ASSESSING BRAND EQUITY IN THE CHINESE CLOTHING MARKET A STUDY OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES

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Abstract

This research paper aims to assess brand equity in the Chinese clothing market by studying consumer perceptions and preferences. Brand equity is a critical factor for the success and competitiveness of clothing brands in China, which is a dynamic and rapidly growing market. This study investigates the key dimensions of brand equity, such as brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand associations, in the context of the Chinese clothing market. The research methodology involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, including surveys with Chinese consumers, focus group discussions, and analysis of brand performance data. By analyzing consumer perceptions and preferences, this study aims to predict the establishment of brand equity for clothing brands in China. The findings will provide valuable insights for clothing brand managers and marketers in developing effective brand strategies, enhancing brand equity, and gaining a competitive advantage in the Chinese market.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Chinese Clothing Market, Consumer Perceptions, Consumer Preferences, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty, Brand Associations, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research.

INTRODUCTION

The term "Brand Equity" describes the added value that consumers are willing to pay for a brand-name product over a generic substitute. Making their products stand out from the competition in terms of quality and dependability is one way for businesses to build brand equity. Advertising campaigns targeting a large audience can contribute to building a reputable brand. Customers are willing to pay a premium for a company's goods even if they are available elsewhere for a lower price if the company's brand equity is strong. In a sense, consumers will fork over more cash to support a reputable company. The difference in price is profit for the company with brand equity because it does not have to spend more than its rivals to get the product to market. The company is able to generate higher margins thanks to the reputation of its brand.

The majority of people are of the view that the marketing strategy of a company is the single most important component in establishing the brand equity of a particular product or service. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the topic of how the different aspects of a marketing mix could have an effect on the value of a brand over the course of time. These investigations have been carried out in order to better understand the topic. Until these theories have been validated via empirical research, it is not possible to declare with absolute confidence whether or not they are relevant to markets situated

in countries other than the United States or other Western nations. In contrast, the current research investigated the relationship between marketing activities and brand equity for imported garment firms in China by employing a tried-and-true method for the creation of brand equity known as the Brand Equity Creation Model. This method was chosen because it has been shown to be effective in the past. In particular, the researchers were interested in examining the connection between these two aspects with regard to China. The benefits that come with having a well-known brand name attached to a product are referred to as "brand equity." These benefits may be measured in terms of the product's usefulness in everyday life or its monetary value. Numerous studies have demonstrated that various marketing methods and circumstances in the market each have their own distinct influence on the brand equity of a specific organisation. This impact may be positive or negative, depending on the circumstances. The amount of money spent on advertising, the amount of money spent on the sales force and marketing research, the age of the brand, the advertising share, the order of entry, and the product portfolio are some of the components that go into determining brand equity, as stated by Simon and Sullivan (2019). Other factors that go into determining brand equity include the advertising share, the order of entry, and the product portfolio. Another statistic that may be used in the process of evaluating the equity of a brand is the advertising share.

Public relations, product warranties, slogans or jingles, logos, and product packaging are a few examples of marketing strategies that have been argued for. Other strategies include jingles and slogans. Keller is of the opinion that the majority of marketing strategies, such as advertising, promotion, event marketing and sponsorship, and public relations, all have a positive impact on the amount of brand equity possessed by a firm. Goes on to say that many different marketing methods contribute in a number of ways, and that each of those strategies has its own distinct personality. When it comes to the strategy of cultivating a feeling of consumer loyalty toward a brand, many people think that advertising has a crucial place in the marketing communications mix. This is because advertising is one of the most visible forms of communicating with customers.

A brand is anything that is sold to an individual, as opposed to a product, which is anything that is made on an assembly line. When something is sold to an individual, it is referred to as a brand. A rival may be able to copy a product, but there is no way for them to copy a brand since it is something that cannot be copied under any circumstances. The amount of relevance that a product has at any one moment may swiftly change, but a strong brand will continue to be relevant regardless of the circumstances.

Recent research has demonstrated that consumers in developed nations and those in established regions may be distinguished from one another using a variety of cultural and socioeconomic factors (e.g. Christensen, Siemsen, & Balasubramanian, 2015; Maheswaran & Shavitt, 2000; Michaelidou, Christodoulides, Cadogan, & Veloutsou, 2015; Morgeson III, Sharma, & Hult, 2015). When it comes to analysing a brand and establishing a long-term commitment to that brand, customers could take into account the cultural differences between those brands and themselves.

Branding is a marketing approach that has been around for millennia and may be used to differentiate the products that are manufactured by one firm from the products that are manufactured by other manufacturers. Branding is the process of creating mental structures that help consumers organise their information about products and services in a way that clarifies their decision making and, in the process, delivers value to the firm. These structures help consumers organise their information about products and services in a way that clarifies their decision making and delivers value to the firm. These structures assist customers in organising the information they have gathered about a company's goods and services in a manner that is both helpful to them in making decisions and valuable to the company. These kinds of mental constructs are referred to be brands in common parlance. As a consequence of this, a product or service is considered to be a brand when it contains characteristics that set it apart from other products or services that are designed to meet the same criteria in some way as the one being satisfied by the brand in question.

Research on the Value of Clothing Brands in China:

As a result of having a population of more than one billion people, China has the largest consumer market of any country in the world. The nation's economy began to flourish in 1978, the year it first opened its borders to foreign trade. It has become an appealing market for Western marketers of well-known brands as a result of market liberalisation and the sheer volume of the country's customer base (Yan, 1994). China currently ranks as the world's second most popular host nation for foreign direct investment (FDI), trailing only the United States, and it is home to one of the most tempting consumer markets anywhere in the world.

After a period of stagnation between 1995 and that year, China's economy had a surge in growth in the year 2000, expanding by 8%. (Asian Development Bank, 2001). Comparable growth rates have been observed in the retail industry; year-over-year increases in retail sales of 8.8 percent were recorded in 2002. (Juststyle.com, 2003). It is possible that the place with the most people living in one of the greatest areas of land could produce the most prosperous consumer market on the entire world.

The Gross Domestic Product of China is growing at an Incredible Rate of 9 Percent Annually. There is a lot at stake in the fashion sector, which is both innovative and fast increasing at a rate of 13% per year, as a result of the fact that the retail industry is just getting started (Brand Strategy, 2004). In recent years, China's textile and apparel industry has experienced growth that is measured in double digits. According to the Economic and Textile Research Center of the Republic of China, the garment market in China was valued RMB360 billion in the year 2000, with sales of over 5.57 billion suits. This information comes from the year 2000. According to the findings of a survey completed by 200 Chinese business owners, retail sales of apparel in China climbed by 34.8% in 2002 when compared to the same period in 2000. (Lee, 2002).

OBJEACTIVES

1. The Study Brand Equity in the Chinese Clothing Market.
2. The Study Consumer Perceptions and Preferences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researcher performed a rigorous cross-sectional investigation. The cross-sectional design necessitated a single point in time data collection, which was quick and low-cost. Because of the short timeframe and limited resources, the researcher opted for a quantitative approach. Rao-soft software was used to estimate the sample size of 600; 775 questionnaires were distributed; 662 were returned; and lastly, 13 questionnaires were deleted owing to incompletion of the questionnaire. The study included 649 people from China as respondents. Using random sampling, all respondents were approached for the survey. Participants who decided to participate in the study were given information about it by the researcher, who was also on hand to answer any questions they had while they were waiting to finish their shopping. When a respondent was unable to read or write, or was confined to a wheelchair, the researcher read the survey questions and response categories to them, and then recorded their responses in the survey form as they were said. In some places, people were given questionnaires to complete and return all at once.

Study Area:

The study was conducted in fashion clothing market, clothing factories, clothing retail market, shopping malls, on China. The study sites were chosen because of consumers availability at the sites to purchases various brands.

Data Collection:

The researcher conducted mixed method research for the study through survey and interview. The details of the survey collection method and interview are described below.

Respondents first answered control questions regarding their the Chinese clothing market, to predict the establishment of brand equity and size of their organization. This left a sample size calculated from Rao Soft and the sample size was 600.

Likert scale, rating system, used in questionnaires, that is designed to measure people's attitudes, opinions, or perceptions. Subjects choose from a range of possible responses to a specific question or statement; responses typically include "strongly agree," "agree," "did not answer," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Often, the categories of response are coded numerically, in which case the numerical values must be defined for that specific study, such as 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, and so on.

In the study the researcher viewed in demographic details that included Gender, the age group of the respondents, the occupation of the respondents, the tenure of work for the respondents, the technical knowledge for the respondents, the surveillance skill for the

respondents and the last one is Income of the respondents. That all are included in demographic details.

The questions from 1-20 follow the Likert scale mentioned above and it provides us with the Chinese clothing market, to predict the establishment of brand equity.

Sample:

Data for the study was collected collection method and interview. Sample Size calculated through Rao-soft software was 600, total 775 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 662questionnaire were received back, and 13 questionnaires were rejected because they were incomplete. The final number of questionnaires used for study is 649 with 297 females and 392 males respectively.   The member of the study surveyed were the following: Teacher 137 respondents (21.0%), Designer 123 respondents (19.0%), Engineer 96 respondents (15.0%), Doctor 89 respondents (14.0%), Business Analyst 107 respondents (16.0%), and Pvt. Employee 97 respondents (14.0%).
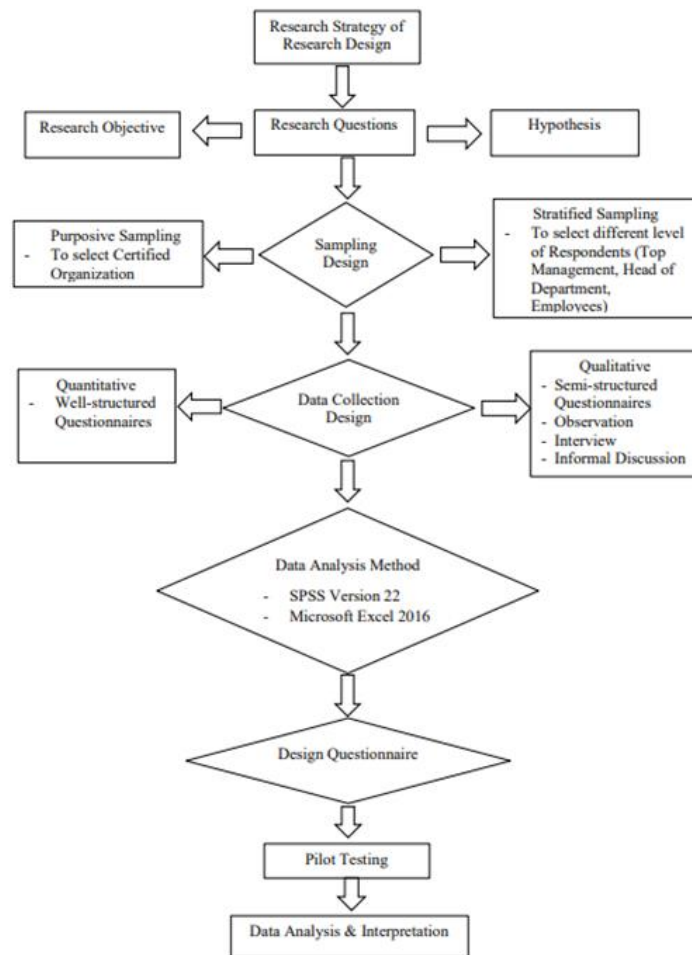

Figure 1: Variable, the Questionnaires Was Formulated On the Basis

Variables:

A characteristic, number, or quantity is referred to as a variable if it is capable of being counted or quantified. It's possible to refer to a variable as a data item as well. Some examples of variables are age, gender, income and expenses of a business, country of birth, amount of money spent on capital expenditures, class grades, eye colour, and type of vehicle.

The study was assessed using 4 independent variables and 1 dependent variable, the questionnaires was formulated on the basis of the various independent variables as following:

Brand Equity:

When compared to a generic version of the same product, the value of a brand-named good or service can command a price premium over its generic counterpart. This value premium is referred to as "brand equity." Adding value to a company's brand can be accomplished for individual items by making them more memorable and easily recognisable, as well as more reliable and of higher quality. Brand equity refers to the level of sway a brand name possesses in the minds of consumers, as well as the value of possessing a brand that is recognisable and favourably thought of by people. Companies build up their brand equity by providing customers with favourable experiences that encourage them to continue purchasing from the company rather than from competitors who produce products that are functionally equivalent.

The value that your company receives from your brand is what is meant to be understood by the term "brand equity." This value may be obtained through better revenues, fewer marketing costs, premium pricing, or even superior negotiation power with third-party suppliers.

DATA ANALYSIS

In the portion of the report titled "Results," an investigation's findings are given, along with the research procedures that were used to acquire those findings. These findings are laid forth in an organised manner, devoid of any bias or interpretation on the part of the author, and serve as a foundation for the discussion section's subsequent assessment and examination. The primary purpose of the results section is to provide the data in language that emphasises how they relate to the research issue that was investigated in the study (s).

The findings of the research should be included in the results section, and only the findings of the study should be included there. The following are the findings:

- Information provided in the form of tables, charts, graphs, and other figures

- A contextual analysis of this data that explains its significance in sentence form

- Every piece of information that is relevant to the primary research topic (s).

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:

It is possible to notice and record qualitative information. Unlike numbers, this data type does not have a numerical value. Observations, individual interviews, focus groups, and other similar procedures are used to get this information. Statistics also refer to qualitative information as categorical data if it can be sorted in a certain way according to the characteristics of whatever it is being studied. Exploratory in nature, qualitative data collecting entails extensive investigation. In contrast, qualitative research approaches dig deeper into topics by focusing on eliciting explanations, justifications, and motivations from participants. Because of the impossibility of quantifying qualitative information, quantitative data collection methods and technologies are typically preferred.
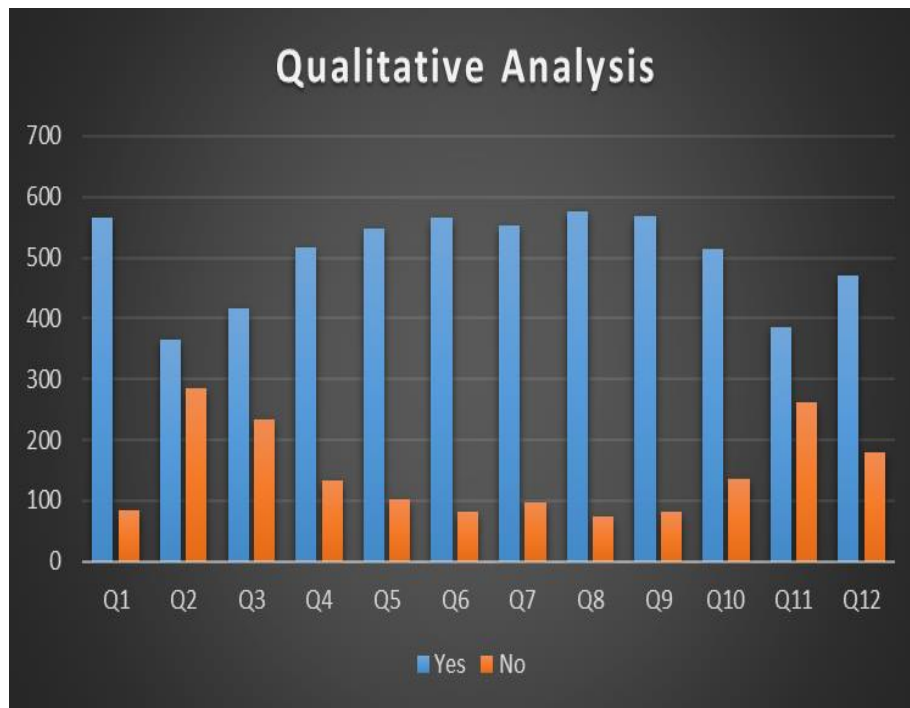

Figure 2: Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative analysis the above questions were analysed, the questions represented consumer understanding of the brand and their loyalty towards it. The interview questions were designed keeping four factors in mind i.e., brand loyalty, brand image, perceived quality and brand awareness respectively. The first 3 questions like (1)

I will not buy any other brand if that specific product is available in stores. (2) The brand is my first preference., and (3) I am loyal to this brand reflects brand loyalty had a positive response of 87%, 56% and 64% respectively. The mean for the brand loyalty was found to be 69% which shows that respondents are loyal towards a particular brand. Similarly to assess the brand image the questions (4) It is easy to recall the brand. (5) I can easily recognize the brand., and (6) I know the logo of the brand had a positive response of

80%, 84% and 87% respectively. The mean for brand image was found to be 84% that shows the brand has a good image among the respondents. Similarly to assess perceived quality, questions like (7) This brand is good quality (8) This brand is consistent quality (9) This brand has excellent features and (10) This brand is the best brand its category were used that had a response rate of 85%, 88%, 87% and 79% respectively. The mean for perceived quality was found to be 85% that shows the quality of the brand is popular among the respondents. Last two questions (11) this brand is effective and (12) I can recognize this brand among other brands were used to know the brand awareness for which the response was found to be 59% and 72% respectively. The mean was 66% that shows that respondents are aware about the brands.

Pilot Study:

When the instrument is tested on several occasions, it must consistently provide the same measurement, otherwise it isn't dependable. The researcher ran a pilot test on a worldwide scale with 10-20 responders to see whether there were any questions that were confusing or ambiguous. Reworked or eliminated questions that were too vague. Survey completion time averaged out to around 20 minutes after the questionnaire was pilot tested by a group of students. The major study did not include responders from the pilot survey, as previously stated.

Measurement scale qualities and questions that made it were examined as part of a reliability study in addition to the connection between items on the scale, which was done to offer information on their internal consistency. A critical step in the instrument's validation is to calculate reliability estimates.

Response:

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Out of this number 775 sets of the questionnaire were returned and 649 questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for social science (SPSS version 25.0) software.

Table 1: Survey responses

Questionnaires sent	775
Questionnaire received	662
Response rate	(662/775) *100 = 85% return

Demographic Details

Demographics are a kind of statistical information used to analyse human populations. A population's demographics are its distinguishing features. Societies or even small groups of individuals may be analysed with the use of demographics. Examples of demographics include things like age, gender, education level, race/ethnicity, and religious affiliation. Researchers may split the population into subgroups using a wide variety of demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, family income, race/ethnicity, education level, marital status, occupation, etc.

Table 2: Gender

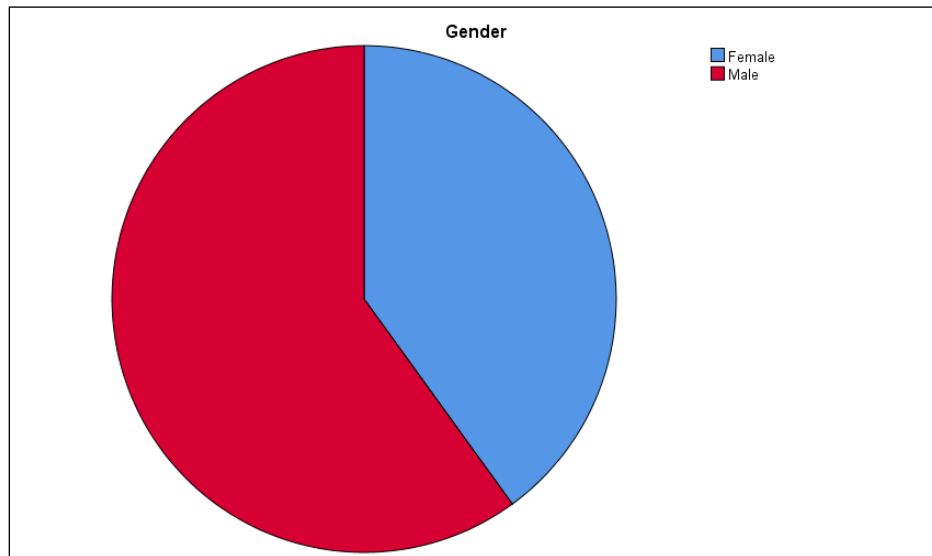| Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Female	260	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Male	389	60.0	60.0	100.0
Valid	Total	649	100.0	100.0	

Figure 3: Gender

As per the table and figure 12 the demographic information of gender for the participants in the study is shown. A total of 649 respondents included in this study, among them 60.0% (N=389) were male and 40.0% (N=260) were female. According to the illustrated table above, there was almost equal distribution of male and female which will give a more standard data.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken with the intention of providing a complete analysis of the manner in which a variety of marketing methods contribute to the growth of brand equity in the Chinese market. The findings of previously conducted study serve as the basis for its hypotheses. Were carried out in the West for the most part. Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) were the first researchers to explore the effects of different marketing actions on brand equity. Their findings served as the inspiration for the Brand Equity Creation Process Model that is presented in this article. The research that Yoo, Donthu, and Lee carried out in 2000 was the first time their Brand Equity Creation Model was used to a study, and an American sample was used. Yoo and Donthu carried out an investigation of the same nature with participants drawn from the Korean population in the year 2002.

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