



FACTORS AFFECTING BRANDING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CLOTHING INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Brand and brand image are the important factors that have effects on consumers in clothing industry. Through its basic function, branding generally serves for being well known and to be differentiated from the substitutes and serves as a powerful tool for consumer loyalty. Branding in clothing may have a specific importance for cloth is much more personal than anything used by the person. It is a complimentary tool to demonstrate who the person is, what he wants to be. Brands may help people to transmit their own image, serving as a symbolic tool. This paper aims to outline the relationship between branding and clothing, considering the leading factors like motivation and need for clothing, purchasing decisions and the relation between personality, clothing and brands, to help developing strategies for clothing companies in branding process. Finally, an analysis has been made about the influence of the factors considered.

1. Introduction

Brand and brand image are one of the most important factors, those have effect on consumers in a rapidly changing global environment with high expectations. Although branding in clothing serves for product recognition and differentiation through its basic function, some features specific to the clothing underlines the importance of branding. Cloth is a special material, as being carried on the body. This makes cloth more personal than any material used at the office or at home. Cloth is a supplementary tool presenting the person's presence, what he wants in the future, his point of view, where he stands in the society, anytime, anywhere. Brands can help people transmitting their own image, serving as a symbolic tool. For example, some brands can be used by special type of people, to reflect different values and features, so that two products having the same quality and material can be evaluated differently because of the values attached to the products [1].

Brand of a cloth is partially made up of style, model, design, pattern, color, which is a basic need, but shaped by the fast changing fashion trends. This interaction is a result of fast changing fashion trends and fast communication to anywhere on the world, through highly developed channels. Clothing companies are called with their brands, not with their company names. Famous brands are known as a type of guarantee for the quality, color and pattern prosperity.

Fashion and branding are generally used together, although they are totally different concepts. Fashion is changeable and dynamic. Brand is expected to be a long-lasting presentation symbol. This symbol may have effects on the society visually and auditory and can lead the consumers to a specific type of behavior but will always be different from fashion. The consumer affinity to brand is generally led by the trust for the quality and the price, also being up to date. But, quality, trust and price do not have a priority in fashion.



2. Method Used

Factors affecting branding with special reference to clothing industry were analyzed through a literature review. The theories and the motivation process for wearing clothes and how clothing could satisfy needs are explained in Maslow's Hierarchy were searched. The relation between identity, brand and clothing were defined in relation with consumer involvement, self expression, and identity and brand identity concepts. Finally the purchasing decisions in clothing were reviewed. These reviews were analyzed and presented in a synthesis, outlining the factors affecting branding in clothing.

3. Results

3.1. Motivation Theories on Clothing

The first theories on wearing were advanced by anthropologists and psychologists, and were generally related with the basic needs. This is an interesting subject which is popular to be discussed and emphasized by the fashion and clothing researchers. Generally there are four functions which are known as basic motivations for fashion and clothing buying:

- **Modesty Theory:** This theory suggests that people wear clothing to conceal the private parts of their bodies. Moralists believe that one's innate feelings of guilt and shame from being naked, led to clothing itself. This theory, called the biblical theory, stems from the story of Adam and Eve and the fig leaf. The definition of modesty theory changes over time. For example swimsuits of the 1920's is quite different from today's, in terms of acceptable exposure.
- **Immodesty Theory:** This theory argues that clothes are worn to draw attention to certain parts of the body. Selection of clothing is a result of the decision for the appropriateness of the amount of the body exposure.
- **Protection Theory:** Some theorists argue that clothing was first used to protect us from the external factors such as cold, rain, sun, insects and animals. Clothing functions as a barrier between the body and the environment. While parkas, gloves, hats are worn to protect the body from the cold, some clothes are used to bring good luck or protection from the harmful spirits.
- **Adornment Theory:** The most universal function of clothing and accessories is adornment, personal decoration and aesthetic expression. Adornment shows status and identity, also raises one's self-esteem.

Above listed functions of clothing may be thought of intrinsic reasons or motivations for clothing choices [2]. Clothing serves as a powerful tool for people to communicate their unique approach and is in such a product category that defines affinity, perception and behavior for consumption. [3]

Motivation refers to the processes that cause people to behave as they do. It occurs when a need (something that is lacking) is aroused that the consumer wishes to satisfy. For example when a need has been activated, such as protection, a state of tension exists that drives the consumer to attempt to reduce or eliminate the need. This need is the gap between the consumer's current state and the ideal state. This gap creates a state of tension. The magnitude of this tension determines the urgency the consumer feels to reduce the tension. This degree of motivation is called a drive. The desired end state is the consumer's goal. Marketers try to create products and services that will provide the desired benefits and permit the consumer to reduce tension created by needs.

3.2. Types of Needs Regarding Clothing

One approach for the needs is classifying them in two types as utilitarian and hedonic. Utilitarian needs are desires to achieve some functional and or practical benefit. (Such as comfort



or protection, etc.) The satisfaction utilitarian needs imply that consumers will emphasize the objective, tangible attributes of the products, such as the durability of the jeans. Needs also may be hedonic, so that experiential needs involving emotional responses. Hedonic/experiential needs are subjective; consumers may rely on a product to meet their needs for excitement, self-confidence, fantasy, and so on. Consumers may prefer to buy the products, providing both types of needs such as buying a mink coat may provide a luxury image and warmth in cold winter days at the same time.

People are born with a continuous need for food, water, air, shelter and protection from external factors to survive, which are also called as biological need. People may have many other needs, which are not biological. Psychogenic needs are acquired in the process of becoming a member of culture. Status, power and affiliations are also classified in psychogenic needs. They reflect the priorities of a culture, and their effect on behavior will vary in different environment. While American consumers prefer to spend a great amount of their income for the products that display their wealth and status, Japanese people may equally work hard to ensure that they do not stand out from their group.

Basic needs can be satisfied in many different ways. The choice of the consumer may be influenced by the unique set of personal experiences and values of the culture. The particular form of consumption used to satisfy a need is called a “want”. Wants are manifestations for needs. Protection is a basic need to be satisfied. This lack of protection can be satisfied by \$ 10 coat that offers adequate warmth and coverage or a \$ 1000 coat from Calvin Klein.

Defining types of needs are popular subjects, studied by many scientists and marketers. The most impressive among those are the Maslow’s comprehensive and hierarchical approach the structure is modeled on a pyramid diagram. Maslow’s needs are listed below beginning from the bottom of the pyramid:

- Physiological needs (Water, sleep, food)
- Safety needs (Security, shelter, protection)
- Belongingness needs (Love, friendship, acceptance by others)
- Ego needs (prestige, status, accomplishments)
- Self-actualization needs (self-fulfillment, enriching experiences)

Clothing can satisfy needs in every level of Maslow Hierarchy, with different contents:

- Physiological needs: Clothing covering the body and protects us from the elements.
- Safety needs: Clothing sold in the United States must pass flammability standards so that it won’t burst into flames when close to an ignition source; we should feel relatively safe in our clothing.
- Belongingness needs-Social: Fashion is something to share with and be seen in by others.
- Ego needs–esteem: Wearing the latest fashion or an art to wear piece makes us feel good about ourselves and gives us a sense of status among our peers.
- Self-actualization: “My clothes are an expression of total me” [2]

For different consumer groups, it must be considered that needs may be different according to the type of clothing. According to a research in this area, while a group of consumers loyal to the high price brands give priority to style, fabric and color, for t-shirts, another group loyal to low and middle price brands prefer easiness in maintenance and comforting the first place. But in jackets, high price brands loyal group prefer comfort, style, color and quality, while the others prefer quality [4].

3.3. Consumer Involvement in Clothing

Involvement is defined as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on the



inherent need, values, and interests". Involvement is a motivational and instinctive construct, which can be viewed as a motivation to process information. To the degree that there is a perceived link between a consumers' needs, goals, or values and product knowledge, the consumer will be motivated to pay attention to product information. As involvement with a product increases, the consumer devotes more attention to ads related to the product, exerts more cognitive effort to understand these ads and focuses attention on the product –related information in them. On the other hand, a person may not bother to pay any attention to the same information if it is not seen as relevant satisfying some need.

Apparel and fashion purchasing is generally thought of as a high involvement activity. Some studies found out that fashion involvement are composed of five fashion–related dimensions: Fashion awareness, Fashion knowledgeable, Fashion interest, Fashion interpersonal communications, Fashion innovativeness

A different study found out that fashion involvement is composed of two dimensions: dress to express personality, and dress as a signal device. For example;

Dress to express personality:

- The clothes that somebody wears tell me a lot about that person.
- My clothes help me express who I am.
- You can tell a lot about the person by clothes he or she wears.

Dress as a signaling device:

- When I wear one of my favorite outfits, others see me the way I want them to see me [2].

A research has been applied for the consumer's approach to domestic and international brands on a high fashion and apparel involvement group in China and it is found out that the consumers who tend to buy imported brands have unique life style approach and shopping oriented. Although this type of consumers was not from the highest income group, they had high expenditures on clothing and were willing to pay higher prices for brand, quality and image. Hedonistic consuming orientation and fashion awareness, lead them to purchase imported apparel. They were more loyal, and their brand and quality awareness were high. They were young and their education levels were relatively high. They read fashion magazines and shop frequently. Knowing this type of features of the target customers can help to the success of branding and marketing activities [5].

3.4. Relation Between Identity, Clothing And Brand

Clothing is an effective way of expressing him/herself. We all dress up for the ones to approve our self realization in a society or against them [2]. Our identity is shaped with how we balance our understanding about who and what we are and our hesitation inherited from our nature, culture and time we live in [6].

Hesitation and uncertainty related with identity is seen as the key driver for fashion. According to this approach aspiration, tension, anxiety and dissatisfaction in the human nature are trying to find out an expression apart from how people perceive them. This search for the identity has a common and collective component. In this concept fashion is targeting this common and collective face of social identities. Identity search feeds the fashion and especially the clothes becoming a code and surrounded in and around the symbols. Consumption and cultural symbolic dimension of consumption play an important role in identity search and the culture. The identity search finds a meaning in fashion and clothing codes [7].

At this point, the need for self expression is satisfied by consumption processes [7]. Consumption materials gain a symbolic meaning with their emotional and social benefits beside functional benefits. This symbolic meaning matches with the applied to the product.

Brand image and identity image compatibility theory, defines image compatibility as the similarity and matching between the brand image and consumer' identity image. It is generally



accepted that similarities between those two images identified by the consumer leads them to motivation to the brand and purchasing desire. When this conformity does not exist, consumer does not tend to purchase the brand. This theory rely on that the probability of the consumer to be satisfied after purchase is very high. This theory is first argued in the studies of Tucker in 1952's. This theory accepts that brand associations shape the user image and the consumer compares his/her own image with brand image. Consumers build their own identity concept through psychological developments and social interaction.

Products and brands are perceived as objects having symbolic meanings. The symbolic role of products and brands help consumer's own identity to develop and enrich by using property, presentation and symbols [7].

This theory is observed and examined in some studies and findings supported the conformity between the purchase intentions [11].

A strong relation level was not found between conformity of brand and personal identity and brand loyalty. Brand and ideal social identity image seems to have relation. As the identity can change, through conditions and status, consumers can use different identity definitions while being a spouse, parent, manager and student in house, in party at school and purchasing preferences may change consequently [7]. While a young girl may prefer a dress in a graduation party, she might prefer a formal dress in the university because there is a difference in the image the girl wants to create and this affects the brand choice. Using brand as a personal identification tool, is a focus concept in identity enrichment concept. Personal identity enrichment is performed in four different levels: Personally, family, social and group levels. Collection materials, presents, and objects in family customs are strong samples for enriched indent. By time, brands occupy central roles in the personal identity, develop a deep emotional relation and taken under control, brands become a part of the identity.

Using brand as an expression of identity, may be seen as a feature of brand personality to expose feelings. According to this, it is accepted that brands expose some certain feelings. Brands can contact consumers with human personality feeling features like aggressive, warm, and strong. Using some brands may be an opportunity to exposure feelings. This evaluation must be considered in brand personality concept, parallel to the consumer's image conformity search.

Young consumers especially have a need to bolster their self images through having cool looks. They generally prefer brands with an identity based on the values with which they can identify and through which they can express their individuality. [8]

Consumers' need for uniqueness is Snyder's and Fromkins' uniqueness theory [9], which manifests itself in the individual's pursuit of material goods to differentiate themselves from others. The consumers' need for uniqueness is demonstrated in three types of consumer behavior:

- Creative choice counter-conformity: consumers purchase goods that express their uniqueness and also are acceptable to others.
- Unpopular choice counter-conformity: consumers willingly risk their social disapproval to establish their uniqueness by selecting products that deviate from group norms.
- Avoidance of similarity: consumers are intent on the avoidance of similarity to goods that are part of the main stream. [10]

Researchers concluded that consumers' with a high need for uniqueness tended to adopt new brands more quickly than those with a low need for uniqueness. They found that consumers tended to buy high quality products not because of desire for uniqueness but despite it. [8]

Azevedo ve Farhangmehr [12] made a research about effect of brand personality on the response of consumer to the advertisement. Following the preceding research on the subject, they analyzed what kind of brand personality features are preferred by 16-25 years old young people among thirty brands. They found positive correlation on identity, brand personality conformity and response to the advertisement. For example, young people at these ages find association with their personality and excitement and prefer fashion brands like Diesel, Sisley, Fashion Clinic, Cheyenne ve Buzz which use excitement in their brand personality.



Brand logo and associations presented on the products to be easily seen, is the most direct method for the consumer to express himself/herself. So the visible brand elements like brand name, logo has capability to express person in the society. But some consumers are may not be willing to carry the brand names on them apparently. The success of branding in clothing, furniture, car and accessories requires a positioning depending on satisfying the emotional/symbolic needs of consumers [7].

Also brand name is important in luxury consumption marker, so that the consumer looking for status prefer to purchase the brands which are representing a meaningful status for the others. It is highly perceived that high status products have high quality and well-known brand names. Consumers looking for status generally prefer brands from countries who have good brand name. [13].

The positive reaction of the consumer's reference group causes enrichment and development of the brand itself and as a result it is expected to be creating increase in brand loyalty and repurchase behavior.

Self-esteem is related with the positive perception of the person himself/herself. People with low self-esteem, do not expect themselves to be successful and beware of shame, mistakes and refusals. People with self-esteem trust themselves and believe in their success, take more risks and are more reluctant to be the focus of interest. Self-esteem is also related with the others acceptance. Managing visual appearance through cultural symbols like fashion can help to establish people self-esteem. When people feel better, they care more about their appearance or when their self-esteem is decreased, they do not care about their appearance or may be more obsessive. In a study experienced among the adults, it was found that people with higher self-esteem prefer clothes which make them happy and they did not need clothes as a tool to attract the others interest. For the others clothes became a tool which they reflect their insecure feelings. So, clothing is a tool for expressing the identity and coping with the social medium.

In another study, performed among foreign brands in China, the results showed that having a foreign brand has been perceived as a success indicator which identifies the status in the society [14].

3.5. Clothing and Purchasing Decisions

Some purchase decisions are more important than others. So, the amount of effort spent for each is different. Traditionally consumer researchers have approached decision makers from a rational perspective or traditional decision making model. In this view people carefully and calmly integrate as much information as possible with what they already know about a product, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives and arrive at a satisfactory decision. This approach implies that the steps in decision making should be carefully studied by marketing managers to understand how the information is obtained, how beliefs are formed, and what product choice criteria are specified by the consumers. Products can then be developed that emphasize appropriate attributes and promotional strategies can be tailored to deliver the types of information most likely to be desired in the most effective formats.

While the steps in decision making are followed by consumers for some high involvement purchases, such a process is not accurate for all purchases. In fashion and clothing purchasing consumers do not follow the rational purchasing model. Process begins with becoming aware of a substance, rather than specifying a need or a problem. To create this awareness the purchasing point/place becomes more important. In this process information gathering is few or never happens.

If all these purchasing decisions happen in this way, they should have little time to enjoy the things they decide to buy. Researchers are beginning to realize that decision makers use a set of strategies. Consumer evaluates the effort required to make a particular choice and then chooses a strategy best suited to the level of effort required.

In low involvement conditions, learned/habitual purchasing behavior is selected, while in



high involvement case rational buying behavior is used.

One helpful way to characterize the decision making process is to consider the amount of effort required for the decision.

Extended Decision Making: It's more close to the traditional decision making perspective. The consumer tries to collect as much information possible, both from the memory (internal search) and from outside sources (external sources). Based on the importance of the decisions, each alternative is carefully evaluated,. The evaluation is often done by considering the attributes of one brand at a time and seeing how each brand's attributes shape up to some set of desired characteristics.

Limited Decision Making: It is more straightforward and simple. Buyers are not as motivated to search for information or reluctantly evaluate each alternative. People instead use simple decision rules to choose among the alternatives. These cognitive shortcuts enable them to fall back on general guidelines instead of having to start from scratch every time a decision is to be made.

Habitual Decision Making: Both extended and limited decision makes processes involve some degree of information search and deliberation varying in the degree to which these activities are undertaken. At the other end of the choice continuum, there are decisions that are made with little or no conscious effort. Some of them are so routine that consumers do not realize what they buy and automatically made the choice. There is huge number of studies made on the criteria that customers use when making clothing and fashion decisions. Some have viewed criteria in terms of external factors (such as price, brand name and store image) and internal factors (such as style, color, fabric, care, fit and quality) Others use different classifications. Following fashion criteria used by the consumers have been researched:

- Appropriateness/ personal style: suitability to individual, good fit, appropriate for occasion, comfort, fabric type and quality and wardrobe conditions.
- Economy/usefulness: price, good buy, ease of care, durability, versatility, matching and utility.
- Attractiveness/aesthetics: beautiful, fashionable, color, pattern, styling, good fit, pleasing to others.
- Quality: quality of construction, fabric type, fiber, durability
- Other-people-directed/Image: prestige, brand and store name, and label, fashionable.
- Country of origin: Made in a well-known country, or imported, Italian.
- Fiber/fabric: natural or synthetic; knits/ woven

Although there are some cultural differences, as to the importance of evaluative criteria used in clothing decisions generally, there has been a little substantive difference found with fit, style, quality and price having top priority and brand and country of origin being less important. [2]. Quality is such an important factor and it is at the second level after price for the consumers who are price sensitive and counterfeit buyers [15]

4. Conclusion

As a result of the literature review about why we wear clothes and the motivation for clothing, we have found that on one side of the continuum there are simple needs like protection and on the other hand there is self-realization. At that point, the search for the ideal identity finds an answer in branding image. As the brand personality matches with the ideal identity then the consumers tend to buy the brand and become more loyal.

So the clothing companies should first determine the target market and the consumer segment and then should know deeper about the consumers in the target market. The motivation factors of this target segment and their expectations from the clothing should be analyzed through consumer surveys.

Once this data has been collected, companies should determine their brand personality



through the consumer's ideal identity expectations. Since the hesitation, uncertainty, search for the uniqueness related with identity is seen as the key driver for fashion, it also becomes key data for the branding in clothing. Identity search feeds the fashion and especially the clothes becoming a code and surrounded in and around the symbols. As the consumers likes, dislikes, needs, expectations, visions for himself/herself is followed through regular consumer surveys, marketers will find clues for establishing the whole branding process starting from the value proposition to elements like logo, name, slogan.

Sometimes brand logo and other associations like color, brand name and logo directly presented on the products to be easily seen, may be a way of expressing the customer himself/herself.

One of the most important factors that affect purchasing of the consumers' cloth is found as appropriateness to personal style which can be defined as suitability to individual good fit, appropriate for occasion, comfort, fabric type and quality and wardrobe conditions. Finally we can say that the success of branding in clothing requires a positioning depending on following and satisfying the emotional/ symbolic needs and expectations of consumers.

As reviewed in this study, clothing is more than protection; with branding it helps consumers establish their ideal identity. So the research on consumer needs and wants becomes more important. For future studies, we can recommend building a branding identity model specific to clothing companies. The research on needs and wants of consumers can help establishing and designing branding elements like name, logo, identity, personality and image. An additional analysis can be performed among the companies with well known brand names and these results may help customizing the branding models. Another input can be SWOT analysis on branding in the target market.

A complete branding model which defines the process starting from the analysis to brand building may help companies to achieve better results.

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