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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Virginia Gibson Switzer entitled "Creating a Brand Experience Across Media Channels." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

John Haas, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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Accepted for the Council:

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Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Creating the Brand Experience Across Media Channels

A Thesis Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Virginia Gibson Switzer
May 2012

Abstract

The goal of this study was to explore the extent to which consumers experience brands through media channels. This study relies on four focus group sessions and a thematic content analysis to gather findings. It was discovered that consumers viewed customer service as the leading characteristic in brand loyalty.

Consumers were primarily impacted by brands through consumer reviews, reliable sources, convenience and special promotions. Participants chose reliable print mediums as a resource to research products. Online sources were the leading medium for reading consumer reviews and learning more about a product, by consuming larger imagery and product descriptions. Mobile devices were utilized for convenience and immediacy. Lastly, consumers reported their desire for more personalization and target marketing as brand managers continue to evolve. These findings provide insight into further developing strategies for marketing and mass communication.

Table of Contents

Chapter		
I.	Introduction	1
	Purpose of this Study	2
II.	Rationale	3
	Uses and Gratifications Theory	3
	Media Channels	4
	Print Media	5
	Online Media	6
	Mobile Devices	7
	Research Questions	8
III.	Methodology	9
	Overall Method and Design	9
	Participants	9
	Instruments	9
	Procedures	11
	Analysis	12
IV.	Results	13
	Defining the Brand	13
	Brand Image	14
	Brand Influence	15
	Brand Interaction	15
	Print Interaction	16
	Online Interaction	17
	Mobile Interaction	17
	Evolution of Brand Experiences	18
V.	Discussion	20
	Research Question 1	20
	Research Question 2	21
	Research Question 3	22
	Research Question 4	22
VI.	Limitations	24
	References	26

Appendices	31
Appendix A	32
Appendix B	34
Appendix C	35
Appendix C	36
Vita	41

List of Tables

Table 1	Brand Experience Variables Assessed by Thematic Analysis	13
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Progress made by technological advancements generate opportunities for consumers to engage in constant communication with brands. Packaging brand content specifically for mobile devices, print media, and online channels allows a brand the opportunity to construct a unique experience for which the consumer can engage. To communicate a brand's message more strategically, the relationship between the consumer, media channels and the brand requires further observation surrounding the experience.

Studies show that the consumer's positive experience with a brand will impact brand loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). Generating brand loyalty supports the main goal of profitability. Specifically, brand-loyal consumers may be willing to pay more for a brand because they perceive some unique value in the brand that no alternative can provide (Jacoby & Chestnut 1978; Pessemier, 1959). True brand loyalty exists when consumers have a high relative attitude toward a brand, which is then exhibited through repurchasing behavior (Dick & Basu, 1994).

Interestingly, the brand experience occurs across various contexts. Consumer and marketing research has shown that experiences occur when consumers search for products, when they shop for them, and when they consume them (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan 2002; Brakus, et. al, 2009; Holbrook 2000). Brand experiences can be brief or long-lasting, and positive or negative (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009; Zarantonello et al., 2010). Indeed, the consumption of a product or service is central to the brand experience, but experiences can also occur indirectly when consumers are exposed to advertising and marketing communication. Media

channels make it possible for consumers to be in constant contact and experience the brand before and between purchases.

In order to capitalize on the brand experience, it was determined that a multimedia plan should be adopted to strategically take advantage of the consumer interaction. The goal of this project is to investigate how people experience a brand through print, online and mobile devices.

The Purpose of this Study

The purpose for conducting research is to explore the brand experience through media channels. Learning what extent do media channels impact the consumer's brand experience is necessary for understanding how messages can better be communicated. Offering this type of research to field experts, is important to the growth of branding and mass communication.

In the wake of technological advancements, it was discovered that consumers were interacting with brands in many different ways through media channels. In order to grasp consumer interaction and brand loyalty, it was determined that brand managers needed a thorough understanding of the consumer experience for more strategic and focused marketing.

Chapter 2

Rationale

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The conceptual framework of uses and gratifications (U&G) theory provides further insight to the relationship between a consumer and media channel. This theory originated from a functionalist perspective and has developed within the areas of sociology and psychology, attempts to explain why people choose and use certain media forms. Katz, Blulmer, and Gurevitch (1962) revolutionized this realm of study when they conceptualized critical elements that now serve as the theory's primary assumptions. The most important elements include the assumption that media consumers play an active role in choosing media to meet their goals, and the degree to which media meets the needs of a user can vary as media competes with other sources of need (Katz, et. al, 1962). While there has been criticism surrounding the legitimacy of U&G, the evolution of new media and interactive nature of the Internet supports the main assumption that users are actively involved in media usage (Eighmey & McCord, 1998; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999).

Furthermore, U&G is applicable for exploring the brand experience because it supports the assumption that consumers actively choose media channels to which their brand experience will vary as media competes with other sources. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) categorized the user's needs as being cognitive, affective, personal, integrative or tension-release. Each of these needs relates to the dimensions of the brand experience. Users have cognitive needs related to strengthening knowledge and understanding. Similarly, the intellectual dimension of the brand experience includes the ability of a brand to engage in the consumer's convergent and divergent

thinking. Users have affective needs related to strengthening a pleasurable and emotional experience (Katz, et. al, 1962). Similarly, the affective dimension of the brand experience includes feelings and the emotional bond between the consumer and the brand (Brakus et al., 2009). Users have social integrative needs that are related to strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world . They also have personal integrative needs related to strengthening credibility, confidence, stability and status (Katz, et. al, 1962). Similarly, the behavioral dimension includes bodily experiences, lifestyles, and interactions with the brand (Brakus et al., 2009). Lastly, users have tension-related needs related to escape which is defined in terms of the weakening of contact with self and one's social roles (Katz, et. al, 1962). Within the sensory dimension brands provide stimulation through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell (Brakus et al., 2009). Different media channels are applicable to the sensory dimension in unique ways. Through print, a scratch and sniff perfume advertisement stimulates sight and smell. Online and through mobile devices, sight and sound are stimulants for a brand experience.

Research surrounding U&G has evolved with the development of media channels. Early exploration included motives for listening to radio (Suchman, 1942), reading comic books (Wolfe & Fiske, 1949), or reading the newspaper (Berelson, 1949). Further research incorporated the Internet, more specifically social media constructs (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010) and online advertisements (Yang, 2004). These studies support the assumption that media channels offer a unique combination of characteristics and attributes that satisfy needs for media.

Media Channels

Print, online and mobile devices foster unique characteristics for packaging content that is consistent with a uniform marketing message. For a brand, every aspect of the consumer

experience must resonate with customers' aspirations, needs and senses of self (Boyd, Walker, & Larreche, 1998). These media channels allow consumers to actively gather product information and shop for brands that meet their personal needs.

Print Media

Catalogs and magazine advertisements are examples of print media created to capture the attention of consumers through appealing imagery and copy. Using an eye-tracking system, a study looking at elements that affect consumer attention in print advertising discovered that attention captured by the brand element transfers more readily to the pictorial and text than to the brand (Pieters & Wedel, 2004). Along with pictorial and textual elements, these brand-related stimuli appear as the brand's design and identity (e.g., name, logo, signage), along with packaging, and marketing communications (e.g., advertisements, brochures, websites) (Brakus et al., 2009). These findings provide insight into marketing elements that are significant in attracting consumers. On the other hand, engagement measures the extent to which a consumer has a meaningful brand experience when exposed to commercial advertising and can be defined as turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context (Spilman, 2006). Research suggests that the uses for magazine readership can be predicted from the content of the medium in that readers of general circulation magazines scored higher on diversion (tension-related, personal and social integrative) needs than trade magazine readers, who scored higher on cognitive needs (Payne, Severn, & Dozier, 1988).

Furthermore, traditional direct mailing is a valuable tool used in retail marketing. Direct Marketing Association reported in 2008 direct marketing campaigns generated more than \$2 trillion in incremental sales (Hippen, Beddor, & Brown, 2008). Consumers who sign up to

receive catalogs are actively gathering product information and using these materials to shop. Catalogs are based on interactivity between the marketer and the consumer. Similar to print advertisements, the brand experience is created through attractive imagery, along with copy that stresses benefit and facilitates quick reading. The layout of a catalog is planned in a way that is analogous to the layout of a retail store (Catalog Marketing, n.d.). Many brands have merged and created catalogs that feature a range of brands that are consistent with their message. Williams-Sonoma, a specialty retailer of gourmet cookware, produces a spring and fall catalog to millions of subscribers each year. This company's message communicates high quality through the well-known brands it offers; yet it only manufactures a small amount of products. The success of Williams-Sonoma catalog is dependent on creating a brand experience that packages products consistent with its message and the consumer's store experience.

Online Media

The Internet is a powerful tool for marketers, which facilitates 24-hour connectivity. In 2009, more than 171 billion e-mails were sent daily, more than 180 million websites existed in cyberspace and more than 112.8 million blogs existed in multiple languages (Okonkwo, 2009). With the technological advancements in web analytics, tracking a consumer's information and online movements provides a database for strategic messaging. E-commerce exists to sale products along with engaging consumers transcending beyond geographical boundaries.

Retail organizations have to employ a different marketing mentality in e-commerce, i.e. they no longer make a product and then seek to sell that product as is, or in order to satisfy any perceived or created demand. Instead, if the intention is to create

loyalty, to detect what the customer wants, and then to customize a product or service so that it fits an individual need (Pitt, Arafa, Dionisi, Martin, & Witkowski, 2000). Accessing user profiles, purchasing history, and behavioral data to refer products generates a more personalized brand experience for the consumer.

Furthermore, brands are utilizing all facets of the Internet to create unique experiences for their online community. According to Hoffman and Novak's (1996) network navigation model, message characteristics (i.e., interactivity and vividness), among other factors (e.g., control characteristics, process characteristics, telepresence, involvement, and focused attention) can influence consumer flow experiences that later contribute to increased learning, more exploratory behavior, an overall positive subjective experience, and greater perceived behavioral control among online consumers. Ferrari established multiple engagement platforms, including Ferrari.com, racing blogs, e-commerce, and a community page, along with Facebook Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and LinkedIn pages. Social networking websites are word-of-mouth advertisements. Research found that 68% of consumers rely on their communities and comments posted online to build their opinion about a product or a brand (Baffou, 2009).

Mobile Devices

Hyper-interconnectivity now travels beyond the computer to include Smart Phones and other mobile devices. With Internet penetration rates increasing annually and the functions of the Internet expanding beyond information exchanges to include services and communities, a new social order has been born online (Weber, 2007). The once traditional advertising approach of cold calling and telemarketing is now being reconstructed as mobile applications and services. One study, researching the iPhone, found that consumers are more concerned with enjoyment

experience than with the existent communication features (Arruda-Filho, Cabusas, & Dholakia, 2010).

While previous research has found differences in consumer needs for media channels, there is no empirical evidence, to date, that looks at the varying brand experiences across the proposed media channels. This investigative study attempts to shed light on the relationship between consumers, brands and media channels. Under the assumption of U&G (Katz et. al, 1962) consumers play an active role in choosing media to meet their goals. Applied to the current study, consumers utilize print materials, websites, or mobile devices to create their brand experience.

RQ1: To what extent will media channels (print, online, and mobile devices) impact the consumer's brand experience?

Since this study uses brand experience dimensions and media characteristics to address the consumer's brand experience, it is appropriate to examine the constructs across levels of engagement.

RQ2: How do consumers define their brand experience?

RQ3: What are credible sources of media channels that impact the consumer's brand experience?

The predictions offered by U&G suggests the degree to which media meets the needs of a user can vary as media competes with other sources of need (Katz et. al, 1962). As technology continues to develop, the media platform will evolve and compete. Therefore it is relevant to look at the future direction of brand experiences.

RQ4: To what extent do consumers see their brand experience evolving?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overall Method and Design

Research for this project was conducted among four focus group sessions. A focus group interview guide was developed to explore how consumers experience brands through media channels (print, online and mobile devices).

Participants

Participants included 37 consumers who have purchased a product within the last three months. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 54. One focus group session (FG1) consisted of 14 undergraduate students enrolled in a communication studies research methods course at the University of Tennessee. The research methods course was chosen because it is an upper-level requirement and represents a younger audience. Participation in the study was a voluntary activity students could complete to receive extra course credit.

Three focus group sessions (FG2, FG3, FG4) were conducted at the global headquarters of Scripps Networks Interactive, the leader in lifestyle media. Divided among three sessions, groups consisted of 23 industry professionals who work in the digital space for brands such as FoodNetwork.com, HGTV.com, DIYNetwork.com and TravelChannel.com.

Instruments

Focus group sessions were conducted during the 2011 fall semester and consisted of ten open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The research design provided a setting for extended discussion regarding attitudes, behaviors and motivations surrounding brand experiences. Each

participant was asked to provide three brands he or she has purchased in the past three months, which were listed on a dry-erase board. Listed brands provided a frame of reference for participants to utilize for examples during discussion. The ten open-ended questions were divided into three categories. The first category was designed to address the second research question and investigate participants' definition and perception of a brand.

To address the first and third research questions, the second category explored the brand experience and influence. Participants were asked to differentiate their brand experience across media channels that included print, online and mobile devices. A modified version of the brand experience scale (Barakus et. al, 2009) was taken into account to accurately address the consumer's conceptions of their experiences. The scale was created to address four brand experience dimensions: sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual. Unlike the original scale, which instructed participants to describe strong and weak brand experiences that were evoked by consumption and brand-related stimuli, this study relied on participants discussion surrounding their brand experiences as it relates to media channels. Respondents provided descriptions of their experiences relative to the scales dimensions. For example, sensory statements consisted of "I go online to see larger, more detailed product images," affective statements were composed of "Getting the Pottery Barn catalog in the mail reminds me of the holidays," behavioral statements included "I use my phone to quickly access product information when I'm shopping," and intellectual statements were comprised of "When reliable sources like CNN promotes a brand that interests me, I usually do more research."

Questions in the third category were designed to addresses research question four by examining the participants' perception of brand evolution. Participants were also asked their

demographic information, including sex and age.

Procedures

Four focus group sessions were conducted to explore the research questions. One session (FG1), which consisted of college students, was conducted in a meeting room in the Scripps Laboratory at the University of Tennessee one evening. It took one hour and twenty minutes to complete. The following three focus groups (FG2, FG3, FG4) were conducted in a conference room at the global headquarters of Scripps Networks Interactive during lunchtime. It took one hour to complete each session. Both conference rooms used in this study were similar in layout and design. Participants were positioned in a U shape around a dry erase board while the moderator administered questions.

To comply with IRB standards and provide complete confidentiality, participants were given a summary of the research study and an informed consent prior to the focus group sessions (See Appendix A) Participants were not penalized if they decided not to participate. The focus group sessions began after the informed consent forms had been collected. Participants were asked to spend two minutes thinking about three brands they had purchased in the past three months. After the allotted time, participants were asked to state their name, profession or field of study and their three brands. While the college students went around the room clockwise providing information, the working professionals shared their information in a random manner, providing their introduction and calling out brands when they were ready. As participants stated their brands the primary researcher listed them on a board that was visually accessible for everyone. There was no time limit for answering questions and discussion. College students were given extra credit for participation and working professionals were provided with a free lunch.

Analysis

All of the focus group sessions were audio recorded to provide data for the analysis. Following the procedure outlined by Schwartz and Jacobs (1979), a theoretical thematic content analysis was used to present qualitative data and identify characteristics of the consumer's brand experience. The primary researcher generated three coding frames based on past research and the focus group questionnaire: definition of a brand, influence of a brand and brand evolution. A coding scheme was developed after listening to audio recordings and identifying emerging themes among all focus group sessions. The data were broken up by key terms and coded into themes. Initially, 71 units of meaning were discovered and 15 themes were generated.

After re-examining the recorded data a second time in reference to the 15 categories, 71 units were consolidated and re-labeled into 64 units. The statements were continually compared and contrasted to one another. Revisiting the data collection after initial themes were created was a vital stage in the coding process because it established further clarity for gathering key terms and phrases relevant to the topics. Items were coded in terms of their frequency discussed in focus group sessions. This process was repeated until themes could no longer be reduced and combined.

Based on similarities and frequency, the final results were regrouped into eight themes surrounding responses that reflected the definition of a brand, image, influence, interaction, print interaction, online interaction, mobile interaction and brand evolution.

Chapter 4

Results

The goal of this study was to explore to what extent consumers experience brands through media channels (print, online and mobile devices). The results are organized around coding frames that include the definition of a brand, influence of a brand, and brand evolution. Eight themes were most frequently discussed among all four focus groups.

Table 1

Representative Brand Experience Variables Assessed by Thematic Analysis

Theme 1	Having a strong identity defines a brand.
Theme 2	Customer service impacts a brand's image.
Theme 3	Consumers are influenced by promotional incentives.
Theme 4	Consumers interact with brands through reliable sources.
Theme 5	Consumers attach sentimental memories to printed catalogs.
Theme 6	Consumers choose the internet for customer reviews, larger imagery and product descriptions.
Theme 7	Consumers choose mobile devices for immediacy and convenience.
Theme 8	Further targeting is sought after as brands evolve.

The items placed in each category were coded by two separate coders. The inter-coder reliability produced a Cohen's Kappa score of 0.81 ($p = .0001$). Because the reliability indicated that the results could be replicated, this scheme was applied to the data.

Defining the Brand

This theme focuses on establishing the meaning of a brand as it relates to the consumer's experience. Participants considered a brand to stand out as an identifier, which includes characteristics that relate to the consumer's lifestyle, as the primary definition of a brand.

J.Crew has a certain look that reflects my lifestyle. I know what to expect when I shop their products (FG2).

Other factors that related to defining a brand's identity included the perception of quality, trustworthiness and values.

Brand Image

The brand image was a depiction of a his or her expectations of their brand experience after purchase. Responses varied in terms of negative and positive experiences. Customer service was the leading factor in creating a memorable image. Participants considered a positive customer service experience to take place when they perceived confidence in the level of product knowledge that retailers provided in stores, when they were faced with an issue that was quickly resolved, and when they were compensated fairly for inconveniences. A negative customer service experience consisted of frustration with automated systems, lack of timely problem solving and miscommunication in regards to product changes.

Value change without notice evoked a negative brand image among participant, through increased price changes and poor-quality modifications of materials used in products.

I signed up to receive monthly movies from Netflix and a few months ago they increased the monthly price without telling me. It discontinued my subscription after that. (FG4)

While a positive brand image was determined primarily during the purchasing process, a negative brand image could occur at any given point during the consumer's information gathering process.

Brand Influence

Influencing factors deals with the effect brands have on a consumer's purchasing decision and experience. Participants indicated that they were influenced by promotional messages that were delivered through product discounts and brand association strategies.

Discounted product promotions that were advertised through email alerts, mobile alerts, mailings, print publications or in store displays were influential.

I receive Groupon alerts on my phone. It's like Christmas everyday. They have some great deals and it's easy to purchase. (FG2)

Furthermore, participants were inclined to purchase from brands that were associated with other brands that generated positive experiences. This concept was exemplified through brands such as Williams-Sonoma, Anthropologie, and other labels that sell a variety of products from a variety of different brands.

Brand Interaction

Interaction is composed of responses that describe the consumer's connectivity with a brand aside from product consumption. Findings suggest that consumers interacted with brands primarily through word-of-mouth and outside sources. Family members, professional contacts, trusted friends and previous consumer reviews are reliable sources who impact the brand experience.

I work closely with Lumber Liquidators as client. I feel like I know a lot about their product. So when I decided to get hardwood floors, I purchased from them. (FG2)

My mom has always used Smuckers to make Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwiches.

I use Smuckers to fix my sandwiches. (FG1)

Reliable sources seemed to provoke a significant response surrounding brand loyalty. Participants were more likely to consume new brands and repeat purchases if they had received positive brand information through reliable outside sources.

Print Interaction

Print media refers to magazines and catalogs. Expanding on the results surrounding brand interaction, findings suggest that consumers primarily choose print publications for reliable sources.

Publications that encompassed specific interests such as electronics, fashion and home décor were examples provided by participants and used to explain interaction. These publications are consumed primarily for entertainment, but participants indicated a high level of confidence surrounding editorial product features. Participants who consumed product reviews through magazines were more likely to go online and conduct further research.

One the other hand, catalogs generated feelings of emotional connection among consumers. Some participants recalled memories of seeing a specific brand catalog growing up or marking products in a brand catalog for birthday gifts.

It doesn't feel like the holidays until I receive my Pottery Barn catalog in the mail.

(FG3)

Online Interaction

Online media evokes sensory and intellectual brand experiences among consumers. Participants reported going online for visual stimulation through large, detailed images of products.

I like websites that offer different product angles and color choices. (FG4)

Participants utilized social network platforms, reviewer specific websites, and reliable online sources to share and gather product information.

ConsumersDigest.com is the first place I usually go to read reviews. They have best buy recommendations that I think about. (FG3)

More expensive purchases were heavily influenced by online reviews, while less expensive purchases were driven by visual stimulation.

Mobile Interaction

Immediacy and convenience were the most important attributes when interacting with brands through mobile technology. Findings suggest that the immediacy received through mobile devices was most valuable when shopping in stores. Consumers used their mobile device to quickly compare prices, access coupons or find a store location.

I do a lot of price comparison when I'm in Best Buy. There's an app that allows you to scan bar codes and compare prices at nearby stores. (F2)

For convenience, participants relied on third party vendors, such as, Zappos, Fandango and Groupon, for purchasing and experiencing a brand on their mobile device. In most cases,

they were more likely to access brands through these third party vendors before accessing the brand individually.

Fandango's app is great, because I can purchase movie tickets and pick them up without ever having to stand in a line. (FG3)

As mobile technology evolves consumers seek even more convenience and ease of use. They are more inclined to interact with brands through their mobile device if they perceive valuable benefits.

I don't like a lot of junk being sent to my phone, but I like having daily Groupon alerts because they have great deals. (FG2)

Evolution of Brand Experiences

Further targeting related to brand interaction is an important area as brands continue to evolve. Participants expressed a desire for more personalization in their brand experience through customer service and product recommendations.

Participants indicated that good customer service will help brands continue to build trust and generate a positive experience. Comments suggested that customer service could be improved by following up with consumers on their purchases, avoiding complicated automated systems and being attentive to a consumer's specific needs.

Product recommendations generated discussion that included technology. As technology continues to evolve, tracking consumer movements online, brands should capitalize on consumer information.

I wish companies would just send me information about new products that are similar to my other purchases. (FG2)

Participants expressed that overexposure to irrelevant brand messages does not generate a positive experience. Instead, brands should focus on the consumers lifestyle through their purchasing history and suggest products and brand messages that are similar or relative to a consumer's online activity.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore to what extent consumers experience brands through media channels. Results produced meaningful information that brands can utilize to bolster their marketing strategies. This discussion is organized according to the order in which the research questions appear in the rationale section.

Research Question 1

To what extent will media channels (print, online, and mobile devices) impact the consumer's brand experience?

The consumer's brand experience was examined through messages delivered by means of print publications, websites and mobile devices. Brand, online and print interaction revealed source reliability to be the primary theme for addressing indirect brand interaction, but differences were discovered as consumer's experience brands through media channels.

Uses and gratification theory suggests that users actively choose different media channels to meet their needs (Blulmer, et. al, 1962), while the brand experience scale addresses dimensions of consumer experiences in a variety settings (Barakus et. al, 2009). It is not surprising that respondents relied on different media channels to conceptualize their brand experience. Contrary to the brand experience scale, results suggest that the brand experience is not consistent as it relates to certain settings (print, online, and mobile devices).

Participants noted their need for larger, detailed images was more readily satisfied through online sources. These findings suggest that when a consumer wants a visually stimulating, sensory experience they are more likely to go online to satisfy that need.

The participants consumed reliable print sources for product reviews and online sources to share and obtain consumer reviews. Findings suggest that consumers actively choose print and online sources to learn more about brands and satisfy their need for product knowledge. Since a large portion of participants mentioned information-gathering strategies, it is suggested that intellectual brand experiences are primarily stimulated through print and online channels.

Overwhelmingly, participants considered mobile devices to be their primary source for immediacy and convenience. In-store price comparison, special promotion alerts and store locator abilities encompass a consumer's need for quick information, which impacts their purchasing intentions. This indicates that perhaps brand messaging through mobile devices stimulates behavioral experiences.

Research Question 2

How do consumers define their brand experience?

In this study the brand was defined as an identifier relative to a specific lifestyle was a theme throughout focus group sessions. A strong brand identity served as the basis for conceptualizing the consumer's brand experience. Consistent with previous literature, consumers interacted with brands directly and indirectly (Zarantonello et al, 2010). Experiences with brands directly were derived from themes surrounding participants' consumption of products, interaction with customer service and consumption of promotional incentives.

On the other hand, responses suggested that indirect experiences included word of mouth interaction, printed and online brand reviews and the utility of third party mobile applications. Overall, findings suggest that consumers are more likely to have direct brand experiences online

than any other media channel. This is primarily because consumers engage in online shopping and utilize brand websites to view larger imagery more readily than any other media channels.

Research Question 3

What are credible sources of media channels that impact the consumer's brand experience?

Influencing factors regarding brand messaging vary during the brand experience online, through print and mobile technology. Participants reported being influenced by special promotions, which is delivered through all media channels. Although, overexposure to special promotions that were irrelevant to the consumer's lifestyle devalued the brand message.

Overall, consumer reviews impacted the participant's online experience, while credible sources found in print media were influential. Past research surrounding source impact suggests that marketers should consider different sources to transmit information about different attributes (Woodruff, 1972). This study proved useful in determining the importance of a consumer's indirect experience and information-gathering strategies found in online and print media.

Research Question 4

To what extent do consumers see their brand experience evolving?

Participants desire for more personalization and targeting was a valuable theme surrounding the evolution of brand messaging. This is a direct result of overexposure to brand messaging. Further research should examine this concept in depth to determine to what extent consumers are negatively impacted by the frequency of brand messaging.

Furthermore, personalization and targeting were closely related to customer service objectives. Past research suggest that customer service is not limited to interaction in a store,

rather it is impacted by a combination of experiences that evolve over time (Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger, 2009). Findings suggest that the consumer's view of customer service varied across all media platforms, from receiving follow up emails or mailings to easily connecting with the brand through mobile devices. As brands continue to evolve participants noted the importance of customer service for brand success.

Chapter 6

Limitations

There are two main issues that arise as the limitations in this study. The participants and the measures used to collect data each present restrictions to the thoroughness and significance of the findings in this project.

Because three of the four focus groups consisted of media professionals at Scripps Networks Interactive, it is assumed that the realm of knowledge surrounding this topic might be far superior than an average consumer. This becomes a limitation because certain topics surrounding the Internet and mobile devices could have provided more thorough responses in regards to trend watching than personal interaction.

Lastly, while focus group sessions were productive for generating open discussion they hindered complete participation. Due to time, not everyone was able to answer all of the questions. A follow up survey would be useful for future studies.

While this study attempts to strengthen current knowledge surrounding multi-media platforms and the brand experience, further research should be conducted. A follow up research study would lend interesting results if participants were divided by age, since generational attributes have been found to contribute to media consumption. While print provided useful findings, online and mobile devices were more readily discussed. Future studies should focus on these media channels through a combination of eye-tracking and focus group research. This methodology would deliver both quantitative and qualitative findings.

Furthermore, looking closely at the brands being consumed is valuable for future researchers. In this study participants discussed a variety of products from detergent to

computers, clothing to cars. Brands can be grouped by the specific needs they meet.

Understanding these needs will provide further insight into how a brand is experienced online and through mobile devices.

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Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Project Directors: Virginia Switzer and Dr. John Haas

Project Title: Creating the Brand Experience

This is to certify that I, _____, have been given the following information with respect to my participation as a volunteer in a research program under the supervision of Dr. Haas and Ms. Switzer.

- **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this research project is to examine how people experience a brand across media channels, print, the Internet, and mobile devices. Consumers are being asked to share 3 brands they have purchased in the last 6 months. Approximately 8 to 10 people are participating in 4 focus groups for this aspect of the research project.
- **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked some questions regarding brand marketing and can answer and discuss these questions with others in the focus group. The session will last one hour and will be tape recorded. The tapes, transcripts, and informed consents will be stored in the School of Communication Studies' Suite in a locked filing cabinet that only the PI and faculty advisor can access. After three years, the transcripts will be shredded and the audio tapes incinerated. These are standard procedures for focus groups.
- **Participation is voluntary:** Your participation in the focus groups is voluntary. You may decline to answer any or all questions, and you are free to leave at any time.
- **Discomforts and risks:** There are no known discomforts or risks. However, some financial purchasing decisions can be sensitive. We are making every effort to ensure that you are comfortable during this focus group.
- **Benefits to me:** Some people find it beneficial to discuss their brand experience because they face marketing messages on a daily basis through different media channels and do not discuss the positive or negative experiences they encounter.
- **Benefits to society:** We are hoping to identify ways in which consumers create their brand experience through media channels in the hope that brand messages can be communicated accordingly.
- **Alternative procedures which could be utilized:** In case you are not comfortable speaking in groups, we have provided a written "focus group follow-up" sheet which you can complete in private and return to the research team instead of participating in the focus group. You need not speak during this meeting, and can leave at any time, taking the "follow-up" sheet with you.

- **Time duration of the procedures and study:** The focus group lasts one hour. If people wish to continue the discussion longer than one hour, we will continue but also provide the opportunity for participants to leave after one hour.
- **Statement of confidentiality:** Every attempt will be made to ensure confidentiality. There will be a short period of time during which individuals and institutions could be identified by the researchers, but all data will be stripped of identifying information before anything is reported from the project. Once identifiers have been removed, the only individuals who could identify your information are those who participated in this focus group with you.

Volunteer: _____

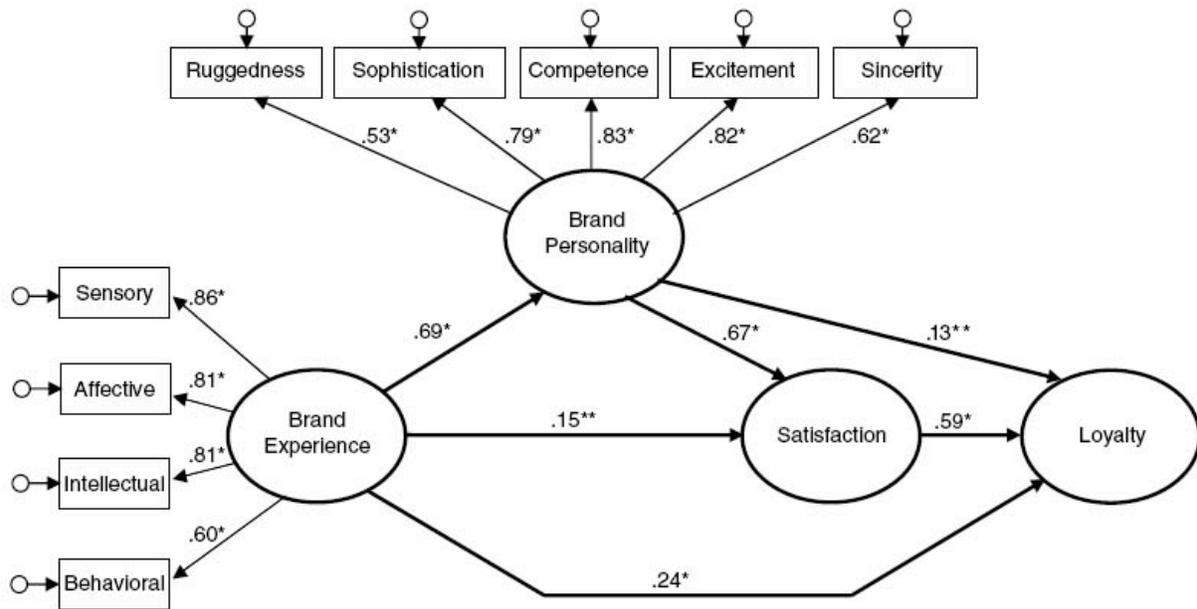
Date: _____, 2011

Investigator: _____

Date: _____, 2011

Appendix B

Discriminant and Predictive Validity of the Brand Experience Scale



* $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

Notes: All coefficient values are standardized and appear near the associated path.

Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009

Appendix C

Let's start off by going around the room clockwise. Please state your first name and professional background/field of study, and 3 brands/products you have purchased for yourself in the last 6 months.

For example, products that are purchased by a brand such as Kitchen Aid through Williams-Sonoma or products distributed by a brand such as Nike.

The facilitator will write all brands on the board. If a brand is repeated then the facilitator will not include it again. Around 15 to 30 brands will probably be listed.

Definition of a brand

1. How would you define the word brand?
2. What makes a brand memorable to you?
3. Does your image of a brand change after a purchase?

Influence of a brand

4. How have you been influenced, positively or negatively, by these brands?
5. Describe for me ways you've interacted with these products.
6. Share with us some electronic must-haves that you use, such as laptops, iphones, etc.
How do you use these electronic devices to find more information on products? Does this lead you to go to another place?
7. Do other traditional print mediums lead you anywhere else?

Brand Evolution

8. How do you see yourself interacting with these brands through your mobile device?
9. As brands evolve, do your view of the brands change? If so, how?
10. What if anything could companies do in the future to influence their brand.

Appendix D

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator: *Virginia Switzer*
College of Communication and Information
School of Communication Studies
293 Communications Building
Knoxville, TN 37996
(865) 924-8321
vswitzer@utk.edu

Faculty Advisor: *John Haas*
College of Communication and Information
School of Communication Studies
293 Communications Building
Knoxville, TN 37996
(865) 974-2090

Department:
School of Communication Studies

2. Project Classification: Research Project
3. Title of Project: **Creating Brand Experience Across Media Channels**
4. Starting Date: **"Upon IRB Approval"**
5. Estimated Completion Date: **April 22, 2011**
6. External Funding (*if any*):
 - Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:
 - Funding Agency:

- Sponsor ID Number (**if known**):
- UT Proposal Number (**if known**):

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project is to explore how consumers experience a brand through media channels, print, online, and mobile device.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this project will be men and women, who are college educated over 18. Participants will be recruited through Facebook and other online sources such as email, classified advertisement boards, etc.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The research design is organized around an in-depth focus group strategy. Please see Appendix B for the focus group guide. Participants for this project include 40 consumers who have purchased a product within the last 3 months. The participants will be questioned in four focus groups, divided by ages 18 to 24, ages 25 to 35, ages 36 to 40, and ages 41 to 55. The participants will be informed in advance of the topics to be discussed (experiencing brands through media channels).

The participants will begin by reviewing the informed consent procedures with the study participant Please see Appendix A for informed consent form. Following the informed consent review, the interviewee will discuss the overarching goal of the study (to explore the brand experience through media channels).

This project will involve audio recording of the focus groups. The focus groups are to be recorded in order to provide the data for analysis. Data analysis for the project will involve content analysis of the focus group responses. Thus, an accurate, complete record of the responses is necessary for the completion of the project. All transcriptions will be completed by the PI. The tapes and transcripts will be labeled in the following manner (focus group 1, focus group 2, etc.) with no names attached to the tape or transcript. The tapes, transcripts, and informed consents will be stored in the School of Communication Studies' Suite in a locked filing cabinet that only the PI and faculty advisor can access. After three years, the transcripts will be shredded and the audio tapes incinerated.

The data will be analyzed and interpreted via content analysis and thematic analysis from the audio recording transcripts.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

No foreseeable risks are associated with this project. Study participants will only be asked to reveal their first names for the purpose of active interaction. All audio tapes and transcripts will be void of identifying information (i.e. names) and be contained in a locked filing cabinet in the School of Communication Studies' Suite along with informed consent forms with the PI and the faculty advisor being the only individual with access to the cabinet. By these measures, confidentiality will also be upheld.

VI. BENEFITS

Seeing the risks to the participants are minimal, the benefits from this study will be to better gauge the brand experience across media channels. This study will yield what consumers perceive as being the components and expectations of a brand experience across media channels.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

In a language easily understandable by the participants, the PI will provide two written consent documents indicating the basic elements of informed consent. The sheets are for the participant to keep and the other to be signed by the participant for the PI. The informed consent form (please see Appendix A) will include the following elements.

1. A statement indicating that the study involves human research, the purposes of the research, the expected duration of the participant's involvement in the research project, description of the procedures to be followed that will directly involve human participants, and the identify any procedures that are experimental.
2. Identification and description of any reasonably foreseeable risks to the participant or potential discomforts the participant may experience during the term of this research. If none, the explanation of why no participant risks or discomforts are anticipated.
3. Description of any benefits to the participant (or to others) that may reasonably be expected from this research.
4. A statement disclosing appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the participant.
5. A statement describing the procedure for maintaining, storing, and accessing the participant's files/records and how confidentiality will be upheld.
6. A statement identifying the individual who may be contacted for responses to pertinent questions about the research and the rights of the research participant.
7. A statement specifically noting the following: (a) participants are of age, 18 years or older, (b) participation in the research is voluntary, (c) refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled, and (d) the participant may withdraw from the research project at any time without penalty of loss of benefits to which he or she is otherwise entitled.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The PI is a graduate student with the School of Communication Studies who has completed previously approved research projects. The faculty advisor for this project is a well-known research in this area and the department chair.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

The focus groups will be conducted in the College of Communication, Scripps Laboratory. The informed consent along with the data will be in a locked filing cabinet and the analysis of the data will be conducted in the School of Communication Studies' Suite.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

The following information must be entered verbatim into this section:

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.
2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.
3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.
4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following

information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: **Virginia Switzer**

Vita

Virginia Gibson Switzer was born in Dyersburg, Tennessee in August, 1985. After completing her work at Dyersburg High School in 2003, she entered the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. During the fall semester of 2006 she studied abroad through the University of Virginia, Semester at Sea. She earned a B.A. in Communication Studies and a B.S. in Journalism and Electronic Media from the University of Tennessee in May 2008. During the following years she was employed at Time Inc. Lifestyle Digital.

Virginia is currently employed as a senior editor at Scripps Networks Interactive, and is pursuing a Master of Science degree in Communication Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.