THE IMPACT OF SPORTSWEAR BRAND PERSONALITY ON GEN Y CUSTOMER PREFERENCE IN CENTRAL MALAYSIA

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

I declare that the work I am submitting for assessment contains no section copied in whole or in part from any other source unless explicitly identified in quotation marks and with detailed, complete and accurate referencing.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to use quantitative approach to exploring brand personality of sportswear. An online questionnaire survey is used to measure the personality dimensions based on Aaker's five personality dimensions. An estimated 300 Gen Y who aged between 22-39 years old will target as sample of this research. The human like traits found in brands help consumers to establish a connection with the brand. The findings help marketers in formulating effective product design, positioning, and promotion strategies .Most of the research on the subject General BP Study in western country, seldom in Malaysia especially for Gen Y and Sportswear. The results found regarding brand personality is important to sportswear brand, as they can be used to identify those personality brand dimensions that appear to be most important in explaining consumer preferences.

Keywords: Brand personality, Gen Y, Sportswear, Customer preference

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif untuk meneroka personaliti jenama sukan. Tinjauan soal selidik dalam talian yang digunakan untuk mengukur dimensi personaliti berdasarkan lima dimensi personaliti Aaker. Dianggarkan 300 Gen Y yang berusia antara 22-39 tahun akan mensasarkan sebagai sampel kajian ini. Manusia seperti ciri-ciri yang terdapat dalam jenama membantu pengguna untuk mewujudkan sambungan dengan jenama. Dapatan membantu pemasar dalam merumuskan reka bentuk yang berkesan produk, kedudukan, dan strategi promosi .Kebanyakan penyelidikan mengenai subjek Ketua BP Kajian di negara barat, jarang di Malaysia terutamanya bagi Gen Y dan sukan. Keputusan mendapati mengenai personaliti jenama adalah penting untuk jenama pakaian sukan, kerana ia boleh digunakan untuk mengenal pasti dimensi jenama personaliti yang muncul untuk menjadi yang paling penting dalam menerangkan keutamaan pengguna.

Keywords: Personaliti jenama, Gen Y,pakaian sukan , keutamaan pengguna

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There is a considerable amount of attention has been given to consumer behavior research on the construct brand personality, which refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.(Aaker, 1997). Aaker developed brand personality scale and identified five distinct personality dimensions that are associated with brands, which are excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness (Tong & Su 2014).Brand and symbol are becoming the key driver to indicate customer preference. A set of human characteristics associated with a brand create and build meaningful consumer–brand relationships define as brand personality is becoming effective marketing strategy on building brand image.

According to a definition supplied by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, sportswear is "a product purchased with the intent that it will be used in active sport" (Newbery, 2009).The sportswear market is expanding as the trend of the promotion of healthy and active living grows (Ponsignon et al. 2015). The global sportswear market is highly competitive and is one of the most heavily branded segments in the global apparel market (Tong & Su 2014).

Considering that few studies have been done to specifically identify the personalities of sportswear brands, this research takes a Gen Y perspective to examine the personalities that are specifically associated with sportswear brands and tests the applicability of Aaker's brand personality framework in the context of sportswear brands. (Tong & Su 2014).Gen Y refers to the specific generation born between the

1980's to the early 1990's(Muda et al. 2016). Gen Ys in Malaysia make up the largest population of consumers, have a high level of spending power and make informed decisions on their purchases (Asian Institute of Finance 2015). The median age of Malaysia is 28 years old (Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal 2016). Members of Generation Y have been described as individualistic, well-educated, technologically savvy, sophisticated, mature, and structured (Syrett and Lammiman, 2003).(Howe et al. 2013). Thus, GenY as largest populations in Malaysia is potential consumer group target by the marketer. (Asian Institute of Finance 2015).

A studied focus on Gen Y perspective was conducted to provide an insight into sportswear industry. Therefore, marketing practitioners have become increasingly aware of the importance of building a clear and distinctive brand personality (Das et al., 2012; Keller and Richey, 2006). as a central driver of consumer preference (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

Aaker (1997) had conducted researches on brand personality. The conceptual and operational definitions of brand personality vary from study to study. Therefore it is needed to conduct more research for better understanding of a brand personality. Besides that, most of the studies conducted on brand personality are mainly done in western countries instead of Malaysia. Hence, it is an opportunity to conduct the research in Malaysia to investigate brand personality in this multi-cultural country.

Previously, there was few researcher conducted some study regarding the brand personality of sportswear in western countries. Very few studies explore the impact of brand personality of sportswear among Gen Y, especially in Malaysia. Thus, this research is going to examine the impact of brand personality on customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Questions

1) What is the impact of excitement on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia

2) What is the Impact of sincerity on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia?

3) What is the impact of competence on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia?

4) What is the impact of sophistication on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia?

5) What is the impact of ruggedness on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia?

1.4 Research Objectives

1) To investigate the impact of excitement on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

2) To determine the impact of sincerity on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

3) To describe the impact of competence on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

4) To analyze the impact of sophistication on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

5) To evaluate the impact of ruggedness on customer preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

H1: Excitement has a positive relationship with customer's preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

H2: Sincerity has a positive relationship with customer's preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

H3: Competence has a positive relationship with customer's preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

H4: Sophistication has a positive relationship with customer's preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

H5: Ruggedness have a positive relationship with customer's preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia.

1.6 Research Scope

The research scope is focused on a study the impact of five main dimensions of brand personality which are excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness in, sportswear industry to customer's preference among Gen Y in central Malaysia. Footwear and clothing of five different brands will be the main focus of this study such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, New Balance and Asics .Whereas population of age group from 22-39 years old as Gen Y are target respondents of central Malaysia.

1.7 Research Limitation

There has some researcher limitation on this research. First, some respondent doesn't have adequate knowledge about the topic that researcher want to study. Brand personality elements are not familiar among consumers, some terms were challenging to convert in simpler words in the questionnaire. It might because respondents misunderstood the content of the questionnaire. For those who doesn't understand the content of questionnaire will cause the problem of unintentional respondent errors. Therefore it could influence the reliability level of the research.

Second, some of the respondents who have limited experiences on purchasing branded sportswear lack of familiarity and awareness on the uniqueness of branded sportswear. Therefore, sportswear brand personality might not become their main concerned. In that case, the tendency of result could be a middle range.

Third, some of the respondents do not provide an honest answer. Respondent bias created by the unwillingness to provide honest answers stems from the participant's natural desire to provide socially acceptable answers in order to avoid embarrassment. This phenomenon is widely known as social desirability bias.

1.8 Research Significant

The findings of this study will bring a small contribution to the framework of Brand Personality(Aaker 2014). This study evaluates the relationship of brand personality with sportswear. A valid and reliable scale that measures personality for sportswear products and confirms that consumers do associate brand personality dimension with sportswear brand.

Limited research has been conducted on investigating and understanding Generation Y's behavior toward sportswear. This paper is useful to marketing practitioners of sportswear industry to understand the impact of brand personality on customer's preference among Gen Y. An insight provides to what dimension of brand personality would deliver the best result in today's competitive sportswear Therefore, sportswear brand could design products according to brand personality dimension prefer by Gen Y. The outcomes of the research contribute sportswear industry in Malaysia to improve its performance efficiently and effectively.

1.9 Conclusion

Background of study was discuss the definition and significant of brand personality in researchers, marketers and customers view. The booming of sportswear industry induced the interest of marketer study customer preference. Gen Y is major target market who contribute largest sales to sportswear industry. Previous study was focus on western countries instead of Malaysia. Moreover majority of previous studies was generally about brand personality without specific subject. Therefore, a study of sportswear brand personality on Gen Y in Malaysia was conducted. The research questions and objectives will investigate the impact of brand personality dimension (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness) on customer preference among Gen Y. Research scope and limitation was clearly stated 1.6 and 1.7. This study is important confirms that consumers do associate brand personality dimension with sportswear brand and also provide an insight of brand personality on customer's preference among Gen Y to marketer.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand

The brand is a composition of name, term, sign, symbol, or design for differentiate products or services with competitors (Kotler ,2000). Brand is an essential asset with high market value.(Vazifehdoost, 2016). Brands have many meaningful benefits.

First, brands is important for customer's choices, promise on delivering high quality products or services, minimize risk and develop trust. Brands stimuli customers remember the entire experience that customer's adoption of products or services. (Su & Tong, 2015a).

Second, brand plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of marketing efforts such as advertising and distribution channel Furthermore, the brand is legal protection of ownership and quality signals (De Chernatony and McDonald, 2003).

Successful brands as the associated elements that cannot be copied by competitors, enhancing consumer preferences over competing brands. (Ebrahim, 2013). The main challenging of branding is to build an in-depth positive associations for the brand. (Kotler, 2000, pg.188). Strengthen of brand able to win consumer preferences and construct long-lasting relationships (Kay, 2016)

2.2 Brand Personality

2.2.1   Brand Personality Definitions and Perspectives

Brand personality has been explored by numbers of researchers especially in western countries. They provide a different insight and concepts from researcher, marketers and customer's perceptions. Table 1 stated brand personality view of several academicians and researchers. These definitions are collected and combined from various previous research.

Table 2.2.1: Brand personality definitions and perspectives of researchers

No.	Author & year of publication	Brand personality definitions and perspectives
		Researchers
1	(Aaker, 1997).	Brand personality, which refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand
2	(Azoulay & Kapferer 2003)	Brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands.

Table 2.2.2: Brand personality definitions and perspectives of practitioners / marketers

No.	Author & year of publication	Brand personality definitions and perspectives
		Practitioners / Marketers
1	(D'Astous et al. 2006).	Creating distinct images in consumers' mind in order to differentiate their offerings from those of competitors.
2	(Demangeot & Broderick 2010)	Brand personality is a popular metaphor in marketing to investigate consumers' brand perceptions and describe brands as if they were human beings

Table 2.2.3: Brand Personality Definitions and Perspectives of Consumers

No.	Author & year of publication	Brand personality definitions and perspectives
		Consumers
1	(Beldona & Wysong 2012)	When consumers view a brand as having human characteristics, the brand is said to have a personality
2	(Alignment et al. 2014)	People express themselves through the brands they consume to the extent that these brands serve as an extension of the self.

2.2.2   Function/ Benefit of Brand Personality

Brand personality is giving extra advantages to company with strong influential power .(Demangeot & Broderick, 2010). Brand personality induce the persuasive level of the brand uniqueness. Brand personality difficult and hard to copy. (Aaker, 2014). Higher level of brand equity influence more customer preference.(Aaker, 2014). Other than that it could build brand loyalty((Su & Tong, 2015b).

There are some managerial advantage of brand personality. (Ahmad & Thyagaraj 2015). Differentiating of brand from the competitors could leverage brand personality as an essential tool. (Tong & Li 2013, Vazifehdoost 2016). Furthermore brand personality is the key of consumer preference, usage and purchase intention (Keller, 2003). As the "soul" of the brand, brand personality is an essential promotional tool to tackle customers for the building of an entire brand image (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999).

Moreover, it could increase the effectiveness of marketing communication with target customers through right marketing strategies for creating favorable attitudes and behaviors for the brand.(Su & Tong, 2015b). Furthermore, it provides a better understanding of the development and maintaining of relations between brands and consumers (J. Gouteron, 2008). Personality is an appropriate association for brands

develops attraction attributes for brands which are having a personality similar to human personality based on customer preference. (M. N. Koebel & R. Ladwein, 1999).

The consumer prefer choose a brand that is associated with the group they wishes to belong to, accepting the brand's identity as a part of their own. It tends to serve as a symbolic or self- expressive function (Huang et al.2012). and also serves as a channel for representing product-related functional advantage and brand attributes.(Aaker, 2014). Personality is an essential consideration in the consumer's choices of brands. Customer prefer choose brand which congruence with their own personalities.(A. Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015).

Previous studies stated brand personality is important for brand differentiation and increasing consumer preference.(Demangeot & Broderick, 2010) .In short, brand's personality can increase consumer preference for and usage of that brand, develop feelings of comfort and confidence in the minds of consumers, enhance levels of loyalty and trust and provide a basis for brand differentiation among the myriad brands in the market. (Keller,2003;Wang et al., 2009). Consumers may hold more positive product evaluations toward a strong and positive brand personality's product. (Tong & Li, 2013).

Brand personality was define as one type of brand association in consumer memory that may be accessed as the need or desire for a particular product or services, and that may influence consumer preferences.(Freling & Forbes, 2005). As a result; the higher the congruency between both personalities, the higher is the consumer's preference and purchase intention for the respective brand.

2.2.3   Dimension of Brand Personality

Brand personality is measured with five dimensions that specially for consumers' brand attribute (Aaker, 1997). Aaker (1997). Constructed brand personality scale (Table 2.2) by determining the number and nature of dimensions of brand personality traits. In addition, Aaker (1997). developed a measurement scale which is brand personality scale with combination of 42 traits. Five personality scale was applicable for all sample even with different groups, demography or brand choices. These five brand personality dimensions is becoming a trend and preference by

majority of brands for their products are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.
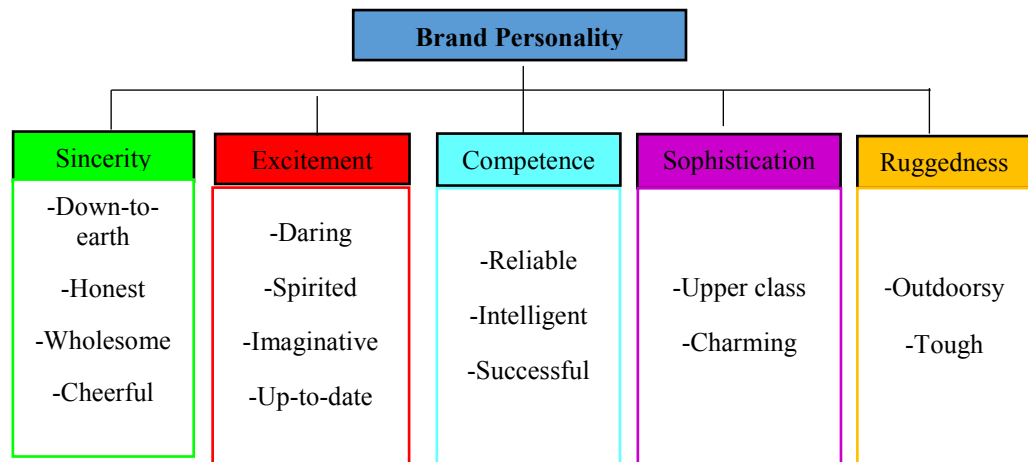

Figure 2.2.1: Brand personality scale

The impact of this model has been so profound that since 1997 most academic publications about brand personality is based on Aaker's methodology. This model has been adapted in other countries as the scale of studied different brands and products.

Table 2.2.4 as a compiled of previous study's result conducted based on Aaker's brand personality scale.