

# Modeling the Domino Effect of Brand Communication- Understanding the Consumer Psychology Behind Brand Evangelism in the QSR Industry

T.S. Arthi<sup>a</sup>, J. Joshua Selvakumar<sup>b</sup>

## Abstract

This study attempted to trace the path of the consequences of communication done by quick service restaurants and how brand communication can manipulate consumer psychology to create brand evangelists. This research employs a descriptive design and the data has been captured through primary sources. Constructs and indicators have been adopted through a careful study of the literature and have been used for the development of the research instrument. The results found that communication done by the brands help establish brand personality. And purchase decisions take place when customers start identifying themselves with the brand. The satisfied customers then turn as brand advocates resulting in evangelizing the brand. Though brands invest in the initial stage of the communication process, in the long run this acts as a cost-effective and mutually beneficial. The research imposes the fact that brand communication strategy if carried out properly will seamlessly get customers to evangelize the brand. This study can be used by the players in the quick service industry as well as other marketers. This study is the first to present communication as a two step process- The initial process of communication being activated by the brand which leads to brand adoption ultimately and the second stage of communication is taken forward by the advocates of the brand resulting in a profitable outcome for the brand. This study helps better our understanding about the importance of the role of communication in developing the relationships that customers build with their brand and its impact on the brands. And also it throws light on how brands can use communication to manipulate consumer behavior through a series of psychological processes which results in favorable outcomes for the brand such as brand evangelism.

**Keywords:** Brand Communication, Brand Psychology, Brand Evangelism, Brand Personality, Brand Identity, Brand Advocacy, Brand Purchase Decision.

## Introduction

It is critical for a brand to have deliberate and healthy communication with stakeholders in this day and age. Hence brand communication has become an important aspect of brand management in which firms inform, convince, enlighten, teach, remind, and expand their stakeholders' understanding of the brand, its strengths, values, foundations, and product or service offerings. It is viewed as a source for effectively managing brand connections with consumers, employees, suppliers, channel members, the media, government regulators, and the general public. (Zehir et al., 2011).

In this paper the domino effect of brand communication is studied under the context of

multinational Quick Service Restaurants (QSR), operating in India. QSR is a dining style in which food is prepared and served quickly with a limited degree of service. In general, modern QSR is associated with global chains established in the United States, such as Burger King, McDonald's, Subway, Starbucks, and KFC. Outside of the United States, rapid expansion has happened; observed mostly as a result of a franchising business model that places an increasing focus on positioning through brand communication (Mathe et al., 2017).

The growing trend of dining out in India's urban cities, across all economic levels, without the need for a special occasion, has increased demand for QSRs. Burger King India Pvt. Ltd., Jubilant Food Works Limited, Burman Hospitality Private Limited, Jumboking Foods Private Limited, were major players in the Indian QSR market, according to a research and market report in 2021

<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar, Anna University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: arthits2020@gmail.com

<sup>b</sup>Associate Professor, PSG Institute of Management (PSG College of Technology), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: joshua@psgim.ac.in

(MarketResearch.com, 2021). Over the last few years, the Indian QSR market has grown steadily. The market increased by 17.27 percent between FY 2016 and FY 2020 and is expected to reach INR 827.63 Bn by FY 2025.

Brands have faced heavy challenges in effectively communicating themselves to their consumers. More often brands lose awareness because of their negligence to invest in the cost of brand operation. Poor customer management, weak brand awareness, blind advertising and unreasonable market personnel system resulted in poor brand communication where their internal advantages were not understood by the customers, and their market share declined (Cheng & Hu, 2020).

Multinational brands also face a geographic and cultural barrier when expanding out of their home countries. This is evident in the case of multiple QSRs venturing into India during the early 2000s, where some brands have spent close to a decade to understand consumer expectations and are still trying to effectively communicate their offerings.

Multinational QSR brands also face an uphill battle in customer retention, where brands put more effort into customer acquisition rather than customer relations, brands that proactively work to fulfill customer expectations have prevailed in the market. Brands also fail customer retention by ineffectively portraying their identity.

Brand Identification is a major part in customer retention, as customers that do not identify with the brand, tend to look for other brands that personify their identity. The psychological behavior of the affinity of customer identity to that of a brand is important. Further into this paper, the study has categorized the effort made by brands that lead to customer retention, in the form of "Push by brands", while the outbound consequences of their operations have been categorized under "Push by customers".

There is also heavy cutthroat competition in the QSR space with a majority of brands consolidated under food conglomerates, fighting for market share, as India is a relatively young market ripe for expansion. It has frequently been argued that incumbents, particularly established international firms, can use brand proliferation to prevent new entrants (Bonanno, 1987; Scherer, 1980; Schmalensee, 1978; Tirole, 1988) and raise market pricing (Levy & Reitzes, 1993).

Predatory pricing strategies have been implemented in the early stages of market growth, which saw brands like Papa John's leave the country under financial stress, but the industry is now

looking for more sustainable means of operations, where effective brand communication, consumer brand identification and customer brand advocacy have become a strategic necessity.

Brands also face heavy challenges in terms of effective brand communication under a brand clutter environment. A cluttered brand advertising environment has been shown to reduce ad viewer engagement (Webb, 1979), increase avoidance (Elliott & Speck, 1998) and impair advertising memories (e.g., Cobb (1985); Webb (1979)). Brand clutter also inhibits audiences' ability to correctly identify the brand (Zhao, 1997), and have a negative impact on emotional responses to advertising (Zhao, 1997). (Mord & Gilson, 1985; Zhao, 1997). An effort to understand brand identification has been made in this study where effective brand communication and consumer brand identification performed in a brand cluttered environment has been studied.

The study identifies brand evangelism as the ultimate payoff for all forms of effective brand communication performed by a company. Brand evangelism as performed by the consumer, is described as the active behavioral and vocal support of a brand, which includes acts like purchasing the brand, spreading favorable brand recommendations, and persuading people about that particular brand. To have your consumers become advocates of your brand and preach your strengths to a wider reachable audience is very ideal for a brand to have as an asset.

Marketers claimed less than two decades ago that pleased customers tell eight others about their experiences, while disappointed customers tell more than 20 others. Technological improvements have now enabled customers' brand-directed behavior to grow exponentially as tasks connected to purchasing and communication habits have been simplified (Scarpi, 2010).

The study attempts to form a conceptual model that attempts to connect various theories in Brand communication with Consumer behavioral psychology.

### **Need for the Study**

With a plethora of newer food options and state of the art marketing techniques popping up every day, the span of customer lifetime value is shrinking each day and so customer retention has become the need of the hour for companies including Quick Service Restaurants. Only a targeted communications campaign can assist create evangelists who will be beneficial for the brand in the long run. The Internet's ubiquity, including easy access via mobile phones and tablets, the rise in the

proportion of customers who thoroughly research upon information upon brands before purchase and readily provide such information to the seekers, the reviews and comments about a brand usage and experience which can be easily posted online instantaneously, the numerous social networking sites, and the growing concern among modern organisations about how brand-directed behaviours by consumers influence current and potential users, turnover, and the firm's worth. Chen et al. (2012); Prendergast et al. (2010); Zhu and Zhang (2010) are all reasons why this study undertakes research upon brand evangelism and how it can be manipulated by brands via communication.

### Objectives

- To ascertain the role of brand communication in shaping brand personality
- To assess the extent to which brand personality enables brand identification
- To find out whether brand identification leads to purchase decision and brand advocacy
- To propose, validate and test a suitable model depicting the sequential flow of brand communication

### Literature Review and Research Hypothesis

#### 1. Theoretical Background and Research Framework

Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) established a model to investigate customers' relationships with brands and brand evangelism in their article titled

"The influence of brand trust and brand identity on brand evangelism." Certain variables have been borrowed as an extension of the theory for use in the suggested conceptual model. This study merged self-congruity theory and social identity theory as frameworks for constructing theoretical models to describe the two paths of brand evangelism among community fans based on the many viewpoints of value congruence (Figure 1).

According to the self congruency and identification theories, people choose to use things that are symbolic of their personality. (Sirgy,1986). According to research based on social identity theory, brands with images that conform to a social in-group will help increase a consumer's relationship with the brand and aid in brand identification (Kuo & Hou, 2017).

According to relationship marketing and social identity theory, psychological attachments influence the direction and intensity of people's volitional efforts and extra-role activities. As a result, this attachment serves as the driving force behind brand evangelists, which a brand can establish through generating high brand resonance.

In the following ways, this study differed from earlier investigations. From the standpoint of value consistency among community members, this study split consumer value consistency into self-congruity and brand consistency, thereby filling a gap in the literature addressing the single viewpoint of value consistency.

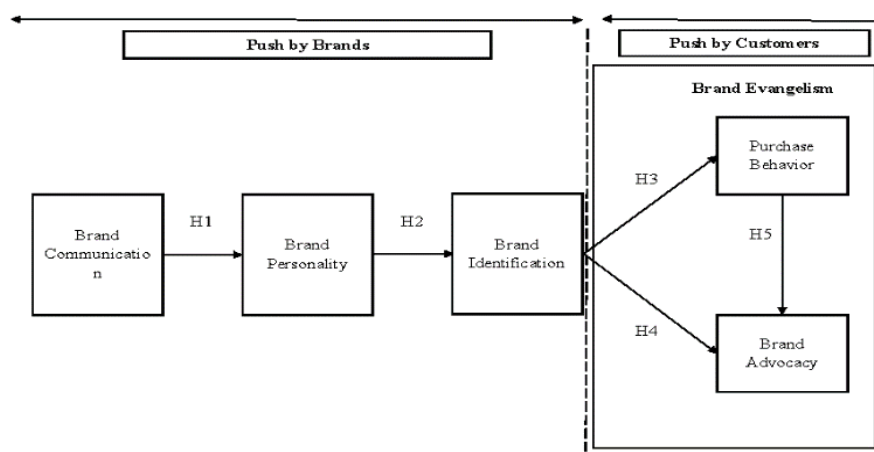


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts a conceptual framework for articulating linkages in QSR communication tactics. This approach is based on a study of the literature by Hsu (2018) and Río et al. (2001). It is also based on academic frameworks such as individual identity theory and social identity theory. The model depicts the chronological process from brand communication to brand evangelism from left to right.

#### Brand Communication

Brand communication occurs when an idea or image of a product or service is marketed in such a way that its distinctiveness is identified and recognized by a large number of consumers. Advertising professionals in business enterprises engage in brand communication not only to increase brand recognition, but also to establish

good reputations and a set of standards that the company should strive to meet or exceed (Sahin et al., 2011). According to Sahin et al. (2011), brand communication can be one-way (indirect communication) or two-way (one-to-one or direct communication). Print, TV, radio advertising are other forms of one-way communication.

This type of communication is primarily intended to raise brand awareness, improve brand attitudes such as brand satisfaction and brand trust, and influence purchasing behavior such as brand choice (Hoek et al., 2000; Zehir et al., 2011). Two-way or direct brand communication is primarily concerned with directly influencing existing customer purchasing behavior and is primarily transactional in nature (Low, 2000; Sahin et al., 2011).

### **Brand Personality**

According to Allen and Olson (1995), brand personality is a set of meanings constructed by an observer to describe the 'inner' characteristics of a brand. The concept of brand personality arises from the application of the concept of personality from individual psychology to the marketing context. As a result, the assumption is that brands, like individuals, can develop personalities that are similar in their characteristics (J. L. Aaker, 1997). Formally, a brand personality is defined as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness are the five dimensions of Aaker's brand personality model (J. L. Aaker, 1997). Furthermore, personality traits associated with a brand, like those associated with an individual, are relatively enduring and distinct (J. L. Aaker, 1997; Wee, 2004).

### **Brand Identification**

Brands have deep meaning (Albert & Merunka, 2013) and help consumers form their own self-concepts or identities. According to Brewer (1991), brand identification fulfils the need for social identity and self-identification. The term "brand identification" refers to "the extent to which the consumer perceives his or her own self-image as overlapping the brand's image" (e.g. Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006); Sternberg (1987)). Self-image congruence is another term for brand identification. Sirgy et al. (1997), as well as self-connection. Consumer brand identification is defined by Stokburger-Sauer (2010) as a perceived feeling of oneness with a brand. Furthermore, the rationale that consumer identification with a brand is stronger when consumers perceive a brand's identity as more positive, attractive, and salient to the fulfillment of their identity needs is supported (e.g. Kuenzel and Halliday (2010)).

### **Purchase Decision**

Purchase decision is defined as the process by which customers identify their needs, research and collect information based on those needs, analyse and evaluate alternatives, and finally make a purchase decision. These actions are influenced by environmental factors such as cultural, group, and social values, and are determined by psychological and economic factors (Yang et al., 2006). In order to make a decision, consumers may rely on inferences. Huber and McCann (1982) demonstrated how inferences can influence how people evaluate products. Purchase decision, also known as buying value, is the stage at which consumers decide who to buy from, where to buy the brand or product from, or simply whether to buy the product or brand at all (Reighley, 2010).

### **Brand Advocacy**

Brand advocacy is defined as a satisfied customer's positive attitude toward a product and his recommendation of that product to others (Howard & Kerin, 2013). Customer advocacy, according to some authors, is a better predictor of consumer loyalty than repeat purchase behaviour (Mazzarol et al., 2007; F. Reichheld, 2006). Customers who support a brand are loyal customers (Cant et al., 2014). Brand advocates' recommendations aid in the acquisition of new customers. This increases the value that the customer brings to the company (Gremler & Brown, 1999). Brand advocacy and positive word of mouth are regarded as effective brand communications and the keys to brand adoption (Keller, 2007).

## **2. Relationship between Brand Communication and Brand Personality**

The symbolism and connotations that comprise brand personality are not always inherent in brands, but are frequently and inadvertently created through corporate communications and customer reactions (Wee, 2004). Positive advertising and communication, aid in the development and maintenance of a brand's personality in a competitive market (Hauser & Shugan, 1983). Advertising is significantly employed in the process of developing a person's personality. This follows naturally from the fact that personalities are especially beneficial for establishing brand associations. Nonetheless, all advertising influences brand personality, not just when an endorsement is used. Communication tactics are often utilized to build brand personality in the process of personality creation in advertising and marketing. Many researchers including

Brassington and Pettitt (2006), Erdogan and Baker (2000) and Redenbach (2000) have found that brands are sensitive to the communication and anchors which catalyze consumer behavior.

H1: Brand Communication positively impacts Brand personality.

### **3. Relationship between Brand Personality and Brand Identification**

The public perception of a brand will be boosted if it exhibits a specific set of characteristics. The brand personality of a certain brand will aid in differentiating it from others. If a brand has a personality, it will determine whether or not it is better than other brands (Siguaw et al., 1999). This brand personality will, in turn, have a positive impact on the brand identity. Customers will be more likely to remember and purchase a brand if it has a strong personality in their minds. When it comes to brand recognition, a lesser-known brand will have less of an impact (J. L. Aaker, 1997).

Brand personalities have different physical characteristics and participate in specific activities, all of which contribute to the public's perception of the brand. Other aspects of this personality may be related to the traits of those who use the brand and what draws them to it (Sung & Kim, 2010). Brand identity aids in the building of relationships between the firm and its customers, which may have an impact on the QSR's overall brand value (J. Aaker et al., 2004; J. L. Aaker, 1997). According to Coelho et al. (2018), consumer identification can occur from two perspectives: on a personal level, brands can help consumers express their personalities, values, and beliefs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), and on a social level, brands can serve as a tool for communicating consumer aspirations and self positioning (Tuškej et al., 2013).

H2: Brand Personality has a positive impact on brand identification.

### **4. Relationship between Brand Identification and Purchase Decision**

Consumers with higher brand identification are more likely to engage in pro-brand behaviours such as supporting the company's aims, preserving its reputation, supporting its products, and brand loyalty, which increases the likelihood of them purchasing that brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). It is obvious that better brand recognition elements will have a beneficial impact on the customer's purchase choice (Siguaw et al., 1999).

H3: Brand Identification has a positive effect on purchase decision.

### **5. Relationship between Brand Identification and Brand Advocacy**

Referral intents are frequently derived from consumers who are invested in the brand, as in having plans to purchase the brand in the near future (F. F. Reichheld, 2003). Furthermore, sending referrals allows consumers to exhibit not just their loyalty to their business, but also their abilities as a savvy shopper (Sundaram et al., 1998). As a result, customers who are prone to express their support for a brand are also likely to criticise competitor brands. Similarly, academics contend that when consumers have strong psychological feelings about a brand, they are under pressure to behave favourably toward the brand, and providing referrals is one approach to reduce the tension associated with the consumption experience (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

H4: Brand identification positively influences brand advocacy.

### **6. Relationship between Purchase Decision and Brand Advocacy**

It is critical for companies to have advocates because it allows them to reflect on the services they provide to the public. Brand personality can play a significant part in assisting some consumers to cultivate and identify themselves, allowing them to express their identities. In accordance with consumer psychology when customers create a connection with a brand and believe that the brand symbolizes who they are, there is a high likelihood that they would purchase that particular brand, and they are inclined to communicate favourable evaluations and assessments about the brand with others (Kemp et al., 2012). When a customer advocates good traits about a brand to others after purchasing it, it increases the buying intentions of others to purchase that particular brand, indicating that the purchase decision has a positive impact on brand advocacy (Hasan et al., 2015).

H5: Purchase decision positively influences brand advocacy.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive in nature. The study has identified 5 main latent variables taken from a thorough scrutiny of literature namely brand communication, brand personality, brand identity, purchase decision and brand advocacy. Brand communication was measured using a total of 12 indicators measured using a validated 7 point scale employed by Schivinski and Dąbrowski (2013). The 11



indicators of Brand personality measurement scales were drawn from Villarejo-Ramos and Sanchez-Franco (2005), D. A. Aaker (1996) and Dickinger and Lalovic (2015) and used a 7 point like rt scale for measuring responses. Brand identity latent variable was measured using a mix of 10 indicators adopted from the papers of Kim and Kim (2004), Villarejo-Ramos and Sanchez-Franco (2005), Tasci (2020). Jiranyakul and Yoksvad (2011) in their paper titled Consumer attitudes toward Quick Service Restaurants in Thailand: the study of influencing factors affecting purchase making decision had developed indicators which have been used in this study for measuring purchase decisions indicators. The five indicators chosen to measure Brand Advocacy where taken from Wallace et al. (2014) and Hassan et al. (2016). All perceptual indicators were measured using a 7 point Likert scale.

### Sample

Around 300 respondents were identified and a structured questionnaire was administered to them for the purpose of survey, out of which 256 individuals responded.

F tests - Multiple Regression: Omnibus ( $R^2$  deviation from zero)

**Analysis: Post hoc:** Compute achieved power

**Input:** Effect size  $f^2$  = 0.15  
 $\alpha$  err prob = 0.05  
 Total sample size = 256  
 Number of predictors = 13

### Output:

Noncentrality parameter  $\lambda$  = 38.400000  
 Critical F = 1.760769  
 Numerator df = 13  
 Denominator df = 242  
 Power ( $1-\beta$  err prob) = 0.992919

A post Hoc power analysis test was carried out and the resultant power ( $1-\beta$  err prob) = 0.992919 shows the sample size is sufficient to prove the theory.

### Instrument Reliability and Validity

**Table 1. Reliability and Validity of Constructs**

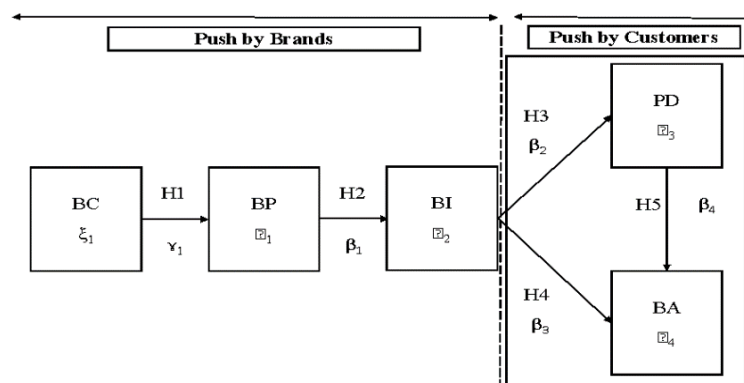
Reliability and AVE			
Construct	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
BC	0.89912	0.509754	0.878395
BP	0.8361	0.506241	0.755272
BI	0.79625	0.56778	0.718562
PD	0.88675	0.570953	0.849228
BAD	0.85261	0.538778	0.784794

(BC- Brand Communication, BP - Brand Personality, BI - Brand Identification, PD - Purchase Decision, BAD - Brand Advocacy)

The scales were measured to ensure their reliability and validity. As can be seen in Table 1, all of the constructs under study were reliable, as their Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.71 to 0.87 and their composite reliability coefficients ranged from 0.79 to 0.89, which is above the minimum suggested 0.70 level (Hair et al., 2014). The average variance extracted were above the minimum suggested 0.50 level (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) so it can be concluded that the constructs had convergent validity (.506-.579). Finally, all of the constructs under study had discriminant validity as the squared correlations (shared variance) between them ranged from 0.01 to 0.22, while the lowest AVE score was 0.55 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, all the above scores indicated that the instruments used in the study had good convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

### Results

The proposed structural model depicted below in figure 2 is a replication of a framework previously presented in figure 1 using mathematical notations in the structural equation model. A total of 5 variables exist in the model and are depicted with the following Greek alphabets.



**Fig. 2. Structural Model**

Brand Communication (BC)- $\epsilon_1$ , Brand Personality (BP)- $\eta_1$ , Brand Identity (BI)- $\eta_2$ , Purchase Decision (PD)-  $\eta_3$ , Brand Advocacy (BA)- $\eta_4$ . While BC is an exogenous variable and the rest are all endogenous variables. Thus a general structural equation model relating to the above variables is given as

$$\eta = \beta\eta + \gamma\delta + \zeta$$

The 5 hypothesis proposed above are represented by 5 casual relationships in the model.

Hypothesis 1 is represented by  $\gamma_1$  (BC--->BP)

Hypothesis 2 is represented by  $\beta_1$  (BP--->BI)

Hypothesis 3 is represented by  $\beta_2$  (BI--->PD)

Hypothesis 4 is represented by  $\beta_3$  (BI--->BA)

Hypothesis 5 is represented by  $\beta_4$  (PD--->BA)

$$Y = a + bx + e$$

$$\eta_1 = \xi_1\gamma_1 + \zeta_1$$

$$\eta_2 = f(\eta_1)$$

$$\eta_2 = \beta_1\eta_1 + \zeta_2$$

$$\eta_3 = f(\eta_2)$$

$$\eta_3 = \beta_2\eta_2 + \zeta_3$$

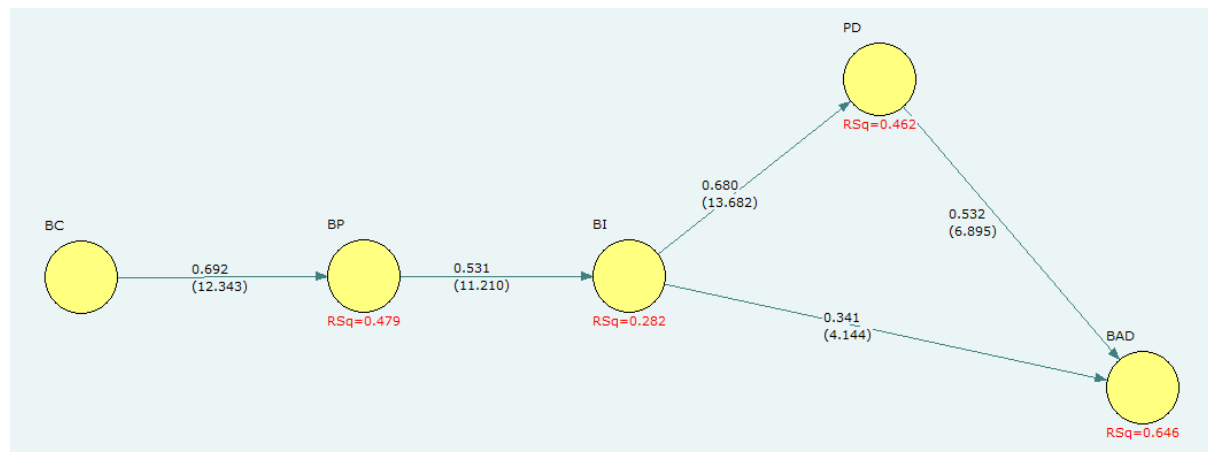
$$\eta_4 = f(\eta_3, \eta_2)$$

$$\eta_4 = \beta_4\eta_3 + \beta_3\eta_2 + \zeta_4$$

**Table 2. Correlation of Latent Variables**

Correlation of Latent Variables					
	BC	BP	BI	PD	BAD
BC	1				
BP	0.692	1			
BI	0.636	0.531	1		
PD	0.71	0.549	0.68	1	
BAD	0.669	0.562	0.702	0.764	1

The relationship between the dimensions of the variables with each other according to Spearman's correlation in the proposed model is significant. Among the variables, the relationship between brand identification on brand advocacy ( $r = 0.702$ ), also purchase decision on brand advocacy ( $r = 0.764$ ) has the highest relationship.



**Fig. 3. Hypotheses Testing**

The above diagram (Figure 3) shows the output of the testing of hypotheses among the latent variables using the path modeling software visual PLS and highlights the final impact on the

dependent variable Brand advocacy. The various beta coefficients, T-values and Regression coefficients and clearly stated in the output diagram.

**Table 3. Bootstrap Summary**

Structural Model--BootStrap					
Hypothesis	Entire sample estimate	Mean of Subsamples	Standard error	T-Statistic	Hypothesis
BC->BP	0.692	0.6926	0.0561	12.3432	Accepted
BP->BI	0.531	0.5315	0.0474	11.2099	Accepted
BI->PD	0.68	0.6819	0.0497	13.6821	Accepted
BI->BAD	0.341	0.3416	0.0823	4.1439	Accepted
PD->BAD	0.532	0.535	0.0772	6.8947	Accepted

Turning to hypothesis testing, the results show that as hypothesized brand communication has a significant influence on shaping brand personality ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.72$ ) with an  $R^2$  value of 0.47. Brand

personality has a significant influence ( $R^2$  value = 0.282) on brand identification ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.56$ ). Brand identification in turn influences purchase decision ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.46$ ) and brand advocacy

( $p < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.65$ ). The resulting  $R^2$  values give credibility to our hypothesis and demonstrate that brand identification influences purchase decisions by around 46 % while brand identification influences brand advocacy by about 64%. Also the final hypothesis which is purchase decision influence on brand advocacy is also hence proved ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.52$ ).

### Discussion

Based on the communications framework the research proposed and tested a suitable model for the effect of brand communications carried out by leading brands in the QSR industry which motivates loyal customers to take the brand further in the path to evangelism. The outcomes of brand identification were brand advocacy and brand purchase decision which collectively constitute brand evangelism. Our findings support the view that initial communication campaigns by the brands create brand personality, and this brand personality in turn helps establish brand identification. The outcomes of brand identification were brand advocacy and brand purchase intentions which constitute brand evangelism. This is also consistent with the literature on brand communication and consumer brand psychology. The findings of our research suggest that brand communication has a positive impact on brand personality, brand personality influences brand identity, brand identity influences brand advocacy and brand purchase intention. One interesting observation that has emerged from the findings is that once brand identification has been established customers advocate the brand irrespective of their intention to purchase. This is indicative of the fact that the customers strongly believe and identify themselves with the brand that their referrals spring from strong trust in the brand. The overall findings point to the need for strong communications to be employed by the brand in order to get customer's unwavering loyalty towards the brand in the long run. It is interesting to note that although all of the hypotheses have been proved, brand personality requires the support of other variables not included in this study to strengthen brand identification.

### Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings from this research will be useful for brand managers to manage and cultivate new & existing relationships between brands and their customers, plus also manage the expectations and associations that the brand invokes. The resultant findings will be quite useful in designing a brands'

integrated communications programme so as to optimize it. Once optimal communication strategies are designed it could be modified better to suit any new brand extensions. Although this study deals with brands converting their customers into brand evangelists through their communication and the final communication which is carried out by the customers of the brands themselves through referral managers need to consider the ramifications that will arise if the customers experience post purchase dissonance or if they perceive any disappointment or betrayal by the brand (Hess et al., 2011). This would cause them to retaliate against the brand (Rozanski et al., 1999) or spread negative word-of-mouth about the brand. So brand managers and organizations need to research on minimizing any negative experiences that the brand evangelists might have with the brand and work on further enriching the relationships which would ultimately benefit the brand in the long run.

The Quick service restaurants considered under this study have succeeded in strengthening and creating a niche product offering. The findings from this study could aid them to design their communications in such a way so as to focus on creating strong advocates for their brand which faces stiff competition from other QSR's and traditional dining services.

### Limitations of the Study

There are a few certain limitations in this study that hinder our ability to generalize the findings. Although the sample is quite large, online intercept sampling results in a convenience sample (Malhotra, 2010) with some bias associated to it, including self-selection. Secondly the data which was collected from various quick service restaurant patronizing communities. The analysis did not take into account the specific characteristics of the various communities from which our sample population have been chosen. Thirdly the study did not consider the third element of brand evangelism which is opposition brand referrals. This concept is drawn from the literature pioneered by Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013); Hickman and Ward (2007); Japutra et al. (2014); Kuo and Feng (2013); Muniz Jr and Hamer (2001); Scarpi (2010); Thompson and Sinha (2008), that shows that a strong positive relationship between a brand and a consumer could lead to negative reactions toward a competing brand. Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) define brand evangelism as the active behavioral and vocal support of a brand including actions such as purchasing the brand, disseminating



positive brand referrals, and convincing others about a focal brand by disparaging competing brands.

As per the concept of *schadenfreude*, the desire to harm may be a reaction to the consumer's perception of the competing brand as a threat (Marticotte et al., 2016). This has not been considered in this research as usually this behavior is exhibited only when the customers perceive the opposition brands as a threat. Besides, a few of the brands chosen in our study come from the same parent company and the brand communication in the first place does not pitch them as rival brands but each of the brands under study are positioned differently.

Customers of the brands under study are believed to avoid trash talk or provide negative advocacy about the other brands because they do not perceive them as a threat. Plus the product offerings of the brand are quite differentiated from each other so there might not arise the question of putting the oppositional brand down.

Mainly the study already takes a list of QSR's and the respondents are presented with such choices. Here the brand rather than its offerings should be the focus. Since the brands are synonymous with their unique food offering there are chances of confusing the brand personality with the product benefits.

Although there were a set of pre-tested brand and product categories that were taken up for the study, it is to be noted that these findings cannot be applied to other product categories or brands. So to further widen the understanding of brand evangelism and brand communication respondents can be asked to furnish expansive lists or select other brands/categories.

### Scope for Further Research

Future research can use the newly formulated communications framework as a guide to examine two aspects: Firstly the antecedents of brand communication and the forces having a direct bearing marketing communication. Secondly the impact of brand trust as a mediating variable and its position of influence in the flow diagram could be researched upon. Researchers could be encouraged to apply the same communications models in other sectors and contexts. Studying the various layers and levels of communication and their individual impact with varying outcomes would be an area of interest. The research can further come up with the method to ascertain optimal communications mix that a brand must employ at all stages in order to shape personality, create identification and advocacy. This will help brands evaluate their ROI and withstand any pressures on the marketing communications budget, while increasing profits,

sales turnover, brand awareness, store footfalls and breaking through brand clutter. To further expand upon and add to the current proposed framework, other variables that influence the customer-brand relationships such as brand trust, brand equity, brand loyalty can also be considered.

### Conclusion

This research examined the flow of communication starting from the brand and ending with the customers and the consequences of the communication which manifest as developing brand personality, creating brand identification and brand advocacy at the final stage at each stage that result in customers themselves becoming advocates of the brand as well as form purchase decisions. In addition the study has understood that there is an underlying consumer psychology which makes brand communication create a strong identity and establish a feeling of oneness with the brand that makes a customer want to advocate the brand and evangelize it in the long run. Also our study proves that, the customers on favorable identification with the brand can advocate the brand even before they indulge in purchase of the particular brand. Thus this study with its proposed framework has succeeded in highlighting the domino effect of communication that can create evangelists for the brand. Extensive brand communication is one of the most notable tools available for QSR brands for leveraging the brand, and paving the way for sustainable growth.

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