A Comprehensive Review of Brand Equity: Theoretical Foundations, Measurement Approaches, and Empirical Advances

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Abstract

This research Article provides a comprehensive review of brand equity, a central construct in marketing scholarship and practice. It synthesizes theoretical models, key dimensions, measurement approaches, and empirical applications with a specific emphasis on research conducted in Thailand and Southeast Asia. The concept of brand equity has evolved from being a strategic marketing tool to a multidimensional construct influenced by cultural, digital, and sectoral dynamics. This review examines both classic and emerging models, notably those developed by Aaker and Keller, and analyzes how brand equity is constructed through consumer perceptions, financial performance, and organizational behavior. Special attention is paid to the role of emotional engagement, cultural values, and digital co-creation in shaping brand equity across Southeast Asian contexts. The paper also explores how consumer-based and financial-based brand equity models apply in Thailand's unique cultural landscape, where collectivism, social endorsement, and symbolic consumption are key drivers of brand loyalty. Additionally, it considers recent trends such as sustainability, brand activism, and digital branding strategies, especially influencer marketing and e-WOM, which are now central to brand value creation in contemporary markets. By drawing from both global and local research, this study identifies key antecedents and consequences of brand equity, highlights measurement strategies suited to Southeast Asian markets, and calls for future research to adopt culturally sensitive, interdisciplinary, and digitally integrated approaches. Overall, the review contributes to the literature by contextualizing brand equity within the evolving socio-digital landscape of Southeast Asia and by proposing strategic insights for academics and practitioners aiming to build strong, culturally resonant brands in the region.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), Southeast Asia Digital Branding

Introduction

Over the past three decades, brand equity has become a central concept in marketing, recognized as a strategic asset that drives profitability and market advantage. Defined as the value a brand adds to a product or service, brand equity explains how consumers respond differently to branded versus unbranded offerings and how brand strength impacts firm performance. Foundational models by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) laid the groundwork: Aaker emphasized brand awareness, perceived quality, associations, and loyalty, while Keller introduced the consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model focusing on memory-based cognitive and emotional responses.

The digital age has transformed brand-consumer interactions. Today, user-generated content, influencer marketing, and peer evaluations increasingly shape brand perceptions, shifting control from companies to consumers. As such, understanding and managing brand equity now require new approaches that reflect this evolving digital landscape.

In Southeast Asia, brand equity plays a crucial role in competitive differentiation. In countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, consumer decisions are influenced by local culture, collectivism, and digital behaviors. Strong brand equity here can drive loyalty, price premiums, and market penetration. Yet, most studies remain focused on Western contexts, and few integrate Southeast Asian perspectives into theoretical and empirical discussions.

Research Objective

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive literature review of brand equity, focusing on its conceptual evolution, measurement methods, empirical findings, and regional applications. Specifically, it (1) clarifies brand equity's theoretical foundations, (2) reviews key measurement approaches—both consumer- and financial-based, and (3) explores brand equity in Southeast Asian markets, with emphasis on Thailand.

Literature review and concepts

Theoretical Foundations of Brand Equity

The concept of brand equity has evolved over several decades, drawing upon diverse theoretical frameworks from marketing, psychology, economics, and strategic management. At its core, brand equity refers to the incremental value a brand name brings to a product or service. While the term itself gained popularity in the early 1990s, its theoretical foundations trace back to fundamental questions regarding how consumers perceive, evaluate, and respond to branded versus unbranded products. Over time, scholars have developed various models and paradigms to explain the construct, giving rise to multiple perspectives, notably consumer-based, financial-based, and employee-based brand equity. This section provides an overview of the key theoretical contributions that have shaped the understanding of brand equity.

1. Early Conceptualizations

The formal study of brand equity began gaining traction with seminal works by David Aaker (1991) and Kevin Lane Keller (1993), who provided the most cited definitions and conceptual frameworks in the marketing literature. Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as 'a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service.' His framework identified five core components: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets. This multidimensional model emphasized the importance of intangible brand assets and their cumulative effect on consumer behavior and firm performance.

Shortly after, Keller (1993) introduced the Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, which viewed brand equity from the consumer's memory and perception. Keller defined brand equity as 'the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to brand marketing.' In this view, a brand with high equity is one that triggers favorable cognitive and emotional responses from consumers due to strong associations, familiarity, and perceived value. Keller's model consists of a brand knowledge structure that includes brand awareness and brand image, which together influence consumer judgments, feelings, and brand resonance.

Both Aaker and Keller's models provided the foundation for a vast body of subsequent research. Their work also introduced a critical shift in marketing thought: brands were no longer viewed merely as identifiers or legal trademarks but as strategic assets with measurable and manageable value.

2. Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

The CBBE perspective remains the most widely studied and applied conceptualization of brand equity. It emphasizes the consumer's cognitive and emotional connections to a brand and posits that strong brand equity results in increased brand preference, trust, loyalty, and purchase intention.

Keller later expanded his original model into a pyramidal structure, known as the CBBE pyramid, which includes four levels: (1) Brand Identity (Who are you?), (2) Brand Meaning (What are you?), (3) Brand Responses (What about you?), and (4) Brand Resonance (What about you and me?). These levels encompass six building blocks: salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance. Brands that reach the top of the pyramid enjoy deep psychological bonding with consumers, leading to repeat purchase and advocacy behavior.

CBBE models have been extensively validated and adapted across different industries and regions. In Thailand, for instance, scholars such as Winit et al. (2014) and Phoothong & Sud-Udom (2019) have used Keller's model to investigate brand loyalty in the cosmetics, banking, and tourism sectors, confirming its cross-cultural applicability with some context-specific modifications.

3. Financial-Based Brand Equity

While consumer-based models emphasize perceptions, financial-based brand equity (FBBE) focuses on how brand value is reflected in financial performance. This approach is grounded in accounting and economics, where brand equity is often evaluated using metrics such as brand valuation, revenue premiums, market share, and stock performance.

Farquhar (1989) defined brand equity as 'the added value with which a brand endows a product.' Later, Simon and Sullivan (1993) proposed a method to estimate brand equity based on firm market value decomposition. Major consulting firms such as Interbrand and Millward Brown (BrandZ) have developed proprietary models that assess brand equity based on financial metrics, customer opinion, and market data. Their rankings, such as 'The World's Most Valuable Brands,' underscore the commercial relevance of branding as a financial asset.

In Southeast Asia, including Thailand, financial-based models are gaining popularity among local firms and investors. However, these models often face challenges due to limited data transparency and market volatility, especially in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

4. Employee-Based and Other Perspectives

More recent studies have extended brand equity theory to internal stakeholders, resulting in the employee-based brand equity (EBBE) framework. EBBE focuses on how employees perceive and embody brand values, influencing customer experience and brand delivery. King and Grace (2009) argue that employee alignment with brand identity enhances external brand equity by ensuring consistent service quality and brand communication.

Similarly, retailer-based brand equity (RBBE) and channel-based brand equity frameworks have been proposed to assess how distributors, resellers, and retail partners influence brand performance in the supply chain. These perspectives are particularly important in Southeast Asian economies, where informal distribution networks and retail intermediaries play a key role in brand proliferation.

5. Integrative and Holistic Models

Recognizing the limitations of single-perspective models, scholars have proposed integrative frameworks that combine consumer, financial, and organizational views of brand equity. For example, Christodoulides and de Chernatony (2010) advocate a multidimensional model that reflects both behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. They highlight the dynamic and co-constructed nature of brand equity in contemporary environments.

In emerging markets such as Thailand, integrative models are especially relevant. Cultural factors—such as high power distance, collectivism, and emotional expression norms—affect how consumers interpret and interact with brands. A one-size-fits-all model developed in Western contexts may not fully capture the nuances of brand meaning in Southeast Asia. Hence, scholars have called for culturally adapted models that reflect local consumer values, linguistic variations, and digital behaviors unique to the region.

6. The Role of Culture in Brand Equity Theory

The influence of cultural values on brand equity is an emerging theme in the literature. Hofstede's cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, etc.) are often used to explain how consumer-brand relationships vary across cultures. In Thailand, studies show that group affiliation, status signaling, and emotional warmth play a stronger role in brand evaluation than in more individualistic societies.

For example, in a study by Phau and Suntornnond (2006), Thai consumers were found to associate strong brands with social approval, family recommendations, and emotional appeal, rather than functional performance alone. These findings suggest that brand equity in Thailand may depend more heavily on symbolic and affective components, which are underrepresented in traditional Western models.

Dimensions and Components of Brand Equity

Brand equity is widely accepted as a multidimensional construct composed of various interrelated components that together determine the value a brand contributes to a product or service. While foundational theories provide a general framework, the dimensions of brand equity often require contextual adaptation, especially in culturally distinct regions such as Southeast Asia. This section systematically reviews the core dimensions of brand equity as proposed by seminal scholars, explores empirical findings from Southeast Asian markets with a focus on Thailand, and discusses industry-specific adaptations.

1. Aaker's Five Dimensions of Brand Equity

David Aaker's (1991) model remains a seminal contribution to brand equity research. In his work Managing Brand Equity, Aaker defines brand equity as 'a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service.' He identifies five key components:

Brand Awareness: The degree to which consumers recognize or recall a brand. Awareness is the foundation of brand equity, as consumers cannot develop strong brand associations without recognizing the brand first.

Brand Associations: These are the mental connections that consumers make with a brand, including attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Associations help build brand image and differentiate the brand from competitors.

Perceived Quality: The consumer's judgment of a brand's overall superiority or excellence compared to alternatives. Perceived quality influences purchase decisions and willingness to pay a premium.

Brand Loyalty: The degree of consumer attachment and repeated purchase behavior towards the brand. Loyalty is often considered the core component driving sustained brand profitability.

Other Proprietary Brand Assets: These include patents, trademarks, and channel relationships that provide competitive advantages.

Aaker's model emphasizes the strategic importance of managing these dimensions collectively to enhance brand value. Empirical studies in Southeast Asia, such as those by Wong and Merrilees (2005), have applied this framework to understand how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region build brand equity despite resource constraints.

2 Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model

Kevin Keller's (1993) Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model complements Aaker's work by focusing explicitly on consumer perceptions as the source of brand equity. Keller defines brand equity as 'the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to brand marketing.'

His model is structured as a pyramid consisting of four stages:

Brand Salience (Awareness): The depth and breadth of brand awareness in the consumer's mind.

Brand Performance and Brand Imagery: Performance relates to how well the product meets functional needs, whereas imagery pertains to extrinsic properties that meet psychological or social needs.

Brand Judgments and Brand Feelings: Judgments involve personal evaluations such as quality and credibility, while feelings refer to emotional responses elicited by the brand.

Brand Resonance: The highest level where consumers develop a deep psychological bond with the brand, reflected in loyalty, active engagement, and community.

Keller's pyramid highlights the dynamic process by which brand equity is built from awareness to deep consumer-brand relationships. This model has been validated across various sectors and cultures, including Southeast Asia. For example, Phau and Teah (2009) examined brand personality and consumer self-expression in the region, demonstrating the importance of emotional and symbolic brand components, which align with Keller's emphasis on imagery and feelings.

3. Comparative Overview of Brand Equity Dimensions

A comparative analysis reveals substantial overlap between Aaker's and Keller's dimensions, with both underscoring brand awareness, associations, and loyalty as central components. However, Keller's model places stronger emphasis on the emotional and relational aspects of branding, capturing the affective and social dimensions through imagery, feelings, and resonance.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Aaker's and Keller's Brand Equity Dimensions

Dimension	Aaker (1991)	Keller (1993)
Awareness	✓	✓ (Salience)
Associations	✓	✓(Imagery, Performance)
Perceived Quality	✓	✓ (Judgments)
Brand Loyalty	✓	✓ (Resonance)
Emotional Connection	—	✓ (Feelings, Resonance)
Proprietary Assets	✓	—

Southeast Asian studies reflect the relevance of both cognitive and affective dimensions. For example, Wong and Merrilees (2005) note the need for SMEs to foster not just awareness but also strong emotional brand connections to compete effectively. Moreover, studies such as those by Sukcharoenchai and Sripornprasit (2019) in Thailand's beauty market emphasize emotional appeal and social influence as key drivers of brand equity.

4. Empirical Evidence from Thailand and Southeast Asia

Regional research confirms that while foundational dimensions are universally relevant, cultural nuances significantly shape the formation and impact of brand equity.

In Thailand, for instance, Sukcharoenchai and Sripornprasit (2019) found that brand loyalty is closely tied to emotional brand associations and social endorsement, reflecting collectivist cultural tendencies. Similarly, Setthasakko and Kachitvichyanukul (2020) in their study on organic food consumers highlight how trust and perceived social responsibility strengthen brand equity, underscoring the role of ethical and communal values in Southeast Asian markets.

Vietnamese research by Tran and Le (2020) in the mobile telecommunications sector reveals that brand awareness remains the strongest predictor of brand loyalty, a pattern consistent with highly competitive and price-sensitive environments. Meanwhile, Lee and Karim (2017) report that in Malaysia's luxury fashion market, brand personality and emotional brand experiences drive purchase intentions, further supporting Keller's emotional dimensions.

These findings suggest that while brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty are core across the region, emotional resonance, social influence, and cultural symbolism must be explicitly accounted for in models of brand equity in Southeast Asia.

5. Industry-Specific Dimensions

Different industries also emphasize distinct brand equity components. In service sectors prevalent in Southeast Asia—such as banking, tourism, and education—trust, service quality, and relationship building are integral. For example, Wong and Merrilees (2005) argue that SMEs in service industries must develop strong brand relationships to foster loyalty in competitive markets.

In digital and e-commerce domains, brand equity increasingly includes dimensions such as online engagement, website usability, and social media credibility. Nguyen et al. (2016) investigate how digital personalization and transparency affect brand engagement, highlighting the evolving nature of brand equity in the digital age, which is highly relevant for Southeast Asia's growing online consumer base.

6. Interrelationships and Dynamic Nature of Brand Equity Dimensions

Research emphasizes that brand equity dimensions are interrelated and sequential. For instance, brand awareness often precedes the development of brand associations, which influence perceived quality and ultimately foster loyalty (Keller, 1993). Moreover, emotional connections can moderate the relationships between cognitive evaluations and loyalty (Phau & Teah, 2009).

Given the dynamic market conditions in Southeast Asia, brand equity is also seen as evolving over time. Social media, digital trends, and cultural shifts can rapidly influence brand perceptions and loyalty. As Nguyen et al. (2016) suggest, brand equity management must consider temporal changes in consumer engagement and sentiment.

4. Measurement Approaches

Measuring brand equity is a critical step for both researchers and practitioners seeking to quantify the value a brand contributes to business performance and consumer behavior. Various approaches have been developed over time, reflecting different theoretical perspectives and methodological preferences. Broadly, these approaches fall into qualitative and quantitative categories, each offering unique insights and challenges. This chapter discusses these measurement paradigms and reviews key models—specifically Aaker's Model, Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model, and Financial Brand Equity Models—highlighting their applications and relevance, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts.

1. Qualitative vs. Quantitative Measurement Approaches

Qualitative methods provide rich, exploratory insights into how consumers perceive and relate to brands. Techniques such as focus groups, in-depth interviews, projective techniques, and ethnographic studies allow researchers to uncover underlying emotions, cultural meanings, and symbolic associations that quantitative surveys may overlook. For example, in Southeast Asia, qualitative research has been instrumental in understanding the cultural nuances influencing brand meaning, such as the importance of social approval and communal values in Thailand (Sukcharoenchai & Sripornprasit, 2019).

However, qualitative methods typically involve smaller samples and are less suited for generalization or comparison across large populations. Hence, they are often used in the preliminary stages of brand equity research or to complement quantitative findings.

Quantitative approaches, on the other hand, utilize structured instruments to measure specific brand equity dimensions numerically, enabling statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. Surveys employing Likert scales or semantic differentials are common, allowing researchers to assess dimensions such as brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty across broader samples. Quantitative data facilitate the application of statistical tools like factor analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), and regression analysis, which help validate theoretical models and understand causal relationships.

In Southeast Asia, the quantitative approach is widely adopted due to its scalability and capacity for benchmarking across industries and regions. For instance, Tran and Le (2020) used survey-based SEM to measure the impact of brand equity dimensions on customer loyalty in Vietnam's telecommunications sector.

2. Aaker's Brand Equity Measurement Model

Aaker's (1991) framework not only conceptualizes brand equity but also offers practical guidelines for its measurement. He suggests assessing each of the five core dimensions through multiple indicators:

Brand Awareness: Measured through aided and unaided recall tests, brand recognition tests, and brand familiarity ratings.

Brand Associations: Assessed by identifying the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand-related attributes, benefits, and attitudes.

Perceived Quality: Measured through consumer ratings of overall quality, performance, and reliability.

Brand Loyalty: Evaluated via repeat purchase rates, switching costs, and attitudinal loyalty scales.

Other Proprietary Assets: Usually measured through legal and financial audits.

Aaker's multidimensional measurement model has been widely adapted. Wong and Merrilees (2005) applied it in a Southeast Asian SME context, modifying survey instruments to better reflect local market conditions. The model's flexibility allows companies to focus on dimensions most relevant to their strategic goals.

3. Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Measurement

Keller's (1993) CBBE model is operationalized primarily through consumer surveys that capture brand knowledge structures. The measurement typically involves:

Brand Salience: Assessed by brand recall and recognition questions.

Brand Performance and Imagery: Measured through consumers' evaluations of product features and symbolic associations.

Brand Judgments and Feelings: Captured via attitudinal scales measuring quality perceptions, credibility, and emotional responses.

Brand Resonance: Measured by indicators of loyalty, attachment, and engagement, such as willingness to recommend or participate in brand communities.

The CBBE approach is favored for its focus on consumer cognition and emotion, making it especially useful in markets where brand meaning is socially constructed. Phau and Teah (2009) effectively used this approach to analyze brand personality and self-expression among Southeast Asian consumers, demonstrating its relevance in culturally rich environments.

4. Financial Brand Equity Models

Financial measurement models evaluate brand equity by linking brand strength to financial metrics, bridging marketing and accounting perspectives. Common methods include:

Brand Valuation Models: Such as those by Interbrand and BrandZ, which estimate brand value based on factors like future earnings attributable to the brand, brand strength scores, and market conditions.

Market-Based Models: These use stock market data to assess brand impact on firm value (Simon & Sullivan, 1993).

Price Premium Analysis: Examining how much more consumers are willing to pay for branded products compared to unbranded counterparts.

In Southeast Asia, financial models are gaining traction among large corporations and investors. However, challenges exist due to limited data availability and market transparency, especially among SMEs. Nguyen et al. (2016) highlight the increasing need for robust financial brand metrics in the region's growing digital economy.

5. Integrated Measurement Practices

Given the strengths and limitations of individual approaches, many studies advocate for integrated measurement frameworks that combine qualitative and quantitative data and merge consumer-based and financial perspectives. Such mixed methods provide a holistic understanding of brand equity's multifaceted nature.

For example, Wong and Merrilees (2005) combined survey data with qualitative interviews to capture both the statistical relationships and cultural context of brand equity in Southeast Asian SMEs. Similarly, Tran and Le (2020) complement quantitative SEM analysis with market data to validate their findings.

In conclusion, measurement of brand equity requires careful selection of methods aligned with research objectives, brand contexts, and cultural nuances. Aaker's and Keller's models remain foundational for consumer-based measurement, while financial models provide critical insights into brand value from an investment perspective. Especially in Southeast Asia, incorporating local cultural dimensions and digital market dynamics into measurement instruments enhances the accuracy and relevance of brand equity assessments.

Antecedents and Consequences of Brand Equity

Understanding the factors that lead to the development of brand equity, as well as its outcomes, is crucial for both academic research and managerial practice. Brand equity is shaped by a combination of internal firm-level and external consumer-level antecedents, which interact to build a strong brand presence. Once established, brand equity influences key performance indicators such as brand performance, purchase intention, and customer satisfaction. This chapter explores these antecedents and consequences, drawing on relevant empirical studies and contextualizing findings within Southeast Asian markets.

1. Internal (Firm-Level) Antecedents

At the firm level, several strategic and operational factors drive brand equity creation. These include:

Brand Strategy and Management: The clarity and consistency of brand positioning, messaging, and identity play a fundamental role. Aaker (1991) highlights that well-managed brand associations and clear value propositions facilitate stronger brand equity. For example, firms that invest in consistent communication and maintain brand integrity over time tend to build higher brand awareness and loyalty.

Product and Service Quality: High-quality products and services create positive consumer perceptions that enhance perceived quality, a key dimension of brand equity (Keller, 1993). In Southeast Asia, companies in competitive sectors such as telecommunications and retail focus heavily on improving service reliability and customer experience to boost brand equity (Tran & Le, 2020).

Innovation and Differentiation: Firms that innovate in product features, packaging, or customer service foster unique brand associations that differentiate their brands in crowded markets (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). In the Thai cosmetics industry, innovation aligned with cultural preferences has been shown to strengthen emotional brand connections (Sukcharoenchai & Sripornprasit, 2019).

Marketing Investments: Advertising, promotions, sponsorships, and digital marketing increase brand visibility and salience. Nguyen et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of digital marketing investments in enhancing brand engagement in Southeast Asia's rapidly evolving online markets.

2. External (Consumer-Level) Antecedents

Consumers' characteristics and perceptions significantly influence brand equity formation:

Brand Awareness and Familiarity: As consumers become more aware and familiar with a brand, their likelihood of developing positive associations and loyalty increases (Keller, 1993). In markets like Vietnam, high brand awareness is a prerequisite for brand equity, particularly in price-sensitive segments (Tran & Le, 2020).

Cultural and Social Influences: Social norms, peer recommendations, and cultural values shape how consumers perceive and relate to brands. In Thailand, collectivist culture emphasizes social approval and emotional bonds with brands, making social influence a strong antecedent of brand loyalty (Phau & Teah, 2009; Sukcharoenchai & Sripornprasit, 2019).

Trust and Perceived Risk: Trust in a brand reduces consumer perceived risk and uncertainty, particularly in service industries. Studies in Southeast Asia suggest that trust is a critical driver of brand loyalty and repeated purchase intention (Setthasakko & Kachitvichyanukul, 2020).

Customer Experience and Engagement: Positive interactions across touchpoints increase emotional attachment and favorable judgments, enhancing brand equity (Nguyen et al., 2016).

3.Consequences of Brand Equity

Established brand equity yields several beneficial outcomes that enhance business performance:

Brand Performance: Strong brand equity contributes to superior market share, pricing power, and competitive advantage. Aaker (1991) asserts that loyal customers reduce marketing costs and stabilize revenue streams. In Southeast Asia, firms with strong brand equity often outperform competitors in both offline and digital channels (Wong & Merrilees, 2005).

Purchase Intention: High brand equity increases consumers' likelihood to buy, as positive brand associations reduce decision-making effort and perceived risk (Keller, 1993). Tran and Le (2020) document that brand equity strongly predicts purchase intention in Vietnam's telecommunications market.

Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty: Brand equity fosters satisfaction through consistent product quality and fulfilling brand promises, which in turn drives loyalty. Satisfied customers tend to become brand advocates, contributing to word-of-mouth promotion (Phau & Teah, 2009). In Thailand's beauty sector, emotional brand connections enhance both satisfaction and repurchase behavior (Sukcharoenchai & Sripornprasit, 2019).

Price Premium: Brands with strong equity can command higher prices, as consumers perceive greater value. This effect is particularly notable in luxury and specialty product segments in Southeast Asia (Lee & Karim, 2017).

4. Interactions Between Antecedents and Consequences

The relationship between antecedents and consequences is dynamic and often reciprocal. For example, improved brand performance reinforces consumer perceptions, which further strengthens brand equity in a virtuous cycle (Aaker, 1991). Additionally, external shocks such as economic shifts or competitive moves can influence these dynamics, requiring firms to continuously manage brand equity proactively.

6. Cross-Cultural and Sectoral Applications

Brand equity is not a universally homogeneous concept; its formation, perception, and implications vary significantly across cultural contexts and industry sectors. In particular, Asia—with its diverse consumer cultures, economic structures, and brand landscapes—has emerged as a rich domain for investigating localized interpretations and applications of brand equity.

1. Brand Equity Research in Asia and Thailand

Research in Asian contexts, including Thailand, has challenged and enriched Western-centric models of brand equity. While foundational models like Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) are widely used, scholars in Asia have highlighted the importance of cultural dimensions such as collectivism, face-saving, and long-term orientation in shaping consumer-brand relationships.

In Thailand, consumer-brand interactions are often driven by emotional resonance, social influence, and symbolic value. Sukcharoenchai and Sripornprasit (2019) found that Thai consumers are more likely to develop brand loyalty when a brand aligns with cultural ideals of beauty, humility, and community approval. Similarly, studies by Phau and Teah (2009) suggest that peer influence and social image significantly mediate brand preference in collectivist societies like Thailand.

Moreover, trust and relationship quality are emphasized more in Asian brand equity studies than in Western models. Setthasakko and Kachitvichyanukul (2020) report that in Thailand’s banking sector, trust is a stronger predictor of brand loyalty than brand awareness or perceived quality, diverging from standard Western hierarchies of brand equity components.

2. Sectoral Applications of Brand Equity

The expression and strategic use of brand equity differ markedly across industry sectors. Key insights from services, FMCG, and luxury sectors in the Southeast Asian context are outlined below:

Services: In service industries such as banking, education, and hospitality, brand equity is closely tied to trust, service quality, and customer experience. Intangibility and customer participation in service delivery make perceived risk reduction central to brand value (Berry, 2000). In Thailand, banks and hospitals leverage brand equity to retain clients in a highly competitive and price-sensitive environment (Setthasakko & Kachitvichyanukul, 2020).

FMCG: For consumer-packaged goods, brand equity centers on familiarity, perceived quality, and symbolic attributes. Nguyen et al. (2016) found that in Vietnam and Thailand, high brand recall and favorable brand attitudes drive repeat purchases in personal care and food segments. Brand equity allows FMCG brands to maintain shelf dominance and command small price premiums in low-margin markets.

Luxury Goods: In the luxury segment, brand equity is closely linked with brand exclusivity, heritage, and emotional storytelling. Asian consumers, including those in Thailand, often equate brand value with social prestige and self-expression (Lee & Karim, 2017). Emotional brand connection and symbolic consumption are especially critical in this sector, as shown by Wong and Merrilees (2005), who identified "emotional attachment" as a key brand equity component for Southeast Asian luxury consumers.

3. Synthesis

Cross-cultural and sectoral perspectives on brand equity suggest that no one-size-fits-all model suffices. Instead, the antecedents and outcomes of brand equity must be interpreted through the lens of local culture and sector-specific dynamics. In Thailand and broader Southeast Asia, emotional connection, trust, and social validation emerge as especially powerful drivers. Accordingly, both researchers and brand managers must adopt a culturally nuanced and sector-sensitive approach to measuring and building brand equity.

7.Brand Equity in the Digital Age

The digital revolution has fundamentally reshaped how consumers perceive, interact with, and evaluate brands. Brand equity, once dominated by traditional media influence and firm-generated signals, is increasingly co-constructed in dynamic, participatory online environments.

Social media, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), and influencer marketing have emerged as powerful forces influencing brand perceptions. This chapter explores the evolving nature of brand equity in the digital era, with emphasis on digital engagement, co-creation, and the Thai and Southeast Asian context.

1. Social Media, e-WOM, and Influencer Marketing

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LINE have democratized brand communication. Consumers no longer passively receive brand messages; they now create, share, and evaluate brand narratives in real time. This participatory communication environment significantly affects brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty—core dimensions of brand equity.

e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth) has been identified as a highly influential antecedent of consumer-based brand equity. According to Ismagilova et al. (2020), e-WOM impacts trust, credibility, and purchase intention more powerfully than firm-generated advertisements. In the Thai market, where mobile internet penetration is high and peer opinions hold significant sway, e-WOM has a pronounced effect on young consumers' brand evaluations (Srisathan et al., 2022).

Influencer marketing further blurs the line between personal opinion and brand endorsement. In Southeast Asia, micro- and macro-influencers play a critical role in shaping brand equity by lending authenticity, relatability, and aspirational appeal. Studies have shown that influencer-brand congruence enhances brand credibility and emotional connection, particularly among Gen Z and millennial consumers (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

2. Digital Brand Engagement and Co-Creation

Digital platforms also enable unprecedented levels of brand engagement and co-creation, both of which are now essential components of modern brand equity. Hollebeek et al. (2014) argue that digital brand engagement—measured through cognitive processing, affection, and activation—positively correlates with brand loyalty and advocacy.

In the Thai context, brands like 7-Eleven Thailand, LINE Friends, and Mistine Cosmetics have successfully leveraged user engagement through interactive campaigns, hashtag challenges, and real-time feedback loops. These efforts create a sense of participation and ownership among consumers, reinforcing brand equity through emotional and behavioral loyalty.

Moreover, co-creation activities—such as product customization, user-generated content, and crowdsourced innovation—invite consumers to become collaborators rather than mere recipients. This active involvement deepens brand attachment and enhances brand equity (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). For instance, beauty brands like Oriental Princess in Thailand have employed co-creation platforms to allow users to vote on product packaging or fragrance choices, fostering a deeper emotional bond with the brand.

8. Research Trends and Gaps

Recent developments in branding research indicate a shift beyond traditional determinants of brand equity to more complex and value-driven themes such as sustainability, brand activism, and ethical consumption. These emerging concerns are reshaping how brand equity is understood, constructed, and measured, particularly among younger and more socially conscious consumer segments.

1. Emerging Topics: Sustainability and Brand Activism

Sustainability has become a central component of brand strategy in many industries. Brands that actively pursue environmental or social goals often experience enhanced brand equity due to perceived authenticity and shared values with consumers (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). For instance, in Southeast Asia, companies like PTT (Thailand) and Grab have incorporated sustainability messaging into their brand narratives to connect with environmentally conscious consumers. Studies by Chatzidakis et al. (2020) and Ritch (2021) suggest that consumers increasingly associate brand equity not only with performance or image but also with ethical alignment and long-term societal impact.

Similarly, brand activism—the practice of taking a public stance on socio-political issues—has emerged as a double-edged sword in brand equity development. While it can strengthen emotional bonds and deepen consumer identification with the brand, it also carries reputational risks in polarized environments. In the Thai context, brand activism remains relatively cautious, although there is growing interest in gender inclusivity, LGBTQ+ rights, and local environmental issues, especially among youth demographics.

2. Future Research Directions

Despite the richness of existing literature, several areas remain underexplored. First, more longitudinal studies are needed to trace how brand equity evolves in response to digital engagement, cultural shifts, and macroeconomic disruptions. Second, much of the empirical work on brand equity has been concentrated in Western markets; further comparative research between Western and Southeast Asian contexts—particularly Thailand—is warranted to uncover cultural nuances in brand equity perception and construction (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Buil et al., 2013).

Additionally, methodological advancements, including the use of AI and big data analytics, present opportunities for refining brand equity measurement. Digital trace data, such as user reviews, social media interactions, and behavioral clickstreams, can provide real-time indicators of brand health and complement traditional survey-based measures.

Lastly, interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate psychology, sociology, and sustainability studies can deepen our understanding of how brand equity is embedded within broader social systems. As brand equity becomes more dynamic and context-sensitive, future research must adapt by embracing diversity in methods, perspectives, and theoretical frameworks.

Conclusion

This review synthesized key academic contributions to brand equity, focusing on its conceptual foundations, dimensions, measurement approaches, antecedents and outcomes, and its relevance in both the digital era and Southeast Asian context. It traced the evolution of brand equity research from firm-centric to consumer- and society-centric perspectives.

The paper began by outlining the theoretical roots of brand equity, especially the seminal models by Aaker and Keller. It then examined how brand equity is structured, measured, and shaped by both firm-driven and consumer-driven factors, with emphasis on cultural and sectoral variations—particularly in Thailand, where digital habits and cultural values strongly influence brand dynamics.

In the digital age, brand equity extends beyond traditional perceptions formed by advertising. It is now co-created through real-time interactions, user narratives, and shared values on digital platforms. Co-creation, e-WOM, influencer branding, and participatory culture have become critical elements of consumer-based brand equity.

The review also identified emerging research directions, including sustainability, brand activism, and cross-cultural validation. As consumer values shift, brand equity remains essential to both scholarship and strategy. For Thailand and Southeast Asia, this opens a rich field for culturally grounded, innovative branding research and application.

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