

# Evaluating the Influence of Sportswear Brand Personality on Generation Y Customer Preference in Malaysia

B.Hardjono, C.Y.Teng

**ABSTRACT:** *Generation Y (Gen Y) is an important target market in fashion products such as sportswear. Due to the big market potential, many of brand owners created the various brand personality to attract the interest of this generation. This study attempts to explain whether there is a positive effect of brand personality on Gen Y's preference in choosing a sportswear brand. A purposive sampling was conducted by taking 300 Gen Y people distributed in the area of Central Malaysia. Using quantitative methods and multiple regression and t-test analysis, it was found that brand personality such as sincerity, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness have a positive influence on Gen Y's preference in determining sportswear brand choices, while the personalities of excitement components are not proven to have significant influence. The marketer in sportswear industry should, however, carefully evaluate the nature of brand personality regarding any other variables that are not included in this research that should be addressed to the future research.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Brand Personality, Gen Y, Sportswear, Customer Preference*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Brand identity is a lot of human qualities that are ascribed to a brand name (Aacker 1977) Understanding the impact of brand identity to shopper conduct can be helpful to an organization.

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Considering less examinations have been done to explicitly recognize the identities of sportswear marks, this exploration takes a Gen Y viewpoint to look at the identities related with sportswear brands and tests the pertinence of Aaker's image identity system with regards to sportswear brands. Gen Y alludes to the particular age conceived between the 1980's to the mid 1990's, and in Malaysia this age makes up the biggest populace of buyers that likewise have an abnormal state of spending power on their buys (Asian Institute of Finance, 2015).

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Although all business player, especially in sportswear, know about the potential market for Gen Y, not many of them understand that brand personality can direct this generation to how they choose their brand preference. Therefore it is needed to conduct more research for a better understanding of brand personality.

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.

This examination will look at the effect of brand identity on client inclination among Gen Y in Malaysia. While the quick developments of Malaysia economy initiate the aggressiveness of sportswear advertise, the analyst might want to investigate Gen Y client's inclination which could help an organization to support or improve their market position.

### 1.1 Research Questions and Objectives

Refer to the all of components brand personality, this research will investigate the influence of them to the customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia. In more detail these research questions can be formulated as follows:

What are the implications of the understanding of excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness as components of brand personality toward sportswear brand

customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia?

To find out the answers to the above questions, some research objectives are set up as follow:

1. To investigate the implication of excitement personality on brand customer preference
2. To find out the implication of sincerity personality on brand customer preference
3. To determine the implication of competence personality on brand customer preference
4. To evaluate the implication of sophistication personality on brand customer preference
5. To evaluate the implication of ruggedness personality on brand customer preference.

All of brand customer preferences here are in the context of sportswear brands among Gen Y customers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand identity has been distinguished as both significant and compelling for buyers and subsequently as giving numerous advantages to firms. (Demangeot and Broderick, 2010) The practical advantages of a brand become substantially more convincing when they are communicated by the brand identity. As per scientists brand identity is a key segment of brand value, high brand value levels are known to prompt higher purchaser inclinations. (Aaker, 2014) Other than that it could assemble brand dependability( (Su and Tong, 2015b)

The idea of brand identity offers a noteworthy administrative advantage.(Ahmad and Thyagaraj 2015) Brand identity can be an essential apparatus in separating their image from the challenge. (Tong and Li 2013, Vazifehdoost 2016) and a focal driver of customer inclination, utilization and buy goal (Keller, 2003). As the "spirit" of the brand, brand identity is a fundamental special apparatus speaking to focused groups of onlookers for the advancement of a general brand picture (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). Identity is a suitable analogy for brands creates fascination highlights for brands which are having an identity like human identity dependent on client inclination. (M. N. Koebel and R. Ladwein, 1999).

### 2.1 Benefit of Brand Personality

The shopper will in general pick a brand that is related with the gathering the individual in question wishes to have a place with, tolerating the brand's way of life as their very own piece. It will in general fill in as an emblematic or self-expressive capacity (Huang et al.2012) and furthermore fills in as a

vehicle for speaking to and demonstrating item related utilitarian advantages and brand characteristics.( Aaker, 2014).

There are five measurements that interestingly connected to shoppers' image portrayal (Acker, 2014). Aaker likewise built up a hypothetical system as observed in Figure:1 of the brand identity build by deciding the number and nature of measurements of brand identity attributes. The five brand identity measurements wanted by numerous organizations for their items are truthfulness, fervor, capability, modernity, and roughness(Gomathi et al. 2018)



Figure 1: Brand personality components

Most of the researchers adapt “Big Five” brand personality scale: 1) sincerity 2) competence3) excitement 4) sophistication 5) ruggedness as a measurement of the customer’s preferable brand personality dimension(Aaker, 1997; Freling& Forbes, 2005; Demageot& Broderick, 2010; Beldona&Wysong, 2012.

### 2.2 Gen Y Sportswear Customer Preference

Age Y is known by numerous names: the twenty to thirty year olds; the iPod age; the me firsts; the web age; the reverberation boomers; the Nintendo age; the advanced age (Schofield and Honoré, 2010). Age Y conceived somewhere in the range of 1977 and 1994, hence Gen Y are client's age bunches from 22-39 years of age in 2016.

In Malaysia, Gen Y represents 11 million individuals in 2010 which is 40% of Malaysia's populace (Department Statistics Malaysia 2016), subsequently Gen Y in Malaysia become a vital market since they additionally have an abnormal state of spending power.

Youngsters accept Sportswear as a general and famous class since it is distinguished by them with a more prominent adaptability, solace, and progressively loosened up way of life. Makers (Shakeel et al. 2018), for example, Adidas and Nike began growing their business in Asia to accomplish higher deals volume for their products.(Deb, 2015). In Malaysia, sportswear brands, for example, Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Puma, Umbro, and Fila are well known among sportswear buyers. Nike and Adidas to begin extending their business, especially in Asia as it can possibly give them the higher volume of offers

for their items (Habib and Aslam, 2014)

Gen Y discovered extraordinary certainty and trust in their preferred brand names (Noble, Haytko, and Phillips, 2009). Items which fit mental self portrait become inclination results of Gen Y of Gen Y. They are choosing and devouring items that assistance them characterize their identity, what is critical to them and what they esteem throughout everyday life ((Shakeel et al. 2019).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative methodology was used for this research while it was designed by using descriptive research since most of the discussion on findings are based on established and well-known theory. Research is focused to investigate the implication of brand personality on Gen Y preference of Sportswear brand. The research instrument used in this research was questionnaire which variables were set up based on five brand personality dimensions and personality traits according to Aaker Brand personality scale framework (Aaker, 1997). These variables and dimension are as seen in Table 1.

Table: 1 Measurement of brand personality dimension

Independent Variable	Dimension
<p><b>Sincerity</b></p> <p>The relationship might be similar to one that exists with a well-liked and respected member of a family. If an individual feels the brand to be a member of a family, he/she will be committed to the relationship.</p>	<p><b>Down-to-earth</b></p> <p>Both feet firmly planted on the ground, family-oriented and narrow-minded</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Honest</b> Sincere, honest , real</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wholesome</b> Original (not fake)</li> <li>• <b>Cheerful</b> Sensitive and friendly</li> </ul>
Independent Variable	Dimension
<p><b>Competence</b></p> <p>It manifests the expertise power of the individuals' personality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reliable</b> Hard-working, secure</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Intelligent</b> Content-driven and social</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Successful</b> Leadership and confident</li> </ul>
<p><b>Excitement</b></p> <p>If an individual feels himself/herself having a spirited, young, up-to-date, and outgoing personality, he/she would like to associate with such brand that provides these personality characteristics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Daring</b> Trendy and exciting</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Spirited</b> Cool, spirited and young</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Imaginative</b> Unique, remarkable and special</li> <li>• <b>Up-to-date</b> Independent and contemporary</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sophistication</b></p> <p>Having a good knowledge of culture and fashion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Upper class</b> Glamorous, good-looking, attractive</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Charming</b> Feminine, smooth, soft</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ruggedness</b></p> <p>This personality dimension manifests in an individual who can withstand any situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outdoorsy</b> Masculine, manly, wild</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tough</b> Rugged, rough</li> </ul>

#### 3.1 Sampling Design

Non-probability purposive sampling technique was conducted for this study due to the target of this study is only Gen Y of 22-39 years old. Other than that, sampling was selected according to the region of central and southern Malaysia because central and southern is big cities which have a larger population of Gen Y. Regarding the approximately total Gen Y population in Malaysia and based on Krejcie & Morgan table, about 300 respondents were chosen. Likert scale with the range 1-5 was applied in the questionnaire in order respondents can make an assessment of every question they answer.

#### 3.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

There were five variables that predicted to have implication towards customer preference. These variables were set up as independent variables which consist of components of brand personality such as sincerity,

excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness as seen in Figure 2.

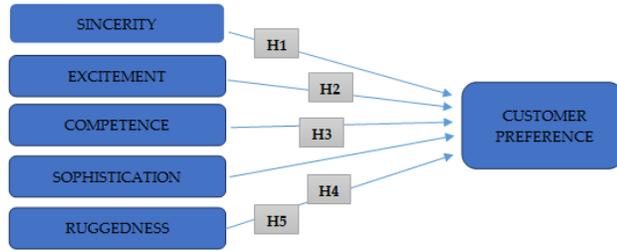


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

Hypothesis to be proposed for this relationship can be written as follow:

**H1: Excitement has a positive association with client's inclination among Gen Y in Malaysia.**

**H2: Sincerity has a positive association with client's inclination among Gen Y in Malaysia.**

**H3: Competence has a positive association with client's inclination among Gen Y in Malaysia.**

**H4: Sophistication has a positive association with client's inclination among Gen Y in Malaysia.**

**H5: Ruggedness has a positive association with client's inclination among Gen Y in Malaysia.**

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic

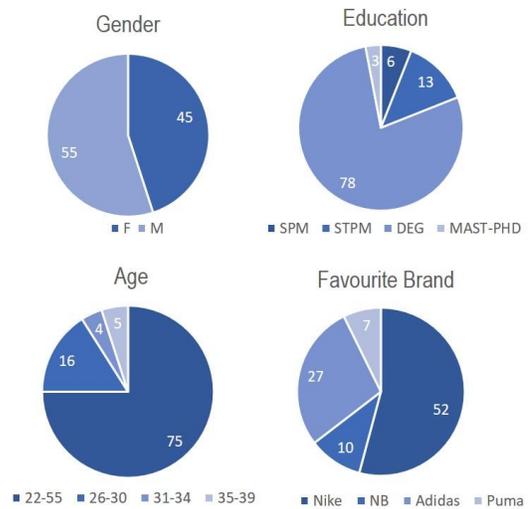


Figure 3: Demographic of Respondents

The profile of respondent is shown in Figure 3. Majority of respondents are females. Most of the respondents are in 22-25 years old which are suitable for the purpose of this research. In term of education, they are mostly are in degree level and followed by STPM level as the second largest. From the 4 top brand in sportswear, they tend to choose Nike as their favourite brand, followed by Adidas, New Balance, and Puma. This tendency is a consistent event when it was checked by gender and education in cross tabulation, they tend to choose the above sequential brand favourite.

3.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

By running all of the data of respondents into SPSS, Pearson correlation value for each of independent variable to their dependent variable can be found out as can be seen in the Table 2. All of Pearson correlation values are greater than 0.500 and significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed), meaning all predictors have a strong and positive relationship with their dependent variable.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Values of Predictors

	Sincerity	Competence	Excitement	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Pearson Correlation					
Signif. (2 tails) = 0.000	0.62**	0.624**	0.511**	0.541**	0.628**
N = 300					

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Allude to the above number, roughness, fervor, and earnestness are the main three characters picked by respondents on the grounds that these characters for the most part additionally mirror the Gen Y's characters. In toughness character, they will in general pick the brand that is extreme (rough and harsh) while in fervor character they are bound to set out (in vogue and energizing), vivacious (cool and youthful), innovative (exceptional, surprising, and extraordinary) and state-of-the-art (autonomous and contemporary). Other than that they prefer the character of sincerity, meaning the brand should be also down to earth (family oriented and narrow-minded). Although the other personalities are lower than the top three, but in this analysis, they also have a relationship with brand customer preference. How exactly the relationship model between all of them to the dependent variable will be explained in more detail in regression analysis.

### 3.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

By using the multiple regression analysis and running all of the data into SPSS, resulted from the multiple coefficients of determinant ( $R^2$ ) the value of 0.536 This can be interpreted that 53.6% the variations in the dependent variable (Gen Y brand preference) can be explained by its set of independent variables. This overall regression model was significant even at the 0.01 level ( $p=0.000$ )

Table 3 shows the regression model has a constant of 1.155 all parameters estimates were significant at the 0.05 which are sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness with each p values of 0.280, 0.256, -0.134, 0.107 and 0.253 respectively.

Using the results from Table 3, the regression model for temporary can be written as follow.

$$Y_{cp} = 0.280X_1 + 0.256X_2 - 0.134X_3 + 0.107X_4 + 0.253X_5$$

(1)

Where,

$Y_{cp}$  = Customer preference

$X_1$  = Sincerity

$X_2$  = Competence

$X_3$  = Excitement

$X_4$  = Sophistication

$X_5$  = Ruggedness

Table 3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.155	.151		7.672	.000
Sincerity	.280	.057	.271	4.903	.000
Competence	.256	.062	.275	4.135	.000
Excitement	-.134	.062	-.149	-2.166	.031
Sophistication	.107	.049	.132	2.159	.032
Ruggedness	.253	.052	.313	4.829	.000

Since there is a negative value for excitement coefficient regression, and some parameters were not significant enough, the final model needs to be checked further in hypothesis test weather this variable valid or not.

### 3.3 Hypothesis Test

To make a generalization of this study to all population, we need to conduct the hypothesis test with the statement stated

below.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: Sincerity has a positive relationship on customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia

**H<sub>2</sub>**: Competence has a positive relationship on customer preference among Gen Y in

Malaysia

**H<sub>3</sub>**: Excitement has a positive relationship on customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia.

**H<sub>4</sub>**: Sophistication has a positive relationship on customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia.

**H<sub>5</sub>**: Ruggedness has a positive relationship on customer preference among Gen Y in Malaysia.

By comparing t-value (calculated by SPSS) and t-value (from t-table) using the known degree of freedom and a significant number from ANOVA (Calculated by SPSS). Based on reference if the value of t-calculation bigger than the value of t-table, then reject **H<sub>0</sub>** and accept **H<sub>1</sub>**. Table 4 shows the hypothesis test result for the independent variables. The hypothesis for each independent variables included SIN, COM, SOP, and R were accepted and only E was rejected.

Independent Variable	Sig	df	t-calc'ed	T-table	Summary	Result
SIN	.000	294	4.903	1.9695	t-cal>t-tab	<b>H<sub>1</sub></b> was accepted
COM	.000		4.135		t-cal>t-tab	<b>H<sub>2</sub></b> was accepted
E	.031		-2.166		t-cal<t-tab	<b>H<sub>3</sub></b> was rejected
SOP	.032		2.159		t-cal>t-tab	<b>H<sub>4</sub></b> was accepted
R	.000		4.829		t-cal>t-tab	<b>H<sub>5</sub></b> was accepted

Table 4: Result of Hypothesis Testing

Based on the table above, all rejected variables were omitted and the final regression model can be re-written as follow:

$$Y_{cp} = 1.115 + 0.280X_1 + 0.256X_2 + 0.107X_4 + 0.253X_5 \quad (2)$$

Or in very complete expression, this model can be written as follow:

$$CP = 1.115 + 0.280 \text{ SIN} + 0.256 \text{ COM} + 0.107 \text{ SOP} + 0.253 \text{ RUG} \quad (3)$$

## 5. CONCLUSION

All components of brand identity, for example, earnestness, ability, energy, refinement, and toughness have solid relationship toward brand client inclination, yet when they are checked by doing the theory test, it was demonstrated that just four from five of these identities have the positive relationship to client brand inclination. These identities are genuineness, skill, complexity, and roughness.

From the final regression model, it can be suggested to the industry that in order to win in the very competitive market such as in the sportswear business, focusing on how to improve the customer brand preference is very important. Refer to the regression model, the most important brand personality respectively are sincerity, competence, and ruggedness respectively followed by sophistication.

For the academic environment, mostly for Malaysia researchers, it would be a challenge to study more about the brand personality in some of the categories of products by adding new variables to be investigated.

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