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Country Equity: An Integrative Review, Conceptualization, and a Proposed Model

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Abstract

This paper aims to present a proposed model for measuring and managing county equity based on customer equity theory. An integrative literature review- approach has been used in this research; it allows going further than analysis and synthesis of primary research findings and offers new insights and concise knowledge about the research topic 'country equity'. The review reveals rare of published research on this topic; thus, the review was extended to reviewing the published research papers in the last 20 years. Despite the importance and interest of the country equity- a topic not only for entering export markets but also for attracting tourists, foreign direct investment and talented people, the current literature in marketing doesn't present a high progress in this area of international marketing- discipline. The current body of marketing literature suffers from inadequacies in presenting a clear theoretical framework of country equity. Grounded on the previous, we conceptualize country equity as an international marketing system that works to maximize the country's cash flow (products, direct investment, tourism, etc.) through organizing the global marketing processes and activities based on increasing loyalty and retention of its customers in the global market. On the other hand, a proposed model for measuring and managing the country's equity is based on customer equity and conceptualization.

Keywords

County equity; Customer equity; Country value equity; Country brand equity; Country relationship equity; Integrative review

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1. Introduction

Countries seek to maximize their national income by increasing exports of products and services, in addition to increasing direct investment and cash transfers, which may enhance the total country into cash flows. Therefore, the countries have worked to promote their image in the global market, coinciding with the efforts of the marketing scholars to study and suggest country equity, nation equity, country branding, etc. Despite the importance and interest of country equity- a topic not only for entering export markets but also for attracting tourists, foreign direct investment and talented people, the current body of marketing literature suffers from inadequacies in presenting a clear theoretical framework of country equity. The scholars deal with "country brand equity", "nation equity", "country branding " country equity", etc., as an extension of brand equity theory from a business perspective. There is a lack of conceptual clarification on how to define nation branding, and the use of terminology is not always clear. Nation brand, nation branding, country brand, country reputation and country image have been used somewhat interchangeably although they should not be. The precise meaning of these terms remains largely undefined and there is clearly no consensus on what they mean. In addition, there is a lack of a coherent and explicit theoretical base in the research domain, the field of nation branding is fragmented and has developed over the last two decades in different directions.

The brand focuses on the image of the company or the overall image of the country, in addition to the fact that the brand acts as a marketing tool for companies or country in general. Therefore, it misses dealing with customers in the international market as an asset and how to calculate the cash flows of the country from the international markets. Consequently, researchers suggest using the equity theory, specially customer equity- theory, and developing a new concept of “country equity” for several reasons: 1) customer equity works to manage the customer as an asset, this concept shares the same meaning with "brand equity" which extends to nation or country brand equity to be understood as “a set of country assets and liabilities linked to a country” (He et al., 2020;Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003, pp. 427-428), 2) customer equity also focuses on the customer as a whole and uses his interactions to reinforce relationships and acquire new customers (Blattberg, et al., 2001), 3) customer equity is as a marketing system that is able to calculate a customer’s asset value, and it can support us to take sound investment decisions in addition to estimating add-on sales, and hence allowing adjustment of marketing investment levels, it is also quite important for country because it incorporates many other important measures to the country marketing-responsible, 4) customer equity is one of the seldom forward-looking measures in country strategy and measurement techniques, 5) branding focuses on the image of a business or total country image, in addition, branding acts as a marketing tool for firms or countries (Martin, 2015). While, customer equity works as a marketing system, recognizes customers as the primary source of both current and future cash flow (Villanueva and Hanssens, 2007).

Grounded on the previous, we conceptualize country equity an international marketing system that works to maximize the country's cash flow (products, direct investment, tourism, etc.) through organizing the global marketing processes and activities based on increasing loyalty and retention of its customers in the global market. On the other hand, this paper aims to propose a model for measuring and managing the country's equity based on customer equity and conceptualization.

2. Theoretical Background

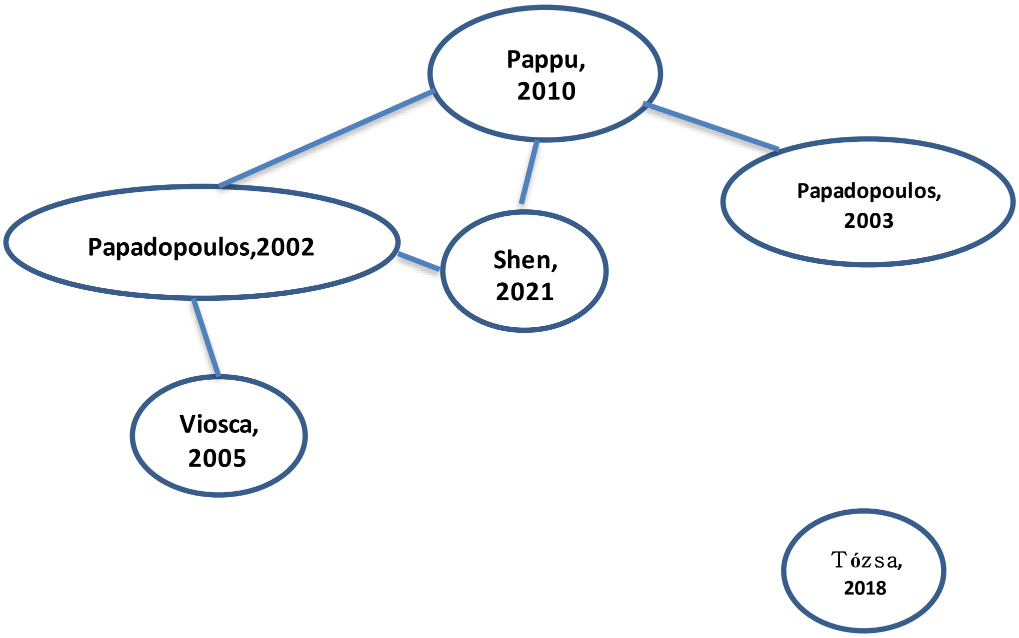
In the context of international business, country branding has become necessary to build, manage, and monitor the value of the brand (Steenkamp, 2017). Because of the strategic function of country branding for any country's competitiveness (Foroudi et al., 2016), country brand equity considers as a conceptual extension of the theory of brand equity, which refers to the value of a country's brand (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2008). Although the importance of country brand equity, it may be more difficult than that of a product due to political, economic, and social roles in the global economy (Mariutti and Giraldi, 2020). The country brand represents the "umbrella" brand that endorses many sector and local brands strategically managed by marketing activities "the communication and information function, as well as the confidence building function of the place brand (Mariutti and Giraldi, 2021; Dinnie, 2016). On the other hand, over two decades of theoretical research, one of the major challenges to a nation's branding is the terminological confusion that prevails in the field (Fan, 2006; Papadopoulos et al., 2016). There is still a noticeable lack of a clear concept of how to define a country's brand; the use of terms is not clear and specific. Nation brand, country reputation, country brand, country reputation and country image have been used interchangeably in much research when they should not be used. The exact meaning of these terms is still largely undetermined as there is no clear consensus for this concept (Hao et al., 2019), this conflict and indetermination extends to other equivalent terms: country brand equity, nation equity, country equity, or country-related assets (Chu, 2013; Maheswaran and Chen, 2006; Zeugner-Roth et al., 2008; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002,2003; Pappu and Quester, 2001;2010; (Vioscajr et el., 2006; Tózsa, 2018). Moreover, there is a shortage of a coherent and obvious theoretical base in this domain. The large aspect of nation branding research is fragmented and lacks theoretical foundations, where the roots of nation equity are based on the adaption of the classical consumer-based brand equity theories, the brand of a nation will also be regarded as an asset (Jiaxun and Yi, 2020), (He et al., 2020).

Previous literature presents many definitions of country equity, nation equity and other equivalent terms. The first group uses the term "Country equity". According to Tózsa (2018), country equity is a complex parameter that is defined by the country brand designed by communication specialists, by the country association based on country image and by the country awareness arising from subjective knowledge and emotions, and the country loyalty (Nadeau et al., 2008; Jenes, 2014). The country equity disentangles the equity contained in a brand and refers to the emotional value resulting from consumers' association of a brand with a country

(Shimp et al., 1993). Country equity is the value endowed by the name of the country on to a product that can be quantified and measured (Pappu and Quester, 2001), from a consumer perspective, it is defined as the value endowed by a source country onto products originating from that country. On the other hand, it can be expressed as a set of images, information and emotional impressions towards the country's brand that are able to influence the decisions of consumers (tourists, students, foreign investors, patients, etc.), where these perceptions can be negative or positive. The intuition is that consumers rate products based on the country of origin of the product, they prefer the products of certain countries over others.

3. Design /Methodology/Approach

The integrative literature review approach has been followed in this research. The first phase of the search starts by using "country equity" in the database of "Emerald", "Science Direct", "Springer", and "Taylor and Francis", in addition to "Research Gate". The initial results reveal that there are 113,659 scientific research papers. The results of the search were filtered based on some of the criteria; 1) papers that discuss "country equity" from a marketing perspective (the research that discusses the concept from the financial was excluded, 2) the research papers that have the term" country equity" in the title "and" abstract, "and" "or" in keywords. The results concluded that there is a severe shortage in the number of research papers, only 6 research papers meet the selection criteria, and a research paper was excluded from them (Shen et al., 2021) because it is published in Chinese, thus, the final number of papers is 5.



Graph (1); Mapping of Research Papers Meet the Selection Criteria, N=6
Source: researchrabbitapp.com

The second phase of reviewing 5 papers, the review is focused on answering: what is “country equity” and how it can be measured. The findings reveal that the published research does not answer the questions that we set previously. This concept has been dealt with as the “country brand equity concept”, as well as the measurement model, which consists of brand awareness, association, perceived quality, and loyalty. Therefore, it can be concluded that the previous research did not provide a concept of "country equity" and measurement model based on considering the country’s client in the international market as an asset, but rather presented "country brand equity" as an extension of brand equity that is used in business.

In the third phase, the authors rely on the customer equity approach which consists of value, brand, and relationship equity to conceptualize and propose an adapted model of country equity that considers the customer as an asset in the international market. For this purpose, the authors have reviewed the available literature in the last 20 years to demonstrate the main dimension of country value, country brand, and county relationship equity from the published research in international marketing and country marketing.

4. A Proposed Model of Country Equity based on Customer Equity Approach

The authors employ the customer equity approach because customer equity manages the customer as an asset. This concept shares the same meaning with "brand equity" which extends to nation or country brand equity to be understood as “a set of country assets and liabilities linked to a country” (He et al., 2020; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003, pp. 427-428). Business profitability and value are maximized through the customer equity marketing system since processes and structures are organized around add-on sales, retention, and acquisition, where the customer equity also focuses on the customer as a whole and uses his interactions to reinforce relationships and acquire new customers (Blattberg et al., 2001). Customer equity is a marketing system that can calculate a customer’s asset value and supports us in taking sound investment decisions. In addition to estimating add-on sales, it allows adjustment of marketing investment levels. Importantly, it incorporates many other measures to the country’s marketing responsibility. Customer equity can be used to estimate future marketing ROI. Customer equity is one of the seldom forward-looking measures in country strategy and measurement techniques. Moreover, branding focuses on the image of a business or total country image. In addition, branding acts as a marketing tool for firms or countries (Martin, 2015), while customer equity works as a marketing system, recognizing customers as the primary source of both current and future cash flow (Villanueva and Hanssens, 2007).

4.1 Country Brand Equity

Brand Equity is the difference in customer behavior and perception when he purchases and consumes the same product from a specific brand and without a brand. Moreover, it expresses the intangible value of services and products that are difficult to measure by quantitative methods (Segarra-Moliner and Moliner-Tena, 2016;

Aaker, 1992). It an incremental utility, value or cash flows which accrue to branded products over unbranded products, that may acquire its roots from a set of assets and factors (or dimensions) creating a brand's value in the consumer's mind. Based on a set of perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors, those result in increased utility and allow a brand to get greater volume or greater margins than it can without the brand name. This comes because of a relational market-based asset created by means of communications and relationships between brands and their customers (Aaker,1991; Kamakura and Russell, 1993; Simon and Sullivan, 1993; Yoo et al., 2000; Christodoulides and Chernatony, 2010; Iglesias et al., 2019). Brand equity is constructed through image and meaning to achieve the core mission (Lemon et al., 2001), it works to attract consumers and lets them assess the brands or compensation value by their perception and recognition of brands. In addition to making customers re-purchasing continuously (Wang et al., 2016). On the other hand, country brand equity defines "It works to applying branding and marketing communications techniques to promote a nation's image at international target audience of visitors, foreign investors, students, guest workers, patients, and the public, by developing a whole collage made into a hierarchical, associative network that contains data, emotional feelings, possibly through experimental results, and possibly even the official national brand. Where the country's whole image concerns to cover the economic, political, social, environmental, historical, and cultural aspects, to create a set of positive beliefs and impressions towards country and develop customer loyalty in the international market (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Ahold, 2005; Fan, 2006; Fetscherin, 2010; Tózsa, 2018).

4.1.1 Country Image

Magnusson et al., (2022); The definitions of country image imply that it is a broad, all-inclusive concept that encompasses impressions of, for instance, economic progress, goods and brands, political climate, and people (e.g., Gotsi et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2020). Also, it's a core tenet of brand origin effects that people develop stereotypes of other nations, which in turn may give those nations a positive or negative reputation (Shimp et al., 1993). A brain network of affective and cognitive associations associated with the country is one definition of "country image" (Verlegh, 2001, p. 25). The country image consists of macro and micro country image:

- Macro country image concerns all components that are shaping the macro country image, level of industrialization in the country. In a highly developed economy, people are highly literate, and have a free-market system. In a democratic country, a high level of technological research offers people a high standard of living, labor costs are high, has a welfare system, and a civilian non-military government (Martin and Eroglu, 1993; Pappu and Quester, 2010).

- Micro country image; the micro country image dimension should ideally be service or product category specific. It reflects the country's differentiation in a specific product or service industry. Products made in the country have quality workmanship, are innovative, dependable, own products made in the country, high status, upmarket, technically advanced, and trust in the country as producers (Nagashima, 1970, 1977; Pappu and Quester, 2010).

4.1.2 Country Brand Awareness and Associations

Awareness is a key element recognized in most of all brand equity models (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Yoo and Donthu, 2001, Srinivasan et al., 2005; Pappu et al., 2005; Buil et al., 2008; Spry et al., 2011, Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015; Frías-Jamilena et al., 2017). Consequently, and based on previous definitions, the brand awareness can be defined as customers' ability to remember and recall the brand, recognize, and distinguish it from other trademarks or brands in the different circumstances and situations because of link the brand name, symbol, logo, etc., with some associations with the customer's memory, and that brand awareness shall precede the brand associations. Where it may be that the customer has a high awareness of the brand as a first stage to create and develop a set of associations. Consequently, country awareness means the ability of consumers to identify or recall that a particular product category is produced in a particular nation. Country awareness demands consumers to be able to recall the name of the country when the product category is stated, rather than just being aware of the country. In other words, when people think of one country, they may think of another, and vice versa. High linkages between a country and a product category show that the country is well known. Customers will have strong nation knowledge if they can clearly recall the connection between the country' node and a particular product category node. Consumers are also able to name some of the country's product brands in addition to knowing the name of the country (Papadopoulos, 1993). Country awareness also refers to the knowledge that potential customers have specific facts or data about the nation without the use of ICT tools like the Internet, smart phones, textbooks, or lexicons. In this manner, the nation's image influences both nation associations and nation loyalty as the source of national awareness.

4.1.3 Country Perceived Quality

It is regarded as a dimension of brand equity in a significant portion of brand equity literature. It is the customer's opinion of a product or service's general quality or superiority over alternatives in relation to the latter's intended use. Customers have a perception of perceived quality. Consequently, it is distinct from several similar ideas, including actual or objective quality, product-based quality, and manufacturing quality. A brand's perceived quality is an abstract, all-encompassing impression. However, it will typically be founded on underlying factors, such as the reliability and performance of the products to which the brand is tied. It has been demonstrated that perceived quality is linked to price premiums, price elasticity, brand usage, and, remarkably, stock return. In the consumer's memory, perceived quality is more closely associated with a country node like "Germany" than to a country node like "Sudan". As a result, buyers may perceive Germany as having higher quality in a certain product category like autos than Sudan (Aaker, 1992, 1993, Zeithaml, 1988, Shariq, 2018, Hao, 2019).

4.1.4 Country Loyalty

It is considered a key marketing objective because of having a main source of sustainable cash flow for business and nations. In addition, it is observed from previous studies that loyal customers are more profitable than new customers acquisition (Zia, 2020). Country brand loyalty is the most important determinant of country brand equity (Mostafa, 2015), the tendency to be loyal to a focal country as demonstrated by the intention to buy products from the country as a primary choice (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2016). Loyalty is customers' deeply steady commitment to continually repurchase or sponsor a favorite product in the future (Ladhari et al., 2011; Baumann et al., 2011; Zia, 2020; Teichmann, 2021). It is the prospect of a customer's return and willingness to act as an organizational partner, thus, many business firms work to design. Loyalty programs aim to develop customer loyalty by rewarding repeat purchases (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998; Kimura, 2021). Moreover, based on a meta-review of previous studies, loyalty is a collection of attitudes associated with sequences of purchase behaviors that steadily favor one business firm over competing firms (Watson et al., 2015). On the other hand, according to Oliver (1999), a consumer is developed through four phases of loyalty development; namely, cognitive, affective, conative and action, which are developed in the given sequence (Sarkar, 2014; Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh, 2020).

4.2 Country Value Equity

Customer value equity plays a central role in marketing. It is a critical element and cornerstone between business firms and its customers in any field, where strong brand and relationship strategies only are not enough to satisfy customers since customers are not satisfied with the company's services and products (Lemon et al., 2001). Hence, there is a growing interest in researching and analyzing the concept of perceived customer value as marketers are increasingly concerned about designing and implementing effective strategies that can maximize their marketing efforts. Although the customer value definition is highly debated and there is no communal agreement as to what founds a customer value (Payne et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2020), conceptual confusion in business and management customer value research has occurred primarily because of the dynamic nature of customer value. Previous studies state that a customer can perceive value consciously, unconsciously, or pre-consciously (Gorth and Dye, 1999; Wang et al., 2016). Thus, a customer perceives value differently. Customer value is a complex concept with numerous meanings and connotations. As a result, there are differences in the qualities of consumer values. The central logic of customer value circles around understanding and capturing customer expectations, creating, and delivering desired customer experiences, and evaluating and managing the customer evaluation (Paananen and Seppänen, 2013). Customer value reflects the fact that the value that is provided to the client depends on multiple factors and possibly multiple firms. It is an individual perception of advantage resulting from a customer's association with an organization's offering value for the customer (Woodall, 2003). It can take the form of a decrease in sacrifice and benefit determined and expressed either rationally or intuitively, or it can accumulate over time from any of those (Holbrook, 2005). In addition, it is 1) interactive, 2) relativistic, 3) differs between people, 4) depends on the situation, 5) embodies preferences, and 6) is not tied to the thing itself but rather to the pertinent consumption experience (Pynnönen et al., 2011). Customer value equity is an objective assessment of the benefit of the brand that customers obtain compared to their perceptions, and therefore reflecting the relative assessments and opinions of target customers towards services and products. Based on that, the customer perceived value is a subjective variable, and that customers evaluate the same product in different ways. Therefore, this subjectivity adds emotional and social dimensions, which in turn may affect customer preferences and choices (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Leone et al., 2006; Sánchez et al., 2006). Customer value is the objective evaluation by the customer of the benefit of the brand based on what has been abandoned perceptions of what is now offered to them. Value emphasizes the rational and objective aspects of the company's offerings. Value is the evaluation of what the customer receives in terms of product characteristics, quality, and services, saving time and effort, and benefits for the price paid (Vogel et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2020).

Value is the basis of a customer's relationship with a company. Value is enhanced where actual consumer experiences of goods and services meet or exceed customer expectations. However, if the customer receives a product that does not meet his desires, it will trigger the risk of the customer switching to another company (Wang et al., 2016). There are many paths in which business companies can go to increase the rights of customers. For example, increasing the characteristics and benefits of the product offered to the customer, reducing the risks associated with purchasing the product or reducing effort and time and providing convenience, lower prices, discounts on sales, etc.

Fair value is an important concept which stems from finding the difference between what the company offers and what competitors in the market offer to the customer by developing new features or new channels, creating new products and services, etc. (Macharia and Cheng, 2019). On the other hand, value equity consists of three main drivers: quality, price, and convenience. Therefore, value excellence is an essential component in building long-term relationships with customers, also, it extends to involve economic value, functional value, social value, temporal flexibility benefit, hedonic value, altruistic value, spatial benefit (Helkkula et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2016; Komulainen et al., 2018: Jutbring, 2018, Zeithaml et al., 2020). In addition, value equity can be deliberated through rewards that a consumer supplies to get something (Lemon et al., 2001). Moreover, it shall be considered one-sidedly based on the business competitiveness of its products and services (Lemon et al., 2001; Kim and Kim, 2012; Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Wang, 2016; Kim et al., 2020; Cho and Chiu, 2021). Value propositions are essential in a business model as the value proposition must explain how the product or service solves customers' problems or improves their situation and gives reasons and incentives to purchase a specific value proposition from the company instead of competitors in the market (Osterwalder et al., 2014). The value proposition consists of three levels; the first level serves to provide the basic benefit that the customer is looking for, while the second level provides the product with basic functions, parts, packaging, design, etc. While the third level is to enhance the product by adding additional and complementary services that enrich the perceived value of the customer (Kuehnl et al., 2017; Andersson et al., 2020).

Based on the previous, value equity at country levels states that consumers' perceived value of products originating from a particular country involves the country's outputs, which are associated with the country name, such as its workforce, products, services, investment ideas, knowledge, and technologies. Thus, a customer perception relates to country name or country image with a specific level of expected perceived customer value (Zeugner Roth et al., 2008). The country value equity, therefore, refers to all the benefits, economic, social, emotions, characteristics, quality, and services, saving time, effort and etc., that customer obtains from the outputs of a particular country., the product of his workers' service, etc., in return for the cost incurred to obtain a specific value offer from a particular country compared to the outputs of competitors from other countries and their perceptions.

4.3 Country Relationship Equity

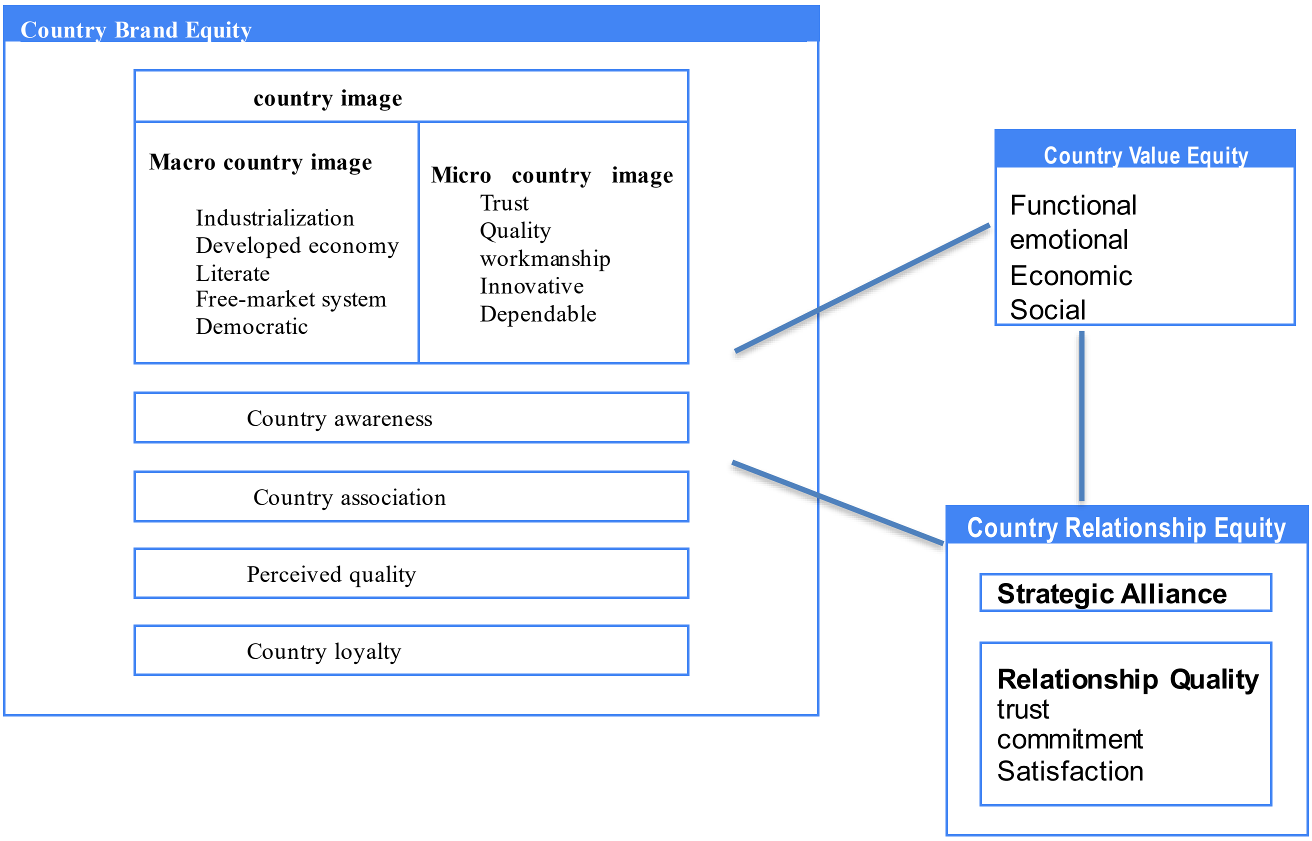
The concept of relationship equity is considered a broad scope that considers the customer equity that has been developed as well as the processes that contribute to strengthening the relationship with customers. The theoretical roots of relationship equity lie in building experience-based relationships with current and potential clients through extensive participation in the activities initiated by the organization which include emotional, cognitive, and behavioral elements that refer to the experiential and emotional accumulation of the client and business firms (Cheng et al., 2019). Relationship equity is the emotional commitment and tendency of the customer to adhere to a specific brand at a level beyond the objective evaluation of the brand on the part of the customer (Rust et al., 2001). It includes special elements that connect the customer to the company and its brand. In addition to strengthening this relation in ways that customer becomes emotionally and personally connected to the company (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

Achieving a high level of value for the perceived relationship with the customer requires the endeavor of the business organization to make customers feel that they are treated well and with special care, which will lead to the development of customer confidence in the medium and long-term. Therefore, investing in relationship equity can create confidence in the relationship between business companies and their customers. In addition, it is the cornerstone of customer acquisition and retention (Gounaris and Venetis, 2002). In other words, the evolution of customer relations not only focuses on the company's direct relationship efforts but also on the processes that a company has installed to deliver value to its customers but also on the processes the company has installed. (Griffin and Lowenstein, 2001). Relationship equity also means a sense of distributive justice in terms of benefits and a sense of well-being, and that the customer is aware of what is due, and this feeling or awareness of entitlements or benefits may be immediate, indicating a sense of fair dealing from the customer's point of view (Low and Johnston, 2006). The key drivers of relationship equity include customer loyalty programs, direct customer interaction (customer support, website interactions, etc.), customer communities, and the knowledge that the company and customer have developed about each other over time. Relationship equity is defined as how customers evaluate perceived relationship value during communications of the firm with its customers to present its product or services (Wang et al., 2016). Moreover, the concept extends to involve all relationships with all interested destinations outside the company (Ercan et al., 2003; Alkaya and Taşkın, 2017). Relationship equity involves all the efforts and activities that businesses adopt to build good relationships with their customers. These efforts include going beyond customer value and brand equity. In addition, it is a constant tendency and adherence of consumers that go beyond objective evaluation of the brand. Moreover, it extends to establishing emotional and good relationships with customers, linking those relationships to important events in the lives of customers. In other words, it is not just like loyalty programs, it is a transformation to affinity programs which re-innovate the structural connections between business and customers in ways that outperform competitors (Lemon et al., 2001; Kim and Kim, 2012; Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020; Cho and Chiu, 2021).

The quality of the relationship with customers includes evaluating the various aspects of the relationship between the customer and the company to assess the overall strength of this relationship. No single dimension can determine the complete essence of customer relationship quality. Hence, it is defined as a higher-order construct that includes satisfaction, trust, and commitment, these dimensions are the mostly used to represent the strength of the relationship between the customer and business organization (Kumar and Pansari, 2016; Itani et al., 2019). In addition, majority of customer equity studies confirm the importance of the relationships between the customers and the business firms in the engagement process (Hollebeek, 2011). Consistent with the engagement theory, trust, commitment, and satisfaction are proposed to drive higher customer equity levels. Satisfaction is defined as a high degree of blessed experience by customer and pleasurable of consumption related fulfillment of specific product or services. While trust is a paradigm applied to describe customers strive in minimizing and reducing risk, it involves behavioral intention in depending on a reliable product provider because of the uncertainty of the provider role (Sumaedi et al., 2015; Boonlertvanich, 2019). Customer trust can be defined as believing that the product or services provider will act in ways that serve the long-term interests of consumers (Crosby et al., 1990). Trust is an expectation of the customer that the company he deals with will provide the product or service professionally (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Commitment is a promise that is reliable and that the other party will meet its obligations in the exchange relationship, also, the exchange partner believes that a constant relationship with another is so essential to secure maximum efforts at retaining it (Johnson and Grayson, 2005).

On the other hand, relationship management in international markets requires from country to set key relations and strategic alliances with local companies and entities, which in turn may enhance the acquisition of rapid insights into the needs of the community. CRM in the international market requires a deep understanding of the culture and nature of the market to develop an effective international relationship campaign and that cultural and social appropriateness shall be taken into account when developing and implementing a CRM program in the international market (Roggeveen and Beitelspacher, 2019),(Ghauri et al., 2012). Relationship marketing strategies by the country can also be leveraged to create an equal relationship and enhance the competitive image of the country's companies, while establishing and developing relationships with clients whether they are companies, consumers, or governments in the international markets. (Ghauri et al., 2012).

CRM differs in the international market and these differences affect the implementation processes of CRM strategy in different countries. The difference entails two sets of factors: the cultural context and the country context, where the country context refers to the overall environment of economic development and infrastructure availability of distribution networks, advertising agencies, legislation, etc., as well as industry level, market efficiency, etc., while the cultural context refers to the set of values, the structure of business relations in the country, and historical patterns, which can be utilized to build and manage relationships with clients based on trust (Iyer et al., 2006).



Graph (2); A proposed Model of Country Equity Based on Customer Equity Theory

5. Conclusion and Future Research

While the countries seek to maximize their total country into cash flows, foreign investment, exports, etc., through the promotion of the country image in the global market, however, previous research in the field of country equity, country branding, etc., suffer from inadequacies in presenting a clear theoretical framework of country equity. The scholars deal with concepts like: "country brand equity", "nation equity", "country branding "country equity", etc., are an extension of brand equity theory from business perspective. there is a lack of conceptual clarification and a lack of a coherent and explicit theoretical base in the research domain, the field of nation branding is fragmented and has developed over the last two decades in different directions, without presenting a clear tool that can be used in countries into cash flow expectation. That is why we conceptualized the concept of "country equity" and propose a model based on customer equity theory.

Objectively, this is an attempt by researchers towards developing the concept and a model of country equity, and therefore, it needs more contributions by marketing scholars in exploring, developing, and testing this model in the contexts of different countries at two levels, the first; testing and measuring the overall country equity and the second considers the industrial level to measure the country's equity in a particular industry.

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