a result of real intent to stay with a brand. But could be as a result of strong necessity for a market offering at that point in time and, therefore, may not necessarily imply the expression "loyal" to a market offering and or brand as there may be limited alternatives. Other authors (like Hess and Story, 2005) seem to view loyalty as preference and commitment, respectively. While preference may represent an attribute of loyalty, there may be strong difficulty in accepting loyalty to directly mean commitment in that both concepts follow similar principles but are indeed different.

Infact some school of thought argues that loyalty is an aspect of commitment. For example, loyalty, in this instance brand loyalty was classified as an aspect of behavioural loyalty or attitudinal loyalty and defined by Oliver (1999) as:

[...] a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize 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 behaviours.

Oliver (1999) also suggests that ultimate customer loyalty is a function of perceived product superiority, personal fortitude, social bonding, and their synergistic effects. Further analysis of Oliver's discussion tend to suggest not that loyalty is commitment, but that loyalty is an aspect of commitment called attitudinal or emotional component of commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 1993; Ogba, 2008). Uncles *et al.* (2003) viewed customer loyalty from a 3 dimensional perspectives, an approach that seems to originate from Meyer and Allen (1991) study on employee commitment; where loyalty is referred to as favourable attitudes or beliefs for one brand which could seem to be an emotional attachment to that brand. Second, loyalty can be seen as a behavioural factor, for example, the purchase behaviour to one special brand and loyalty as an accident approach that presumes the correlation between attitudes and behaviour.

Whatever represents the meaning of brand loyalty as the list of authors with varied approaches seems endless, the fact remains that brand loyalty exist as a result of the interaction between a customer's relative attitude to a special brand, and also their repeat purchase behaviour for that brand. Brand loyalty may, therefore, exist as a result of repeat purchase or due to the absence of perceived differences between brand alternatives Muncy (1996). It could also exist as a result of simple habitual purchase behaviour (Assael, 1998), which could mean long or short-term involvement on repeat purchasing of a market offering or brand. A knowledge of brand loyalty is, therefore, necessary as according to Wood (2000) brand image is tailored to the needs and wants of a target market so as to facilitate brand loyalty. That is customer involvement in repeat purchase behaviour on a brand and the success or otherwise of this process determines the degree of brand loyalty and will probably have influence on consumer long-term loyalty. This study therefore proposes that:

H1. Brand image has positive impact on customer loyalty.

Brand image and customer commitment
Following the identified theoretical disparity on loyalty, wherein loyalty was suggested as meaning commitment. This research will briefly seek to explore the meaning of customer commitment so as to show the differences between the concepts and further research on possible impact of brand image on customer commitment to brand.

Although there is a growing debate on the meaning and scope of commitment theory, most of the well-known definitions tend to explore commitment from organizational perspective, with approaches that seems to suggest that commitment reflect on one or more of the three components of organisational commitment, referred to in Meyer and Allen (1991) as affective commitment, "employee emotional attachment to, and involvement in a particular organisation", continuance commitment "an awareness of costs associated with leaving the organisation", and normative commitment "a feelings of obligation to continue employment" (Meyer and Allen, 1991, p. 67). These views are further consider in a holistic definition of commitment as:

> [...] the extent to which employees are psychologically connected to their organisations, sustained by continued desire to remain employed in the organisation, and expressed as emotional feeling, bonding, involvement and consideration of alternatives, sacrifices, and costs due to internal organisational and external cultural influences (Ogba, 2007, p. 84).

This approach supposes that commitment could be expressed to some foci within and around the organisation; as a result, "a range of antecedent variables" (Lok *et al.*, 2005, p. 491) that influences commitment do exist (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1991), including customer commitment to brand and other market offerings as customers "desire to maintain a valued relationship" (Moorman *et al.*, 1992, p. 316) with organisations "directly and indirectly through commitment which affects exchange outcomes" (Morgan and Hunt 1994, p. 23).

Customer commitment like any other kind of commitment expression is a new concept and is argued to be driven as a result of expected outcomes from a market offering, including outcomes from buying of a product, psychological ego of identifying with brand, etc. According to (Moorman *et al.*, 1992) customer commitment is:

> [...] an enduring attitude or desire for a particular brand or firm. It is the degree to which customers as members of an organisation are emotionally connected to an organisation, its brand or product, sustained by continues desire to maintain membership.

It is a sustained experience, emotional belonging and quest for continues identification with a brand. Customer commitment is, therefore, deeper than repeat purchase (loyalty). As Aaker (1991) suggests, it can be argued that a strong brand with high equity, will have a large number of committed customers, leading to high and continues interaction and communication between the customer and the market offering or the brand. The brand, therefore, becomes of ultimate importance to the customer; it shapes the customers' beliefs and in some circumstances their personality. Customer commitment is, therefore, customers' enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship with the brand or organisation that directly and indirectly through commitment affects exchange outcomes (Moorman *et al.*, 1992). Commitment helps organisations identify and distinguish and potentially effectively reward genuine customer loyalty (Lacey (2007). Consequently, customer-based commitment can be considered as commitment to an organisation or its foci including its brand, brand associations (i.e. brand image and brand reputation) and other marketing activities employed by the organisation.

Following the above theoretical outcomes, this study argues that customer commitment should be viewed as different from customer loyalty and, therefore, should be conceptualized and measured from the point of view that customers can express emotional feelings and desire to maintain relationship with a brand as a result of deeper intrinsic factors like the brand meaning and image from customers perspective rather than simply from repeat purchase. In view of this, it is also relevant to argue for a possible positive impact of brand image on customer commitment. This study therefore proposes that:

H2. Brand image has a positive impact on customer commitment.

Following the above theoretical outcomes by which two propositions were developed, one can theoretically argue that brand image has positive impact on customer loyalty,

and customer commitment. Nevertheless, it is relevant to argue that such ascertain may be subject to debate or argued to lack facts as most of the literature through which the supposition was based upon originates from researches carried out within Western environment. To further explore this supposition and empirically ascertain the validity of the assumption, this study will subject the above postulation to test using participants within the Chinese mobile phone market as previously discussed. Conduct of this research outside a Western environment will help support not only the literature outcomes but lead to possible generalisation of the view that brand image has positive impact not only on already researched antecedents (Ehrenberg, 1988; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998; Bloemer *et al.*, 1998; Oliver, 1999; Easingwood and Murphy, 2001; Fornell *et al.*, 2006; Lacey, 2007) but also on customer loyalty and commitment. This study will, therefore, explore the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment within the Chinese mobile phone sector.

Research methodology
Questionnaire design and demographic data
This research scale items were designed as an interval rating seven-point Likert scale to be responded to on a scale of one to seven "to indicate the extent of participants" agreement or disagreement with a given statement, where seven represents "very strongly agree", six represents "strongly agree", five represents "agree", four "neither agree nor disagree", three "disagree", two "strongly disagree", and one "very strongly disagree". The purpose of this improved method is to offer the respondents with more choice and help capture their feelings toward the brand of their choice and provide room for the assessment of the scale's validity and reliability (Hinkin, 1995; Ogba, 2006).

The scale items were, therefore, administered as a questionnaire with 26 items statement to 250 participants within the Chengdu City, Sichuan province of China, with 40 percent usable response rate. Some items within the scale originates from this study while other items (statements) like "I feel a sense of duty to influence my friends to identify with this brand because it represents something unique" were adopted from an existing research scale on commitment and brand (Ogba, 2008). The data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis for scale item reduction and factor extractions, and Cronbach α internal consistency measure for reliability test, and ANOVA and correlation analysis for the assessment of association and or differences of variables.

Outcome from the demographic aspect of the research shows that 61 percent of participants represent male respondents while 39 percent were female. On participants' age, 4 percent represents the age groups 16-18, 86 percent representing the age group 19-23, while 16 percent of the participants are between the age ranges 24-28. On participants educational level, 72 percent of total participants were university undergraduates pursuing a Bachelor degree, while 14 percent are on Diploma Programme and 14 percent on Postgraduate programme with 11 percent on Masters degree and 3 percent involved in other types of postgraduate studies. The study also explored participants' level of income with most respondents below RMB 6000 (68 percent), with 6 percent representing participants earning between RMB 6, 001 to 8,000 and 7 percent on RMB 8,001 to 10,000. Only 11 percent of respondents have income level between RMB 10,001 to 12,000 and 8 percent above RMB 120,001 per annum.

Analysis

The study subjected the scale items to exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation for scale reduction, factor extraction and identification of smaller set of factors with eigenvalues greater than or equal to 1.0:

> [...] Prior to performing the PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed [...] the inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.3 and above (Pallant, 2005, p. 191).

The factorability of the correlation matrix was supported and established using Bartlett's (1954) test of Sphericity, which showed components extractions are statistically significance ($p = 0.000$).

Output from the PCA was the reduction of the scale items from 26 items to 25 usable scale items and the extraction of 5 components representing perceived quality, customer satisfaction, customer commitment and loyalty. The five factor extractions from the 25 scale items are with eigenvalues above 0.1. The first component shows a maximum (total) initial eigenvalues of (11.025), that is a cumulative percentage of approximately 44 percent of the total variances. While the other components showed a maximum extraction of (2.346), (1.926), 1.549 and 1.231, which is approximately, 9.384 percent, 7.7 percent, 6.1 percent and 4.9 percent of the respective total variances, representing a total of 72.3 percent cumulative percentage of the initial eigenvalues of all the variances. In other words, the factor extraction represents a total of 72 percent of all the 25 items in the scale before factor rotation. The reliable (suitable and usable) of items were also explored with high scale reliability of 0.942α.

The motive behind the above analysis was to test for instruments suitability and usability in a study of this kind as evidences abound of various studies that suppose to measure such behavioural components, but in reality are measuring something similar or different from the concept in study (Hinkin, 1995; Mowday, 1998; Lee *et al.*, 2001). This outcome, therefore, suggests that the scale is indeed measuring the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment.

ANOVA

In testing the behavioural and attitudinal aspects of customer loyalty and commitment in relation to brand image, the two propositions were subjected to statistical test using one way ANOVA. Output from the assessment of customer loyalty and commitment on brand image as presented in Table I, showed strong evidence of statistical significances at $p < 0.05$ level. The significance level for each customer component was: customer loyalty (0.000) and Customer commitment to the product (mobile phone) at (0.000).

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was employed in assessing the possible association between each component variables: customer loyalty, customer commitment and brand image. "Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity" (Pallent 2005, p. 127). The outcome of the analysis was a moderately strong positive relationship (correlation) between brand image and the components, with stronger correlations existing between brand image and customer commitment at $r = 0.809$ and strong association between brand image and customer loyalty at $r = 0.777$. Therefore, r is significant beyond the 1 percent level (0.01) as shown in Table II.

	ANOVA	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Satisfaction	Between groups	1083.681	24	45.153	4.406	0.000
	Within groups	768.679	75	10.249		
	Total	1852.360	99			
Commitment	Between groups	2446.839	24	101.952	12.208	0.000
	Within groups	626.321	75	8.351		
	Total	3073.160	99			
Loyalty	Between groups	1857.150	24	77.381	8.367	0.000
	Within groups	693.600	75	9.248		
	Total	2550.750	99			
Quality	Between groups	876.161	24	36.507	5.089	0.000
	Within groups	538.29	75	7.174		
	Total	1414.190	99			

Table I.
One-way ANOVA of customer loyalty and commitment on brand image

	Correlations	Image	Loyalty
Image	Pearson correlation	1	0.777**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	n	100	100
Loyalty	Pearson correlation	0.777**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	n	100	100
Image	Pearson correlation	1	0.809**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	n	100	100
Commitment	Pearson correlation	0.809**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	n	100	100

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table II.
Correlation between brand image, customer loyalty and commitment

Further analysis of customer loyalty

Following Bowen and Chen (2001) recommendation and to further explore customer loyalty to brand and by implication the degree of brand image impact on customer loyalty, this study subjects participants' response to frequency analysis. The study measured customer loyalty using behavioural assessment of customer loyalty through two dimensions:

(1) evaluation of customer repeat purchase; and

(2) attitudinal assessment of customers in form of evaluation of customer recommendation of brand to others.

The outcomes from the above analysis is 74 cumulative percent for possible participants repeat purchase of the market offerings associated with the brand in study and 70 percent for possible participant recommendation of same to others. These percentages present more than half of the total respondents (Dick and Basu, 1994). Consequent upon this outcomes indicating brand impact upon the variables, this study

accepts the propositions as established in hypotheses one and two (*H1* and *H2*) of this research that: brand image has positive impact on customer loyalty and commitment.

This research outcome implies that a positive brand image will enable possible high customer loyalty and customer commitment towards a market offering. However, integrating this outcome to that of other research (like Oliver, 1999; Easingwood and Murphy, 2001; Fornell *et al.*, 2006) on the impact of brand image on customer perceived quality and satisfaction, the consequence will be represented as shown in Figure 1 linking positive brand image to customer perceived quality, satisfaction, loyalty and commitment.

Discussions and summary

This research set out to explore the possible impact of brand image customer loyalty and commitment, and to evaluate these in the light of customer behaviour towards selected brands within the Chinese mobile phone market sector.

Following outcomes from review of literatures and conceptual frameworks relating to brand image, customer loyalty and commitment, two hypotheses were generated and further assessed using previously developed and tested research instrument on brand image, customer commitment and loyalty. The outcome from the study suggests that effective study of the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment in Non-western environment is possible, but should be approached as individual/independent variables in that each variable tends to show strong independent on each other and yet highly dependent upon brand image as a customer with low level loyalty may express high level commitment towards a brand or market offering.

The outcome also supports the assumptions that brand image has positive impact on customer loyalty and commitment. The study and its finding was identified as indeed fundamental as previous researchers have conducted less research on the impact of brand image on the variables explored in this research and with evidence of lack of substantive empirical study on the subject within Non-western developing economy like China. The study was seen as urgent and relevant. To show evidence of dependability, the study not only measured item's suitability and usability, but also linked its findings with similar study on brand image and other components like customer perceived quality and satisfaction and draws an empirical conclusion that brand image has positive impact on customer perceived quality, satisfaction, loyalty and commitment (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998; Bloemer *et al.*, 1998; Oliver, 1999; Easingwood and Murphy, 2001; Fornell *et al.*, 2006).

This study is, therefore, a contribution to and an addition/consolidation of an existing knowledge. The study was advanced by exploring the impact of brand image on key
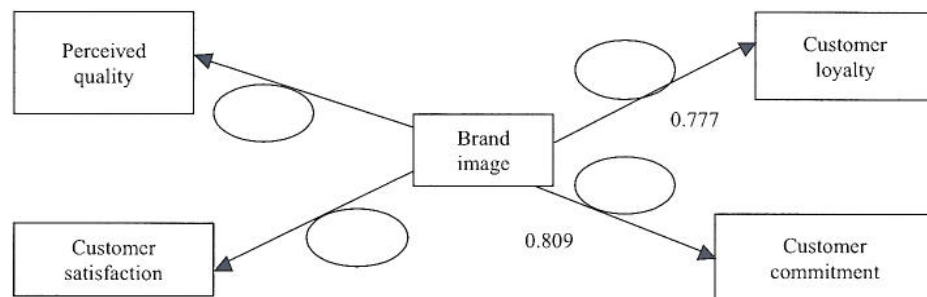

Figure 1.
Results of correlation analysis on hypotheses

customer behavioural variables. The approach employed in this study made the exploration of a study of this kind possible in that the study not only acknowledged the lack of available common definition of the concepts discussed, but also acknowledged the difficulties in its measurement and thereafter employed a quantitative approach that logically developed assumptions for the study of various issues within the study. Following the results from this study, therefore, one can conclude that brand image can positively influence customers' perceived quality on a market offering and also boost customer satisfaction, loyalty and commitment towards a market offering. It is also evident that these variables have strong association to and with brand image. This implies that a good brand image is that which impacts positively on this entire customer variable: customer satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality and commitment to a market offering and not necessarily on one or few of the variables. This, therefore, represents the degree of the relevant of this study, that a good brand image must positively impact on customers' loyalty and perceived quality and should also influence to a greater degree the extent to which customers perceives a market offering and express satisfaction to such offering for long-term delight and sustainable profit.

Limitations of the research
Although this study took a positive approach in reviewing previous literatures and analyses of data using advanced statistical tools, there are some limitations worth acknowledging. These include issues with the research sample size in relation to and with the actual population of mobile phone users within Chengdu City of Sichuan Province in China; this constraint may have direct impact on possible generalisation of the research outcomes and may, therefore, call for further research using a bigger sample size. Further limitations can be identified from the method and result of questionnaire administration and language differences between the researchers and the respondents and the researchers' ability to effectively translate the research statement from English to Chinese. Although participants have Basic English language skills, there is likelihood of biasness and error as through misinterpretations amongst other issues.

Managerial implications of study and recommendations
As earlier reviewed, brand image is considered to be significant in influencing customer behaviour positively. Managers within, and outside the sector, China and other non collectivist culture should acknowledge findings from this study and the relevance of the valuables studied and the power of brand image in influencing consumer behaviour and seek to constantly explore and assess brand image impact on similar variables for effective and long-term customer delight. The danger, therefore, is that whereas it is known that a poorly developed and presented brand image will lead to disaster, the neglect of such vital organisational issue, may lead to loss of customers as there may be low satisfaction and therefore low loyalty and commitment to organisations market offering.

Recommendations for further research
Studies on brand image and most importantly brand equity and there impact within and outside the organisation is still in its infancy and is evolving with more complications in terms of definition and measurement. Further research is, therefore, needed on the conceptualisation and measurement of brand image and its impact on

other customer related issues like: sales, promotion, and organisations return on investments. Such research is urgently needed and will provide deeper insight into an area that although very important to sustainable profit, is indeed riddled with lack of agreement. The study will further highlight on the usefulness of brand in the twenty-first century organisation and on how more and more organisations are depending on brand for survival in highly competitive environment.

References

Aaker, D.A. (1991), *Managing Brand Equity*, The Free Press, New York, NY.

Aaker, D.A. (1994), *Gestion del Valdor de la Marca. Capitalizar el Valor de la Marca*, Diaz de Santos, Madrid.

Andreassen, T.W. and Lindestad, B. (1998), "The effect of corporate image in the formation of customer loyalty", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 82-92.

Aperia, T. and Back, R. (2004), *Brand Relations Management: Bridging the Gap between Brand Promise and Brand Delivery*, Liber AB, Malmo.

Assael, H. (1998), *Consumer Behaviour and Marketing Action*, 6th ed., South Western College Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.

Bartlett, M.S. (1954), "A note on the multiplying factors for various chi square approximations", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 16, Series B, pp. 296-8.

BBC (2007), "China and India: emerging giant", BBC, 15th August, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/world/2006/emerging_giants/default.stm (accessed January 2008).

Bloemer, J., De Ruyter, K. and Peeters, P. (1998), "Investigating drivers of bank loyalty: the complex relationship between image, service quality and satisfaction", *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, Vol. 16 No. 7, pp. 276-86.

Bowen, J.T. and Chen, S. (2001), "The relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 213-7.

Burleigh, G.B. and Sidney, L.J. (1955), "The product and the brand", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 33-9.

Cronin, J.J. and Taylor, S.A. (1992), "Measuring service quality: a re-examination and extension", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 56, pp. 55-68.

Dick, A.S. and Basu, K. (1994), "Customer loyalty: towards an integrated conceptual framework", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 22, pp. 99-113.

Dobni, D. and Zinkhan, G.M. (1990), "In search of brand image: a foundation analysis", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 110-9.

Easingwood, C. and Murphy, J. (2001), "Using qualitative research to refine service quality models", *Qualitative Market Research*, Vol. 4, pp. 217-23.

Ehrenberg, A.S.C. (1988), *Repeat-Buying: Facts, Theory and Applications*, 2nd ed., Edward Arnold, London.

Fornell, C., Mithas, S., Morgeson, F.V. III and Krishnan, M.S. (2006), "Customer satisfaction and stock prices: high returns, low risk", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70, pp. 3-14.

Garcia Rodriguez, M.J. and Bergantinos, C.G. (2001), "Los components del valor de la marca: una aplicacion empirica en el segmento alto del Mercado automovilistico", *Revista Europea de Direccion y Economia de la Empresa*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 161-78.

Herzog, H. (1963), "Behavioral science concepts for analyzing the consumer", in Bliss, P. (Ed.), *Marketing and the Behavioral Sciences*, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, MA, pp. 76-86.

Hess, J. and Story, J. (2005), "Trust-based commitment: multidimensional consumer-brand relationships", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 313-22.

Hinkin, T.R. (1995), "A review of scale development practices in the study of organisations", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 967-89.

Jacoby, J. (1971), "Brand loyalty: a conceptual definition", *Proceedings of the American Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC*, Vol. 6, pp. 655-6.

Keller, K. (1993a), "Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based equity", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 No. 1, pp. 1-22.

Keller, K.L. (1993b), "Conceptualizing, measuring and managing customer-based brand equity", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 No. 1, pp. 1-22.

Keller, K.L. and Davey, K.K. (2001), "Building customer-based brand equity", *Marketing Management*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 14-19.

Lacey, R. (2007), "Relationship drivers of customer commitment", *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 315-33.

Lee, K., Allen, N.J., Meyer, J.P. and Rhee, Y. (2001), "The three-component model of organisational commitment: an application to South Korea", *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, Vol. 50, pp. 596-614.

Lok, P., Westwood, R. and Crawford, J. (2005), "Perception of organisational subculture and their significance for organisational commitment", *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, Vol. 54 No. 4, pp. 490-514.

Low, G.S. and Lamb, C.W. (2000), "The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 9 No. 6, pp. 350-68.

Martensen, A., Gronholdt, L. and Trajcevski, S. (2004), "Building customer-brand relationships on the internet: development of an online brand equity model", Forum for Advertising Research.

Martinez, E. and Pina, J.M. (2003), "The negative impact of brand extensions on parent brand image", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 12 No. 7, pp. 432-48.

Mathieu, J. and Zajac, D. (1990), "A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 108, pp. 171-94.

Meyer, J. and Allen, N. (1991), "A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment", *Human resources Management Review*, Vol. 1, pp. 61-89.

Meyer, J. and Allen, N. (1997), *Commitment in the Workplace*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Meyer, J., Allen, N. and Smith, C. (1993), "Commitment to organizations and occupations: extension and test of a three-component conceptualization", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 78, pp. 538-51.

Mowday, R.T. (1998), "Reflections on the study and relevance of organizational commitment", *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 387-401.

Moorman, C., Zaltman, G. and Deshpande, R. (1992), "Relationship between providers and users of market research: the dynamic of trust within and between organisations", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 314-28.

Morgan, R.M. and Hunt, S.D. (1994), "he commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58, pp. 20-38.

Muncy, J.A. (1996), "Measuring perceived brand parity", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 411-7.

Ogba, I.E. (2006), "Organizational measurement: exploring and developing effective employee commitment measurement", in Neely, A., Kennerley, M. and Walters, A. (Eds), *Performance Measurement and Management: Public and Private Bedfordshire*, Centre for Business Performance, Cranfield.

Ogba, I.E. (2007), "Organisational commitment in developing countries: the case of Nigeria", Thesis (PhD), University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Ogba, I.E. (2008), "Commitment in the workplace: the impact of income and age on employee commitment in Nigerian banking sector", *Management Research News*, Vol. 31 No. 11, pp. 867-78.

Oliver, R.L. (1999), "Whence customer loyalty", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63 No. 4, pp. 33-44.

Padgett, D. and Allen, D. (1997), "Communicating experience: a narrative approach to creating service brand image", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 49-62.

Pallant, J. (2005) SPSS survival manual: a step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for windows (version 12), Open University Press, Maidenhead.

Sohu (2007), Report of research on customer satisfaction of mobile phone 2007 (Chinese translation) available at: http://digi.it.sohu.com/s2007/mobile-service2007

Uncles, M.D., Dowling, G.R. and Hammond, K. (2003), "Customer loyalty and customer loyalty programs", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 294-316.

Wood, L. (2000), "Brands and brand equity: definition and management", *Management Decision*, Vol. 38 No. 9, pp. 662-9.

Zeithaml, V.A. (1988), "Consumer perceptions of price, quality and value: a means-end model and synthesis of evidence", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 52 No. 3.

ZOL (2007), Report of marketing research on customers' attention of Chinese mobile phone, (Chinese translation), available at: http://zdc.zol.com.cn/

Further reading

Lok, P. and Crawford, J. (2003), "Antecedents of organizational commitment and the mediatingrole of job satisfaction", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 8, pp. 594-613.

About the authors

Ike-Elechi Ogba is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing Management and Strategy at Newcastle Business School. He has research interests spanning from Marketing to OB with specific interests on Customer and Employee commitment, well being and organisational measurement, an area in which he obtained his PhD. He currently supervises two Doctorial students. Ike has had his research papers presented in national and international conferences, peer reviewed, refereed and published. Ike-Elechi Ogba is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: ike-elechi.ogba@northumbria.ac.uk

Zhenzhen Tan holds a Bachelor's Degree in International Management from Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University at Newcastle and at the verge of progressing into her PhD programme. Zhenzhen research is in Marketing with special interest in Customer satisfaction and loyalty.