

Study finds consumers grow attached to brands that boost their confidence

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Consumers are more likely to connect with brands that they believe enhance their autonomy, competence and ability to relate to others, according to a new study from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business and the University of Texas at El Paso.

"Brand skill: Linking [brand](#) functionality with consumer-based brand equity," published in the *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, explores the relationship between brand functionality and consumer-based brand equity.

The authors introduce the concept of brand skill—the extent to which [consumers](#) perceive their own performance as emanating from their use of a particular brand. Brand skill experiences are stored in memory, becoming a part of the associative network surrounding the brand.

The researchers, including Mayoor Mohan, Ph.D., and Brian P. Brown, Ph.D., of the VCU Department of Marketing; and Caley Cantrell of the VCU Brandcenter, found that brands play a ubiquitous role in consumers' lives and that some brands are viewed as more valuable than others.

"Valuable brands were broadly identified as those that justify consumers' loyalty and price premiums," the study reads. "Not surprisingly, [study] participants' descriptions of valuable brands included both functional and nonfunctional attributes." Functional attributes include performance, quality, durability, usefulness, ease of use and savings. Nonfunctional attributes include descriptions of attachment, status, power, identity, love and trust.

Participants also noted that outstanding functional brands that excel in performance and quality make them feel more skillful when performing certain tasks, suggesting that consumers' perceptions about their own abilities are affected by the usage of particular brands. For instance, a

male millennial said, "I wouldn't want to say 'I don't know where that is.' Google Maps makes me less paranoid and more confident. And I never have to tell people I used a GPS." A female millennial noted that Netflix is "about being able to talk to people about anything that's going on in television ... from being ignorant to knowledgeable."

"The adage, 'Nothing kills a bad product [or brand] quicker than good advertising,' suggests that if a product or brand fails to meet consumer expectations by not delivering value, it will quickly become exposed," the study continues. "The research findings contained here support these claims. Managers ought not overlook brand functionality. ... Indeed, nonfunctional brand attributes such as connection, attachment, love, trust and emotion are important. However, these connections cannot be made without ensuring the functionality of the brand. Brand managers ... should make every effort to ensure their brands perform as promised."

More information: Mayoor Mohan et al. Brand skill: linking brand functionality with consumer-based brand equity, *Journal of Product & Brand Management* (2017). [DOI: 10.1108/JPBM-06-2016-1247](https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2016-1247)

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