

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Evaluation of Brand Extension through a Relationship Perspective Based on Trust

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Abstract

This paper has the purpose to show the importance of the introduction of a relationship approach based on trust in brand extension. After presenting the classical approaches of evaluation of brand extension and showing their limitations, we propose a conceptual model including the trust as a multidimensional construct and its consequences. An empirical study was carried with two brands with a sample of 400 consumers for every brand on the purpose to validate the model and verify the role of trust in this context. The test of the different relationships of the model was achieved in a structural modeling using Amos which allows us to specify the causal links between the various constructs. The results have highlighted the way in which the trust acts especially the action of its dimensions in the acceptance of a brand extension and this whatever the level of the fit between the brand and the extension.

Keywords: *Brand extension, Relationship marketing, Trust, Structural equation modeling.*

Introduction

Since its emergence, brand has succeeded in acquiring a prominent place on consumer market. This is visible through the large number of brands that knew how to build important positions on the world market as well as consumers' minds. This situation highlights the growing importance of brands and the evolution which they could present all along the last decades. In fact, we can meet more and more brands which are not only associated to one product but to a set of heterogeneous products. This strategy is called the strategy of brand extension. It consists in promoting different products in terms of nature and function from the original product keeping the same name of the brand [1]. This is the case of "Vittel" which is present on the mineral water market and cosmetic products, or "Samsung" that offers mobile phones and electrical appliances. Now, we see that many companies tend to reduce their portfolio of brands, keeping only those with a known name. This is imposed by the competitive situation of the market where brands are becoming more and more numerous and the costs of launching new brands become too expensive. However, this strategy presents a number of risks. In fact, many extensions have been a failure and this situation has led to a bad impact on the mother brand and the other products of the original brand. So researchers have seen the interest of understanding the impact of brand extension on the brand and they presented in this

framework several approaches to explain the evaluation of brand extension. Literature is mainly marked by two main approaches: the perceptual congruity and the categorical approach. These two approaches regard a relevant extension as the closest one to the original brand in terms of fit (adaptation) and typicality. This conclusion can be denied by many examples of brands that launched many extensions away from the original brand and achieved a great success. We can mention the case of Benetton brands, LG, Samsung, Tefal...etc. Thus it can be argued that the study of the evaluation of the brand extension is mainly based on the study of the categories of products as well as the physical and / or conceptual characteristics without taking into account the relationship side of the brand and its consideration as a true active partner in the relationship. So this restrictive view of the brand is likely to cause the negligence of some concepts which are able to provide some answers to the issue of the evaluation of brand extension. Among these concepts, one can notice the emergence of trust in brand. This is born from a new conception of change based on the establishment of a lasting relationship between partners. Hence, trust has become the main feature of most trade [2] and without this trust the relationship between partners can be neither stable nor lasting in time [3]. Therefore, trust in brand seems relevant in the case of brand extension. Indeed, this strategy

stands for an acute situation of uncertainty because the company suggests a new category of different products in nature and function of the original product of the brand. Hence, the consumer is in an attempt to estimate the quality of extension. This test will be based on the consumer's knowledge and experience with the brand to determine his attitude towards the new product. We can conclude that the consumer will expect a good product in extension if the original brand is known for its good quality. Therefore, the integration of trust in the clarification of the evaluation of brand extension can provide answers and elements of clarification that are able to solve some drawbacks of the classical approaches. We can assume that if a brand seeks to have a lasting relationship with its customers, it must ensure a good capital of trust with its clients to have a good acceptability of a change of its offer as a launch of a brand extension.

With reference to the drawbacks of both the study of the history of the trust as well as its role in the evaluation of brand extension, we are committed to conceive a conceptual model to identify the impact of each dimension of trust on the retained consequences. A state of the art of different conceptualizations and measurements of this phenomenon are presented as well as different backgrounds maintained by the literature. A conceptual model is so suggested. An investigation carried out by a sample of 400 customers for each brand of the study to test the solidity of this model. The theoretical and practical contributions of such conceptualization are then exposed.

The Strategy of Brand Extension

Generally, brand extension is heard as the use of an existing brand (called mother brand) to penetrate a new product (called extension) in a category of different products of the original brand. This is the attitude of many authors like [4, 5, 6]. The notion of brand extension is generally linked to a change of a category of products [4, 7]. Nevertheless, the notion of brand extension is seen to develop several definitions. Kotler and Dubois [8] define brand extension as the use of a brand name that has proven itself to start a product belonging to a new category. Aaker and Keller [5] think that brand extension is the use of an existing brand to a new product category for the company, in contrast to the line extension that uses the brand name in a product category where brand is already present. These definitions stand for a certain ambiguity which dwells mainly in the definition of the notion of the category of product. Cagerra and

Merunka [1] were the first who tried to clarify this concept. They think that brand extension can be considered only if the category of the product of extension is different from the original one. From his side Ladwein [9] suggests a cognitive definition of brand extension approaching it from the perspective of the real knowledge of the consumer. Indeed, he believes that despite the clarity and precision of the definition of Cegarra and Merunka [1], their point of view shows some restrictions linked to their belief that consumers have homogeneous knowledges and structures of the same way. Ladwein [9] suggests hence to consider any product extension not drilled by the consumer belongs to the range displayed by the brand. This definition stands for a disadvantage, for it seems difficult to identify an extension according to the categorical realization of every customer. In fact, what is regarded definite for a customer, as range extension, can be regarded brand extension for another. It depends on the customer's knowledge nature and structure. Lai [10] agrees with Ladwein [9] in considering that brand extension must be approached from consumer's point of view. However, in order to distinguish range extension and brand extension, he proposes to define the extension on an aggregate basis as a new product to an existing brand, classified in a majority form by consumers in a family of products different from those that brand is actually marketing.

Otherwise, Michel [11] regards the brand as an area of interaction between the company and the consumer. This conception of the brand leads to understand extension as an introduction to a new status which pretends the company. In other words, according to a dynamic conception of the brand, the company uses the strategy of brand extension to develop its status.

Consequently, we can notice that these different definitions highlight the difficulty of identifying brand extension and delimitating the boundaries between the categories of products. Ladwein [9], by suggesting his cognitive definition based on consumer's conception, tried to overcome this deficiency. However, practically, it seems difficult to apply it. Therefore, we have chosen to keep the definition of Cegarra and Merunka [1] who deserve to present clear criteria which help distinguish the categories of products from extension and the original category of brand: brand extension corresponds to a new product having the name of an existing brand whose nature and function are different from the original category of product.

The Explanatory Approaches of the Evaluation of Brand Extension

Since the 1980's, the strategy of brand extension was strongly imposed on companies among the strategies of development. More and more brands become no longer linked to an only product but to a group of heterogeneous products. We can mention the case of "Evian" which is originally a mineral water product, now it is present in the cosmetic domain. There is also the brand "Signal" which went from toothpaste to toothbrush and now chewing gum. However, success was not the fate of all the extensions, some ones have failed. They have even led to a bad impact on the mother brand. And to bound this risk, researchers tried to study the evaluation of brand extension. The literature review shows the domination of two main approaches: the congruence approach and the categorical approach.

The Approach of Perceptual Congruence

The approach of perceptual congruence has met great interest of researchers who are interested in the evaluation of brand extension by consumers. In fact, in literature, the evaluation of brand extension is highly dominated by the notions of "fit" and perceived similarity. Indeed, most of the developments in this context explain the attitude or preference away from brand extension whether from the perceived similarity between the original category and the category of the product viewed in extension, or the logical linking between the brand and its extension.

The concept of similarity has been studied in two different ways in research on brand extensions. On the one hand, some researchers have focused on the role of physical similarity that can exist between the extension and the existing products of the brand, the results seem to lead to the same conclusion: more extension is physically similar to the original products brand, also its evaluation will be based on the mother brand attitude [5, 12, 13]. On the other hand some researchers have looked towards the study of symbolic similarity between the brand and the extension. This was the question raised in the study of Park, Milberg and Lawson [14] that are based on real brands (Timex and Rolex). This research has enabled the authors to put in evidence that the coherence between the brand concept and product concept considered in extension and the degree of similarity with the extension allow a favorable extension. This can be considered when the proposed products in extension are intrinsically coherent with the brand extension.

In addition, the literature on brand extension was mainly interested in the transfer of associations and the "fit" between the mother brand and the extension [15]. Most authors include in their research the "fit" between the brand and the extension which can be translated as "logical linking" or "perceptual agreement" or "perceptual coherence". According to Tauber [4], this concept describes how the consumer accepts the product as logical (with respect to the mother brand) and expects to see this product under the brand name. This term is actually used as a synonym to similarity in the context of literature on brand extension. However, this concept is preferred to the notion of similarity because the latter has the disadvantage of not comparing more than two objects of the same kind (for example, two categories of products) while that of the fit allow the comparison of two objects of different kinds (for example, a brand and an extension) [16, 17]. This logical linking appears to be decisive in the transfer of brand attitude between mother brand and extension [18] and helps to explain the intention to purchase the product extension [19]. However, despite the wide consensus on the significance of this approach several critics have been addressed. For instance, consider the case of Ladwein [9] which identifies the boundaries of perceptual congruence in three points:

- The operationalisation of perceptual congruence According to Ladwein [9], there can be plenty of cases in the measurement of perceptual congruity:
 - The perceptual congruence between a brand (a name) and a category or a type of products.
 - The perceptual congruence between a given set of products and a category or a type of products.
 - The perceptual congruence between a set of labeled products and a category or a type of products.

These three measures lead to different conclusions in the process of perception, coherence is done in a different way depending on information provided by the respondent.

- The evaluation of the extension and the transfer of attributes

Distinguishing between different forms of congruence, we assume that there are different kinds of transfer of attributes. Having a type of product facing a set of transferred product attributes between the original product and the extension product is the result of the relationship between product categories as perceived by the

respondents. However, if this is a brand that is subject to assessment, the general idea held by the respondent (semantic aspect of the brand as well as the most typical products) directs the possible transfer of attributes in the evaluation of the extension. This attribute transfer has been the subject of research conducted by Keller and Aaker [20]. Their work has assumed that by managing the brand extension cleverly (the order of extensions), it is possible to change the perception of the brand.

▪ Extension and competitive perspective.

The evaluation of the brand extension on the basis of perceptual congruence leads to a reasoning based on the potential of the product category chosen as an extension. Such conclusions show that it is implicitly admitted that a product which is favorably judged in terms of its perceptual congruence is a possible product in extension. This kind of conclusions should be a subject of analysis because it is taken on the basis of the complex nature of the product, and it does not take into account the dimensions related to the competitive nature of the product category and the intended procurement extension that might be very competitive [6].

Moreover, some research has highlighted the role of other variables on the evaluation of brand extension. Indeed, the replications of the study of Aaker and Keller [5] as Sunde and Brodie [21], Nijssen and Hartman [22] and Roux [12] found that attitudes towards extensions are, on the one hand, oriented by the perceived quality of the mother brand and by the fit, on the other hand. Lye Venkateswarlu and Barret [23] concluded that the effect of quality is more important for functional extensions. For prestigious brand names, the quality is considered as an input and consumers rely on other factors in evaluating the extension such as the logical connection, the brand image etc ...

In this same perspective, Abideen and Latif [24] suggest to focus on the attributes of the mother brand and its features to explain the evaluation of brand extension. Grime, Diamantopoulos and Smith [25] have identified the moderator role played by certain variables on the fit, they assume that the fit has not an absolute effect on the evaluation of brand extension and its impact should be studied according to certain concepts:

- The quality of mother brand: these researchers found that the perceived quality plays a

moderator role between the fit and the evaluation of consumer and brand extension.

- The knowledge of consumers: the knowledge of consumers consists of familiarity and expertise. Familiarity refers to the number of accumulated experiences with a particular product and expertise is defined by the consumer to use the product correctly. Consumers' knowledge is supposed to moderate the effect of the fit. Particularly, the more the knowledge of consumers is improved, the greater the impact of the fit is.
- The certainty of the consumer: the certainty of the consumer indicates the ability of a company to ensure consumer's expectations [26]. Keller and Aaker [20] talk about the credibility of the company which can be defined as the belief of the consumer that a company can produce products and services which meet the needs of consumers. Smith and Andrews [26] showed that the effect of the fit was moderated by the certainty of the consumer. Particularly, the greater is the certainty that the company can produce new products, the less is the effect of the fit on the evaluation of extension.

The Categorical Approach

This approach based on the representation of knowledge made it possible to rephrase the question of the evaluation of brand extension and respond to the main criticisms of the approach of perceptual congruence. Indeed, according to Ladwein [9], taking into account the categorical approach has helped to structure a theoretical framework that permit to:

- Define brand extension on the basis of existing cognitive structures and evaluate them accordingly.
- Consider the problem of the transfer of the characteristics of brand to a product and that of extension on the original perception of the brand: facing an extension, a consumer will compare the brand with the product category in extension. According to Changeur and Chandon [27], this comparison leads to a certain perception of the way in which the new product is considered representative of the mother brand or not. Several phenomena can occur:
 - Acceptance of the product in a cognitive category that the brand shapes in memory.
 - Restructuring of the category to introduce the new product.

- Non acceptance of the product in the category previously formed.
- To take into account the competitive situation in which extension takes place because the product will be examined from several angles like its function, its utility, its qualities, and the different brands that sell variations.
- To understand the brand extension in terms of the process of consumer choice considering this one as a choice made simultaneously between a product linked to a range associated to a brand and the choice of a product of a certain brand among a set of other competing brands.

Mervis and Rosch [28] have developed the idea saying that typicality is a measure of the proximity between different elements and a central concept. This proximity stems from a cognitive processing based on the attributes of various elements. These attributes are supposed to be shared by certain elements of the group, but not all. Thus, the degree of attributes an element of the category has in common with other members is positively correlated with the degree of perceived typicality. Loken and Ward [29] showed that the typicality of a product is positively related to the attitudes towards it. So if a brand is positively evaluated and its extension is typical, its evaluation will be positive because the typical extensions share the same benefits associated to the brand [13].

However, despite the importance of the concept of typicality, its contribution must be relativised. Indeed, the judgment of typicality leads to a measurement of the position of the cognitive item in a very specific category like its ability to represent the group. This judgment is drawn from a previous knowledge owned by the consumer. According to Ladwein [9], in the case of an extension strategy based on the concept of the brand, a product judged as typically low does not necessarily mean that the product proposed in extension is not interesting for the brand. This extension will be interesting if others ones are launched by the brand and the concept of the brand will change. This modification can help an extension judged as typically low to improve its typicality rating. These approaches can eventually explain the success of some brands like Benetton in its multiple extensions. This orientation has led Ladwein [9] and Michel [6] to conclude that the strict use of the term typicality in the evaluation of brand extension can lead to a loss of opportunities by limiting its scope of

application, because measurement of typicality leads, as already mentioned, to a resistance to a peculiar change to cognitive category. This implies that consumers tend to evaluate a product that is physically away from the original ones of the brand as slightly typical while this product can be quite coherent with the mother brand and has an opportunity of success. Thus, we can conclude that the study of the evaluation of brand extensions is based on a focus on the study of product categories, physical and / or conceptual of the brand without taking it into account as an active partner in the exchange. This narrow vision of the brand leads to the negligence of certain approaches and concepts that are able to provide a kind of deepening in the resolution of the problematic evaluation of brand extension.

The conceptualization of exchange has greatly evolved, it is no longer considered as punctual transactions but as a relationship between the consumer and the supplier. The brand has also undergone the consequences of this assessment; it is currently regarded as a partner in the exchange itself. It was born initially from the will of the manufacturer to establish a long-term relationship with the customer, but it also has an interest for the consumer as it allows the simplification of purchasing tasks and consumption, the process of information, the reduction of perceived risk and the maintenance of cognitive coherence and a comfortable psychological state [30]. This view of the brand as a personified body, beyond the evaluation of its usefulness, enables the consumer to enter into a relationship with it, allowing the emergence of trust in the partner as the most characteristic trade [2, 31].

The consequences of the consideration of a relationship approach to brand seem to be relevant to the case of brand extensions. Indeed, in this particular case, the consumer is in a situation of acute uncertainty related to the new offer of the brand. In this case the brand offers a category of product new in nature and function. So, the consumer is in a situation of estimating the quality of the new product. And he will depend on his knowledge and previous experience of the brand. It is also estimated that in this case the consumer will rely on his trust in the brand in order to predict the quality of the proposed extension. The integration of the concept of trust in the issue of the extension seems relevant, it would solve the inadequacies of explanatory approaches for the evaluation of brand extensions especially their restrictive view of the brand and

their neglect of the impact of a relationship approach on the evaluation of a brand extension.

The Trust

Researches on social psychology and relationship marketing agree that trust plays a very important role in establishing and maintaining long-term relationship. Rotter [32] defines trust as a general predisposition to believe, to trust the word and the promise of the other. Morgan and Hunt [33] show that following the outlook of relationship marketing, the company has developed a network of internal relationships with its lateral partners, suppliers and customers as well. Trust is regarded as a vital concept for understanding the process of structuring business exchanges. In addition, following the call of Sheth and Parvatiyar [30], a recent trend of relationship marketing has emerged and sought to extend its principles to the field of consumer's behavior. It proposes to consider the consumers' demand as a holistic request where the tangible part is included with other service elements (intangible) such as information on a better use of the product, after-sales service, etc. ... and not as a simple request for products or services [34]. Thus, and by including the principle of reciprocity [35], fundamental in the relationship approach, the emphasis is on the benefits and contributions of a reciprocal and sustainable relationship for both consumers and business. With regard to the company, the fact of maintaining exchange relationships with customers is a source of long-term benefit [36]. For consumers, set relationships up rather than stick to one-off transactions leads to a variety of benefits such as the simplification of tasks of purchasing, consumption, information process, reducing the perceived risk as well as the maintenance of a state of psychological comfort and cognitive consistency [30]. This consideration of trust in the brand leads to some implications. First, the adoption of a certain quality of the interpersonal relationship leads to the finding that the brand has some features that exceed the product approach. This idea is not new because the brand has already been treated as a particular by Aaker [42, 37]. According to Delgado-Ballester and Aleman-Munuera [38], trust in a person can be regarded as a sense of security based on the belief that his behavior is guided and driven by the favorable and positive intentions towards his partner. So this person will not lie or take advantage of the vulnerability of the latter. Trust in the brand can be defined as a sense of security of the consumer that the brand will reach his expectations and be up to them [38]. It is, therefore, to consider the brand as a human with

personality features [39, 40] and is given almost human characteristics [41, 42].

Brand Trust: A Research Model

Analyzing researches on trust, it has been noticed that these studies were seen as analogous to a trust in a person and therefore they considered interpersonal trust as a starting point to propose a conceptual framework of trust in the brand [43, 44, 45, 46]. Based on the review of recent researches, we can see that there is some confusion in the definition and implementation of the concept of trust in the brand. Indeed, Fournier [47] proposed a multi-faceted built to measure the quality of the brand relationship. It consists of two affective facets, two cognitive and two conative. Hess [43] has regarded trust as a multidimensional concept to which it has been developed a specific scale. This consists of a dimension "honest" a dimension "altruism" and dimension "reliability". Several concepts have been proposed to define trust, they are of several kinds: cognitive as belief [44, 48], emotional as the presumption [45, 49, 50], and conative as the will [51, 52].

Beyond the very nature of the trust, there is another disagreement at the level of literature regarding the decomposition of this concept. Indeed, one can find three conceptions of trust in marketing research: unidimensional, two-dimensional and three-dimensional.

Unidimensional Conception

Trust was considered essentially unidimensional by Fournier [47] and Morgan and Hunt [33]. The two latters have adopted the scale of Larzelere and Houston [53] from the social psychology. According to Morgan and Hunt [33], the dimensions of honesty and motivation are inseparable in practice though they are conceptually distinct.

Two-dimensional Conception

According to Ganesan [54] and Ganesan and Hess [55], trust has two dimensions. On the one hand we distinguish the objective credibility of the partner that combines his competence, honesty and willingness to keep his promises. On the other hand, there is the benevolence which corresponds to the right intentions of the partner and his perceived determination to pay attention to the needs and desires of the other. This conceptualization of trust has been operationalized in the relationship approach of the brand in particular by Sirieux and Dubois [44]. According to this view, brand trust consists of the honesty and competence attributed to brand on

the one hand, and motivations and intentions of the brand to the consumer on the other.

Three-dimensional Conception

Despite the differences observed between the authors, the majority of them agree that there is a multidimensional construct. Increasingly, the research presents a three-dimensional design of trust. Some researchers believe that trust consists of three dimensions [43, 45, 50, 56].

- The presumption of competence (the mastery of skills)
- The presumption of honesty that is to respect what is promised.
- The ability of the brand to take into account the interests of consumers and their motivations for a long term.

As already noted, the interpersonal trust is not limited to cognitive foundations, it also consists of affective elements [57]. Indeed, trust is based on a cognitive process in the sense where we choose those who will trust us and we base our choice of

"good reasons" which constitute the evidence that the other party is trustworthy [58]. However,

trust also has affective origins which are the emotional ties formed between people and lead to the formation of a great interest to achieve the expectations and well being of their partners [57]. Thus, and in accordance with Gurviez [59], we propose to consider trust as a "presumption" rather than as a "belief" in order to emphasize the nature of both cognitive and affective processes of trust. Indeed, the belief, as the presumption is certainly not objective judgments. But what sets them apart is that the belief is generally regarded as a judgment that varies with the level of security that accords to subject. However, the presumption is defined as "to hold true," the consumer is based in this case on evidence rather than on actual facts to form its position with respect to the brand [59, 54]. Therefore, the fact of considering trust as a presumption takes into account the uncertainty that surrounds every trade. In this paper, we propose that trust in a brand will lead to positive outcomes whatever the level of the fit of the brand extension. The research framework is shown in fig. 1.

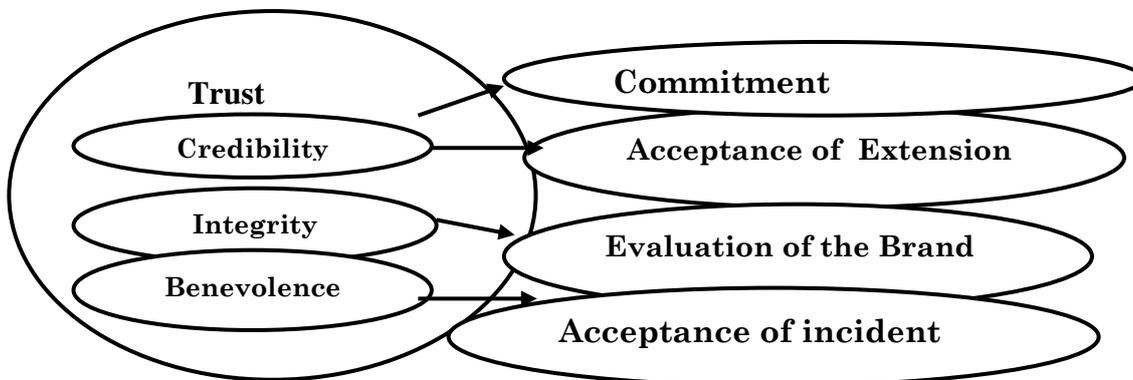


Fig. 1: The conceptual model

The Consequences of Trust

The Commitment

Gurviez [45] defines commitment to the brand as the intention, implicit or explicit, to maintain a lasting relationship with the brand, resulting in a brand loyalty, and having a positive impact on purchasing behavior. In the literature, it is noted that trust and commitment are strongly related.

It is indeed on a consensus among researchers that trust in the brand leads to commitment as it creates a strong trading relationship [33]. It also reduces the perceived risk and vulnerability in a relationship that leads to a strong commitment to

the relationship [58]. Trust reduces the transaction costs, which increases the likelihood of the continuation of the relationship and therefore the commitment [60]. In this research, we consider commitment as a direct result of the trust. This concept seemed appropriate because it allows the longevity of the relationship, the perception of future earnings and a limited desire to search for alternatives [61]. Such consequences of the presence of the commitment in the case of brand extensions seemed very interesting because this strategy has a high level of risk related to the

novelty of the product and may be limited in the case of consumers engaged in a relationship with the brand.

H1: Trust positively influences commitment.

- *H1.a: Credibility positively influences commitment.*
- *H1.b: Integrity positively influences commitment.*
- *H1.c: Benevolence positively influences commitment.*

The Acceptance of the Extension

The acceptance of the brand extension is recommended as a direct result of the trust [1]. According to Gurviez and Korchia [3], consumers tend to accept a new product from a brand that they trust.

This review is also the one of Siriex and Dubois [44] who indicates that a brand possessing a high level of trust can benefit of a halo effect making it possible to postpone the trust in the product for all products associated with this brand. Wu and Yen [62] argue that brands with strong trust bring a more favorable assessment of the extension than those with a low level of trust. Thus, a new product launched under a brand that a consumer has always been satisfied benefit of a capital of trust already established.

H2: Trust positively influences the acceptance of the extension.

- *H2.a: Credibility positively influences the acceptance of the extension.*
- *H2.b: Integrity positively influences the acceptance of the extension.*
- *H2.c: Benevolence positively influences the acceptance of the extension.*

The Evaluation of the Brand

The evaluation of the brand is all the feelings and emotions associated by the individual to an object [6]. In the context of the literature on brand extension, there can be three types of effects of the extension on the evolution of the brand evaluation:

- Deterioration of the brand evaluation: this effect takes place when presenting extensions incoherent with the mother brand.
- A better evaluation of the brand: this occurs when the extensions are seen as similar to the original products of the brand [20].

- The inertia of the brand evaluation: according to Rompf [63] and Ladwein [9], extensions coherent or incoherent, typical or atypical have no impact on the evaluation of the brand.

These divergent results show that the study of the impact of the extension on the brand requires more depth and a new analysis. It is in this context that we propose to introduce the role of trust in the brand evaluation. Indeed, a consumer with a certain trust in its brand will tend to be more accepting of products of this brand and this regardless of the level of fit of the extension presented. According to Siriex and Dubois [44], trust can influence the perceived quality of products in the consumer experience and thus increase customer satisfaction due to this experience. Thus, we can assume that the presence of brand trust leads to a positive evaluation of the latter.

H3: Trust positively influences brand evaluation.

- *H3.a: Credibility positively influences brand evaluation.*
- *H3.b: Integrity positively influences brand evaluation.*
- *H3.c: Benevolence positively influences brand evaluation.*

The Acceptance of Incident

We will consider acceptance of a deficiency in the quality of the product as an indirect consequence of trust through commitment. Indeed, if a consumer has trust in a brand, he will engage in a relationship with it characterized by a desire to develop a long term relationship. The engagement leads thus to an attachment to the brand and a positive impact on the purchasing behavior to protect a temporary lack of quality [64, 45, 3]. This result seems relevant to the case of brand extensions because the risk of incident is more present and commitment in the relationship would allow to the brand on the one hand, a better consumer predisposition to accept the proposed extension and on the other, to forgive him his fault if failure occurs. Therefore, it seems interesting to see the role of the commitment to this kind of problems that may be encountered extension. Arguably, therefore, the consumer engagement with the brand leads to greater acceptability of incidents that happened to him and can continue the relationship.

H4: Commitment positively influences the acceptance of the brand incidents

Research Methodology

A preliminary study was made in order to choose the categories of products and brands used in the study. To achieve this goal we have adopted the following approach.

Choice of Products

In this study, we chose to work on mass consumption products. This choice was based on the fact that this type of product benefits from a capital of familiarity and high experience of consumers allowing a better evaluation of products. Moreover, we note that in the literature there has been some interest in the role of trust in the food industry. Indeed, consumers suffer from a lack of confidence in this type of product. This is due to several reasons such as loss of connection with the product, the birth of unidentified products, the abundance of food, the growing influence of media ... etc. [65]. These reasons can confirm our choice of the field in the particular case of this research. In order to choose two specific product categories, we adopted an approach similar to that used in research on brand extensions [5, 20, 13, 66]. We started in a first step by selecting product categories commonly used by consumers in the food industry. This step helped set up a list of ten categories. In a second step, the same list was used in a pretest to select the two categories that have the highest score of familiarity by a sample of sixteen persons belonging to the target products. This procedure resulted in the selection of yoghurt and biscuit categories as most familiar with our sample.

Brand Choice

Once the chosen categories, we have identified the existing brands in the same category. We started by making an initial selection of these brands based on the following criteria:

- Notoriety of the brand: it is preferable to use strong notoriety brands, this is due to the fact that consumers generally have a clearer picture of the brands with a strong reputation. In addition, this type of brand has a good level of perceived quality.
- The level of dilution: we chose to work on some brands diluted to eliminate the effects of a wide range of consumer evaluation [20].
- The level of perceived quality: it is necessary that the brand has a good reputation in terms of quality of its products.

- This first selection resulted in a first place to hold a list of brands corresponding to each product category. We then submitted this list to test familiarity of the brands by a sample of sixteen people. This step allowed us to retain the most familiar brand familiar to consumers in each category. Thus, the brand "Delice Danone" was selected for yoghurt and the brand "Saida" for biscuit.

Choice of Extensions

To choose the brand extensions of the study, we adopted a methodology similar to that used in previous research on brand extensions [20].

Proposal for the List of Extensions

To generate a credible list of extensions for each brand, we organized a brainstorming session with a sample of five experts for each brand. After these two sessions, we selected a list of 17 products for Danone products and 14 for the brand Saida. Then we decided to submit the list to two marketing specialists. These latter have distinguished from this list brand extensions, line extensions and complementary range. These experts are based on the definition of Cegarra and Merunka [1] to make this work.

Choice of Extensions

Based on the list of brand extensions used, we subjected each product category proposed to the test of "fit" of Aaker and Keller [5]. This test measures the similarity between the category extension and the original brand category as well as the transfer of know-how between the brand and the extension. The result of this work has enabled us to retain the categories of products with the best fit and those with the least fit. This pretest was done with twenty individuals and gave the following results:

- For the brand "Delice Danone", chocolate product had the best scores in terms of similarity and transfer with the original product of the brand which is the yoghurt, and children's toys product had the worst scores.
- For the brand "Saida", chocolate product had the highest scores in terms of similarity and transfer with the original product of the brand which is the biscuit, and mineral water product has been deemed the most distant.

Data Collection

In this research, data will be collected using a self-administered questionnaire. We have prepared four versions of the questionnaire. Each

version corresponds to one of two brands of the study and each brand has been associated with two different extensions fictitious in terms of the "fit" perceived.. Consumers have discovered the poster of the extension study and responded to items related to the consequences of trust. Our investigation was made with an experimental group of 800 persons, 400 people for each brand studied. This convenience sample is composed exclusively of management students. This choice is motivated by the fact that it forms an important target for both brands studied. However, it has no objective representation. Our sample is composed of an equal of men and women with a high school education.

Measurement of Variables

The selected measurement scales come from the literature review. These are psychometric scales that have been used in similar contexts in our study. In this study, trust is retained as a multidimensional concept made by credibility, integrity and benevolence. The adapted scale of Gurviez and Korchia [50] is composed of three items measuring the credibility, three items measuring the integrity and two items measuring the benevolence.

The acceptance of the extension has been measured by the scale suggested by Gurviez and Korchia [3] which arises two questions. The first one measures the consumer's expectations towards the quality of the suggested extension, and the second measures purchasing intention of the suggested extension. Commitment has been measured through the scale of Gurviez and Korchia [50] which composed of three items. These ones measure in particular the relationship of the consumer with the brand, the intention of making sacrifices, the intention of defending the brand as well as the intention of carrying on with

the relationship with the brand for an expanded period of time.

Concerning the acceptance of the incident, it will be measured through the scale of Gurviez and Korchia [3]. This scale is aimed at measuring the intention to continue the relationship with the brand despite the incidents. The evaluation of the brand is generally measured inclusively [67, 6]. The considered scale is composed of two items: the first is stemmed from the study of Ladwein [9] and the second is suggested by Filser [68].

Presentation and Discussion of the Results

The test of the different relationships of the model is achieved in a structural modeling using Amos 6 which allows us to specify the causal links between the various constructs. The stepwise method was applied. First, we began by ensuring the quality of adjustment of the measurement model. This test was performed using a principal components analysis and confirmatory factor analysis and completed by the calculation of reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha and Rho of Joreskog) and construct validity (convergent validity and discriminative validity). Then, we estimated the structural adjustment of the model and overall model that is to say studying the indicators of the overall model to ensure a good adjustment between the theoretical model and the empirical data. Finally, and in a last step we checked the hypothetical causal relationships between the latent variables in our model.

Verification of the Reliability and the Validity of the Features of Constructs

In this section, we will start by ensuring the factorial structure of the scales adopted in this research and the reliability of the constructs retained. To do this, we conducted a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and a verification of reliability indices (Cronbach's alpha and Rho of Joreskog), the results of these analysis are summarized in the following tables:

Table 1: Structure and reliability of measurement scales

Measure scales	Factorial structure	Reliability of the scale			
		DD		Saida	
Trust	Tridimensional at eight items: Credibility: three items The integrity: three items Benevolence: two items	Strong fit	Weak fit	Strong fit	Weak fit
		$\alpha = 0.987$	$\alpha = 0.932$	$\alpha = 0.993$	$\alpha = 0.94$
		$Rho = 0.99$	$Rho = 0.94$	$Rho = 0.99$	$Rho = 0.88$
		$\alpha = 0.772$	$\alpha = 0.785$	$\alpha = 0.761$	$\alpha = 0.78$
		$Rho = 0.87$	$Rho = 0.91$	$Rho = 0.87$	$Rho = 0.92$
		$\alpha = 0.8$	$\alpha = 0.744$	$\alpha = 0.794$	$\alpha = 0.768$
		$Rho = 0.76$	$Rho = 0.86$	$Rho = 0.75$	$Rho = 0.87$

Commitment	Unidimensional	$\alpha = 0.915$ $Rho = 0.83$	$\alpha = 0.868$ $Rho = 0.92$	$\alpha = 0.917$ $Rho = 0.84$	$\alpha = 0.879$ $Rho = 0.80$
Acceptance of the extension	Unidimensional	$\alpha = 0.727$ $Rho = 0.87$	$\alpha = 0.747$ $Rho = 0.86$	$\alpha = 0.702$ $Rho = 0.87$	$\alpha = 0.713$ $Rho = 0.77$
Evaluation of the brand	Unidimensional	$\alpha = 0.705$ $Rho = 0.89$	$\alpha = 0.734$ $Rho = 0.88$	$\alpha = 0.706$ $Rho = 0.86$	$\alpha = 0.723$ $Rho = 0.86$
Acceptance of incident	Unidimensional	$\alpha = 0.919$ $Rho = 0.80$	$\alpha = 0.844$ $Rho = 0.84$	$\alpha = 0.914$ $Rho = 0.80$	$\alpha = 0.835$ $Rho = 0.76$

Result of Structural Modeling

Our conceptual model has the particularity to be composed of two sub-models for each brand. After examining the quality of adjustment of the measurement model, we now estimate the adjustment of the structural model and the global model that is to say studying the indicators of the global model to ensure a good adjustment between

the theoretical model and the empirical data. To this, we will check the quality of adjustment indexes [69]. The following table includes the results of these estimations in the four studied sub-models.

Table 2: Adjustment of sub-models of the study

	X2	DL	X2 /DL	NFI	NNFI	CFI	RMSEA	R2
Brand 1(strong fit)	412.452	284	1.356	0.973	0.954	0.985	0.031	5.771
Brand 1(weak fit)	252.361	272	1.456	0.966	0.991	0.991	0.032	4.582
Brand 2(strong fit)	561.353	286	1.843	0.951	0.972	0.977	0.027	4.655
Brand 2 (weak fit)	675.691	315	1.793	0.966	0.971	0.979	0.032	6.111

By checking the results of this adjustment, it can be argued that the values of the indicators are satisfactory and demonstrate the good quality of the adjustment of each of these studied sub-models and for the two proposed brands. Indeed, compared to the null model, the tested models have a good adjustment, this is shown through the verification of the values of CFI, NFI, NNFI which are greater than 0.9 and RMSEA that is less than 0.05. Furthermore these four sub models also meet the conditions of parsimony as the values of the normalized X² (X²/dl) are quite low (less to 5) [69]. We will now adopt structural equation models to test various causal links between the exogenous variables and endogenous variables consisting our models. The results of our research hypotheses are presented in the next paragraph.

The Consequences of Trust

According to the model of this research, we attempted to study the impact of trust through its three dimensions on the main consequences. These relationships will be studied by incorporating the effect of a control variable which is the fit.

Commitment

Trust has a positive and significant impact on commitment and whatever the proposed extension (table 3). This result is consistent

with previous research that has attracted the commitment as the main consequence of trust. However, through this research, we tried to check the effect of three dimensions of trust, it was found that credibility and integrity have the greatest impact on the creation of the commitment toward the brand. In addition, it was noted that even if a brand is launching a remote extension of the original category of the brand, consumer's confidence will remain committed to this relationship. However, we note that only the effect of benevolence on the commitment was sensitive to the nature of the extension. Indeed, in the case of strong fit extension, we note that benevolence has a significant effect on commitment, moreover in the case of weak fit, this effect is not significant. This can be explained by the fact that the consumer feels that the brand has not met his interests as he expected especially when it launches a product that is not in accordance with consumers' expectations. This type of result indicates that consumer's trust in the brand will remain committed to this relationship regardless of the level of fit of the proposed extension. Thus, we can conclude that the sub- hypotheses H1-a and H1-b are confirmed, however, the sub- hypothesis H1-c is partially confirmed.

Table 3: The influence of trust on commitment

Delice danone	The influence of the trust on commitment	
	γ	CR*
The influence of credibility on commitment (strong fit)	0.758	3.765
The influence of credibility on commitment (weak fit)	0.875	7.549
The influence of integrity on commitment (strong fit)	0.790	8.777
The influence of integrity on commitment (weak fit)	0.607	6.709
The influence of benevolence on commitment (strong fit)	0.534	2.800
The influence of benevolence on commitment (weak fit)	0.100	1.414
Saida	γ	CR
The influence of credibility on commitment (strong fit)	0.786	6.715
The influence of credibility on commitment (weak fit)	0.937	12.160
The influence of integrity on commitment (strong fit)	0.807	10.676
The influence of integrity on commitment (weak fit)	0.626	7.277
The influence of benevolence on commitment (strong fit)	0.604	7.591
The influence of benevolence on commitment (weak fit)	0.087	0.912

*CR>1.96, p=0.05

The Acceptance of the Extension

Generally trust has a positive and significant effect on the acceptance of the extension (see Table 4). Detailing this, we notice that:

- Credibility has a significant impact on the acceptance of the extension and this whatever the proposed extension. So if a consumer finds that his brand is credible, he will accept the product in extension.
- Integrity also provides a positive impact on the acceptance of the extension whatever the

product launched. So, if the consumer is certain that his brand is honest, he will tend to accept this extension.

- Concerning the effect of benevolence, we note that it is sensitive to the proposed extension. So, if a consumer finds that his brand is not entirely benevolent, it will be more difficult to accept the extension.

Table 4: The influence of trust on the acceptance of the extension

Delice danone	The influence of the trust on the acceptance of the extension	
	γ	CR
The influence of credibility on the acceptance of the extension (strong fit)	0.449	3.181
The influence of credibility on the acceptance of the extension (weak fit)	0.524	4.458
The influence of integrity on the acceptance of the extension (strong fit)	0.600	6.066
The influence of integrity on the acceptance of the extension (weak fit)	0.472	8.243
The influence of benevolence on the acceptance of the extension (strong fit)	0.647	7.462
The influence of benevolence on the acceptance of the extension (weak fit)	0.172	5.533
Saida	γ	CR
The influence of credibility on the acceptance of the extension (strong fit)	0.470	4.169
The influence of credibility on the acceptance of the extension (weak fit)	0.603	9.561
The influence of integrity on the acceptance of the extension (strong fit)	0.622	4.787
The influence of integrity on the acceptance of extension (weak fit)	0.455	10.222
The influence of benevolence on the acceptance of the extension (strong fit)	0.711	5.142
The influence of benevolence on the acceptance of the extension (weak fit)	0.126	1.320

Hence from these results, one can argue the importance of the role played by trust in the acceptance of the extension and this mainly through the first two dimensions. In addition, from this research, we can highlight the importance of the relational dimension of the brand in the case of brand extensions, something that has not been considered in previous research. So we can say that the sub-hypotheses H2-a and H2-b are confirmed by our research, however, the sub-hypothesis H2-c is partially confirmed.

The Evaluation of the Brand

According to the results we can see that only the credibility has a positive and significant impact on brand evaluation. However, the integrity has a slight impact on the latter and the benevolence has no significant impact (see Table 5). Considering this type of result, we can say that since the evaluation of the brand was measured with consumers as a direct judgment, we can say that this result is logical because credibility is a rational and cognitive dimension of trust. So if a brand is credible in terms of technical performance, it will be better evaluated by consumers whatever the type of this proposed extension.

Table 5: The influence of trust on brand evaluation

The influence of the trust on the evaluation of the brand		
Delice Danone	γ	CR
The influence of credibility on brand evaluation (strong fit)	0.480	5.621
The influence of credibility on brand evaluation (weak fit)	0.601	5.351
The influence of integrity on brand evaluation (strong fit)	0.168	1.963
The influence of integrity on brand evaluation (weak fit)	0.145	2.591
The influence of benevolence on brand evaluation (strong fit)	0.082	0.881
The influence of benevolence on brand evaluation (weak fit)	-0.062	-0.910
Saida	γ	CR
The influence of credibility on brand evaluation (strong fit)	0.487	6.220
The influence of credibility on brand evaluation (weak fit)	0.642	2.743
The influence of integrity on brand evaluation (strong fit)	0.157	3.467
The influence of integrity on brand evaluation (weak fit)	0.147	4.026
The influence of benevolence on the brand evaluation (strong fit)	0.088	0.393
The influence of benevolence on brand evaluation (weak fit)	-0.126	-1.603

So, according to the previous results we can say that the sub-hypotheses H3-a and H3-b are confirmed. However, the sub-hypothesis H3-c is not valid. Thus, from these results, we can say that if a brand has built a good level of trust with consumers and essentially good credibility, this will lead to an acceptance of the extension that is visible in improving the evaluation of the brand.

The Acceptance of Incident

Commitment to the brand leads to a positive and significant impact on the acceptance of an incident committed by the brand and this whatever the proposed extension (table 6).

This result highlights the importance of a relational approach to the brand and more specifically in the case of a brand extension strategy. Indeed, a consumer engaged with the brand will tend to forgive an occasional deficiency of the brand without altering his level of commitment to it. Therefore, brands need to focus on this type of result in trying to build a long term relationship with its customers in order to benefit from their involvement in the relationship and this whatever the difficulties encountered by the brand.

Table 6: Influence of commitment on the acceptance of incident

Influence of commitment on the acceptance of incidents		
	β	CR
Delice Danone		
Influence of commitment on the acceptance of incidents (strong fit)	0.917	27.942
Influence of commitment on the acceptance of incidents (weak fit)	0.817	9.798
Saida		
Influence of commitment on the acceptance of incidents (strong fit)	0.943	15.156
Influence of commitment on the acceptance of incidents (weak fit)	0.878	16.587

So, it can be argued that the commitment has a very important influence on the acceptance of a deficiency in the product quality, independently of the level of the logical link between the extension and the original product of the brand. Thus, the hypothesis H4 is confirmed.

Conclusion

In this research, we tried to integrate the concept of trust in solving the issue of brand extension. This concept has been chosen as defined by Gurviez and Korchia [50] who retain the trust as a three-dimensional concept composed by the credibility, integrity and benevolence. In this paper, we tried to study the impact of trust, and more specifically each dimension on a set of consequences significantly related to the issue of brand extension. The consequences used are the following: the acceptance of extension, the commitment, the brand evaluation and the acceptance of incident. Our investigation was conducted with a sample of 400 consumers for each brand studied. We also sought to integrate the fit as a control variable, that is to say, by distinguishing an extension of strong fit and extension of weak fit for each brand. The investigation carried out has led to the following results:

- Trust has a positive and significant impact from all its dimensions on the formation of commitment and this is regardless of the proposed extension.
- Trust also has a positive impact on the acceptance of the extension. However, it was observed that only the impact of the benevolence varies according to the "fit" between the original brand and the extension.
- The impact of trust on the brand evaluation occurs mainly through its rational dimension which is the credibility and integrity of any order and this regardless of perceived fit.

- Commitment has a positive effect on the acceptance of an incident committed by the brand and this regardless of the "fit" linking the brand to extension product. This type of result highlights the interest of building a long term relationship with the brand for the continuity of the relationship, whatever the conditions. In addition, it can show the indirect impact of trust on the acceptance of an incident through the commitment and the importance of integrating relational dimensions in the particular case of brand extensions.

Thus, these results show the impact of trust on the consequences for the particular case of the problem of brand extensions. These results have highlighted the way in which the trust acts especially the action of its dimensions for this case of brand extension. This research has several contributions. On a theoretical level, this study is added to the limited number of works that have studied the relationship between brands and consumers in the field of mass consumption. It is also, to our knowledge, among the few which introduced relationship marketing and more specifically the concept of trust in the issue of brand extension. Our study has demonstrated the importance and significance of the role of trust and more specifically each of its dimensions in the evaluation of brand extension and this regardless of the nature of the proposed extension. This type of result highlights the importance of establishing a relational approach based on trust before embarking on a strategy of brand extension and what is the dimension that has the greatest impact in the acceptance of an extension. On the managerial level, this research shows the importance for the practitioners borrowing a relational approach based on trust in the brand extension strategy. Indeed, this type of result could convince practitioners to adopt a relational approach and thinking to develop and build a relationship based on trust with consumers. Our research has some limitations that should be

taken into account when interpreting the results. Indeed, our survey was conducted by a sample of students selected by convenience sampling method. Thus, our results concern only the sample of our study and cannot be generalized in any way to the entire Tunisian population.

Moreover, our research suggests new lines of research:

- Our survey was conducted in the case of brands operating in the mass consumption. So it would be

interesting to study the behavior of consumers for sustainable purchasing.

- Our research could be conducted by a broader sample and for other age groups and other cultural levels, this would allow us to observe the difference in reactions between these different categories.
- Our model could be enriched by introducing moderating variables.

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