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Exploring Young Consumers' Purchase Intention Towards Foreign Brand

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with the purpose of understanding young consumers' preference towards foreign brands in contrast to local brands. A total sample size of 300 respondents has been distributed to undergraduate students in UiTM Kedah with the purpose of understanding and identifying whether perceived quality, prestige, value and influence from others have relation with purchase intention on Malaysian young consumers towards foreign products. Two items were used as the dependent variable (purchase intention) to test the relationship between variables stated that is personal care products and personal apparel products.
The data obtained from the survey were analyzed using SPSS version 16. The result from this study indicated that the young generations are more prone towards buying foreign brand products rather than local brand products as their final consumption. The result obtained from this study is beneficial as a direction for local marketers in understanding what the criteria are searched by local consumers in buying consumer items and what can be done by them in improving the products offered.

Keywords: Foreign brands, local brands, young consumers', purchase intention

1.0) INTRODUCTION

Marketers in the developing nation is now facing with a greater challenge as they have to compete with marketers from outside their home country in attracting consumers to buy their products. The scenario whereby consumers from developing nations prefer to buy foreign brands than local brands is an interesting subject to look into. Many researchers in their studies found that "foreign brands are generally more preferred by local consumers in most developing markets" (Papadopoulos., 1990., Ettenson, 1993., Ahmed and d'Astous, 1999) (as cited in Lianxi and Wong, 2008, p.471)

A study made by Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp and Ramachander (2000) was conducted on consumers in developing countries. The study which was conducted in India was aimed at realizing the main objective of testing whether brands perceived as non local brands , especially from the West were more preferred to local brands, for the reasons of perceived quality and social status. The result from the findings found that, it was true product from non local brands had greater effects on consumer purchase intention in developing countries.

Similarly, a study was conducted by Ergin and Akbay (2010) with the same purpose to understand consumers' purchase intentions of urban Turkish consumers for foreign brands. The study was conducted with the understanding that consumers in developing countries now had greater interest towards foreign brands due to the high availability of such products in developing nation.

The reasons for the preference of foreign brands over local brands are an interesting point to study.In light of this, it is vital to study on the factors influencing consumers purchase intentions that lead to the preference towards foreign products than local products. Studies conducted by Batra (2000) and Kwok, Uncles and Huang (2006) found that foreign brands were able to give impact on the products and services offered through two primary motives that were perceived quality and social status or prestige. While perceived value should also be included as another motive that drove consumer preference towards purchasing foreign brands (Zeithaml, 1988; Anderson and He,1998).

2.0)   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is generally understood that competition among brands now is becoming complicated and local brands have to compete with foreign brands which are generally well accepted among consumers in the developing nations. The effects of stronger acceptance for foreign brands in developing nations is closely related to feelings where interpersonal relationship and portrayal of status image is taken as one of the important factors in their lifestyle.

The challenge to understand the criteria related to brand like personality, perceived value, quality, feelings and image brought together with it is still limited in developing nations. Having to understand consumer perception towards brands is important as it will give direct impact to brand development and growth. It is also valuable for local marketers to help answer questions regarding positioning of the brand and further marketing activities which are necessary so that product differentiation can be applied and can be given to local customers.

The practice of globalization in the world's economy has given many impacts on the new practice and policies applied in different countries around the world. Understanding the strong forces of globalization, there is a need for marketers to target a specific group that is perceived to have strong influence towards foreign brands and may contribute to purchase impact in the future.

A study made by Lianxi and Wong (2008), on the purchasing motives of young Chinese consumers for foreign brands by looking at how they perceived prestige, quality and value possessed in foreign brands in influencing their purchase intention to buy. The study which was conducted in Zhejiang Province, China had taken the undergraduate students across four major universities in the province as their sample. The reason for choosing them was because it was reported that the average per capita disposable income for urban residents in Zhejiang as in 2006 was 18,265 yuan (USD2550) which was 50 percent higher than the national average. The figure showed that the ability to spend among young consumers was high and therefore they had the tendency to become the main purchaser in the future and contributed to national income.

Siew (2000) in particular conducted a study on purchase intention for party clothes among Singaporean Chinese teens. The purpose of taking them as the sample group was because of the estimation that there were more than 85 million teens from the age of 10–19 in ten Asian countries (Abdoolcarim, 1994). In Singapore alone, 207,000 teenagers were spending S$250 million (US$180million) annually, excluding the items purchased by their parents for them (as cited in Siew,2000. Looking at the tendency of market growth among the young generations, it is therefore justified for young consumers to be chosen as the target sample for this research. It is hoped that the finding will solve questions on the perceptions of the teens towards foreign brands and how the input can be used by local marketers to improve the performance of their products.

Therefore, this research was conducted with the purpose of looking at the perceived attributes searched by consumers in influencing them to choose between foreign or local brands. A clear understanding of the value searched by consumers will help local marketers to improve their products and image. Similarly, the target sample for the study was the undergraduate students which were grouped as the potential buyers in the future. Understanding their view on foreign brands now will serve as an input for local marketers to improve their product attributes so that the acceptance from this group can be increased in the future.

3.0) PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recently, competition among brands is becoming more complicated and the local brands are now facing with stiff competition to make sure their products can be accepted by the locals as well. Many foreign brands are now made available to local consumers and the effect is greater in developing countries. The people in developing countries now are having greater access to foreign products and how they make a choice between foreign or local brands is an interesting factor to look into.

The purpose of conducting this study was to investigate how the factors identified in consumers purchase intention towards foreign brands influenced their decision to buy foreign brands rather than local brands.

Therefore, the examination of consumer perceived factor towards attributes in a product was important to ascertain and explore in comparing

whether the scenario in Malaysia was the same with the international findings found by other researchers.

Therefore, this research is conducted with the purpose to answer the following questions:
i) What are the factors that influence the consumers' purchase intention towards the consumption of foreign brands?
ii) What are the factors searched by the consumers' from a specific group segment in attracting them to buy the products?

The objectives of the proposed research project are:
i) To examine the factors influencing the consumers' purchase intention towards foreign brands in Malaysia.
ii) To identify the factors for local marketers to focus on in order to attract a specific group segment to purchase locally made products.

Hypothesis
i) Consumer's perceived quality, prestige, value and social compliance will be positively related to consumer's purchase intentions in buying foreign apparel brands.
ii) Consumer's perceived quality, prestige, value and social compliance will be positively related to consumer's purchase intentions in buying foreign personal care brands.

4.0) LITERATURE REVIEW

Independent variables:

A) Perceived Prestige

Consumers own perception towards foreign brands as having a higher prestige is the motivating factor for them to consume it. A study made by Batra(2000), found that consumer preferences towards foreign brands in developing countries were strongly related to the symbols of cosmopolitan and prestige. Batra (2000) further explained that foreign brands were said to have higher prestige because of their relative scarcity and higher price compared to local brands.

This was supported further by Featherstone(1991) by stating that foreign brands symbolic values such as prestige and status were relevant in societies that were characterized by "income disparities" and "social mobility". This explains that the higher the gap of income between one society to another, and the higher the social mobility that is the ability to move from one level to another level, the higher is their preference towards foreign products. Certain consumers preferred to buy foreign brands as they believed it would enhance their self image as being cosmopolitan, sophisticated and modern (Friedman, 1990).(as cited in Zhou and Wong,2008).This explains the scenario of why consumers' from the developing nations has greater intentions to purchase foreign brands than local brands. In this context, there exists a challenge for the local marketers to increase the value of their products so that it can be assumed as having the same prestige with foreign brands.

B)   Perceived Value

Perceived value as explained by Zeithaml (1988) as," […] consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given". This means that consumers perceived value is based on the expectation that the quality of product received must worth the amount of money they pay for.

Besides that, an item is also considered as having a higher value if they are limited in supply, while those readily available are less desirable (Solomon, 1994). Because of the perceived limited supply of products in consumer's mind, it therefore enhances a consumer's perceived value and preference for foreign brands.

The perception of limited availability is a normal behavior that leads to an increasing consumption of such products because having to own something that is rare in the market may portray higher image in the consumers' mind. Limited supply of foreign brands can happen especially in developing countries because of the charge imposed towards import products. This makes them usually more expensive and scarcer than local products. Due to that factor, "foreign product is more desirable from a reference group standpoint" (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). This provides an interesting point for local marketers that when it comes to limited supply, price does not give much impact on their intention to purchase as long as owning

it can give effects on their social status in the eye of the society .Local marketers therefore must look upon this matter in improving the quality and brand image so that the placement of local products can also be perceived as having the same value with foreign products.

C)   Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is defined as "a consumer's evaluation of a brand's over-all excellence based on intrinsic (performance, durability) and extrinsic cues (brand name, services)" (Kirmani & Baumgartner, 2000, p.400). They further explained that perceived quality of a product can also come from internal reference points such as stored evaluative information about the target brand or cognitive comparison standard that can be used to evaluate individual attributes. This means that whatever perception stored in consumer's mind on the positive values of a product will be used in making comparison when choosing products and may also serve as important clues to help consumers making the final decision to consume. Therefore, local marketers must try to improve the quality of the product produced in improving the perceived quality of local made products in the eye of local consumers.

Rao and Monroe(1989) further stated the relations of brand name and quality as follows "brand name is perceived as a key indicator of qual-ity" (p.355), and foreign brands are assumed to have higher quality. In their study, Rao and Monroe tried to look at the relations between price, quality and brand names. Based on their study, they found that the price relation factor does give effect to a product's brand name. If the price of a product is high, it creates a good image for the brand. Therefore this may increase consumers' purchase intention towards the product based on the perception that products with higher prices indicate a higher quality. This contributes to the increase in image for the brand.

Many researchers found that among the consumers' in developing countries, foreign products are generally perceived as having higher quality compared to local brand products. Aron and Kenny (2001) conducted a study on the influence of brand associations on brand preference and its effects on purchase intention among the young South East Asian consum-ers and the study found that the younger generations in Asia did have greater interest in purchasing foreign brands rather than local brands. Again

their perception was that consuming foreign brands brought together greater feelings and improved one's self image. Since the perception of consumers from the developing nations was generally negative towards the local brands, thus this research was conducted to look at the underlying factor that contributed to such assumption.

D)   Influence from others

Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel (1989), found that the development of an interpersonal influence scale consisted of two dimensions which was informational dimension and normative dimension. They defined the informational influences as "the tendency to learn about products and services by observing others or seeking information from others" and normative influences are defined as " the need to identify with or enhances one's image in the opinion of significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brand, the willingness to conform to the expectations of others regarding purchase decision".

According to Singh, Kwan and Pariera (2003), young consumers normally depend on peers to get ideas and information. Peers normally influence one's information search regarding the use of any brands. When they have experience regarding a brand, they will influence their friend to do the same.

5.0)   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1)   *FREQUENCY TABLE : RESPONDENT'S PROFILE*

Questionnaires were distributed to 300 undergraduate students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah.This study focused on the purchasing trend of young consumers, and therefore university students were considered to be relevant and appropriate group for the study. The data obtained were analyzed to understand young consumers' purchase intention towards foreign products'. Table 1 demonstrates the summary of sample demographics.

Variable	Frequency	%
Gender:		
Male	103	34.3
Female	197	65.7
Age:		
Under 18	8	2.7
19 – 21	181	60.3
22 – 24	106	35.3
Above 24	5	1.7
Level of education:		
Pre-diploma	48	16
Diploma	145	48.3
Degree	107	35.7
Monthly spending:		
Below RM 150	49	16.3
RM 151 – RM 300	157	52.3
RM 301 – RM 450	79	26.3
RM 451 and over	15	5.0

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Most Preferred Foreign Personal Apparel Brand

Brand	Least preferred (%)	Less preferred (%)	Moderate (%)	Preferred (%)	Most preferred (%)	Ranking
MNG	25	10.3	34	20.3	10.3	**1**
LEVI'S	12	11	25.3	28	23.7	**4**
GUESS	17	7.3	28.3	21.3	26	**3**
NIKE	11.3	7.7	25.7	31.7	23.7	**5**
DIESEL	23.7	16	30.7	19	10.7	**2**

Table 2: Most Preferred Foreign Apparel Brand

Table 2 shows that from the total of 300 respondents, the most preferred brand for personal apparel products is MNG (Mango). That means young Malaysian consumers preferred to choose MNG brand for their personal apparel product compared to Levi's, Guess, Nike and Diesel brands.

Most Preferred Foreign Personal Care Brand

Brand	Least preferred (%)	Less preferred (%)	Moderate (%)	Preferred (%)	Most preferred (%)	Ranking
CLINIQUE	25	10.3	34	20.3	10.3	1
LANCOME	12	11	25.3	28	23.7	4
L'OREAL	17	7.3	28.3	21.3	26	3
ESTEE LAUDER	11.3	7.7	25.7	31.7	23.7	5
GARNIER	23.7	16	30.7	19	10.7	2

Table 3: Most Preferred Foreign Personal Care Brand

Table 3 shows that from the total of 300 respondents, the most preferred brand for personal care products is Clinique. That means young Malaysian consumers preferred to choose Clinique brand as their personal care items compared to Lancome, L'oreal, Estee Lauder and Garnier.

5.2)   *RELIABILITY ANALYSIS*

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived quality	10	0.84
Prestige	10	0.91
Value	6	0.85
Influence from others	8	0.85

Table 4: Reliability analysis

Reliability test using Cronbach Alpha was conducted to ensure the stability of items. Reliability of less than .6 was generally considered as poor, those in a range of .7 were acceptable and those over .8 were good (Sekaran, 2002). The results for reliability analysis for this study showed that the Cronbach alpha for perceived quality as 0.84, prestige as 0.91, value as 0.85 and influence of others as 0.85.

5.3 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Perceived quality	4.26	0.85
Prestige	3.60	0.97
Value	3.52	0.99
Influence from others	3.37	1.02

Table 5: Descriptive analysis

Based on the table above, the standard deviation shows high variance in the answers given by the total of 300 respondents. Based on the mean value of the variable explained most of the respondents tend to answer agree for the questions that they have answered. All items used a 5-point Likert scale with 1 is strongly disagree until 5 is strongly agree.

5.4 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

(Personal Care Product)

	Perceived Quality	Prestige	Value	Influences of others
Perceived Quality	1	.507"	.431"	.329"
Prestige	.507"	1	.685"	.507"
Value	.431"	.685"	1	.492"
Influence from others	.329"	.507"	.492"	1

Table 6: Correlation Analysis (Personal Care Item)

From the results, we can see that all the values are positively correlated to each other. This indicates that the decision to purchase foreign personal care product is positively correlated to the attributes stated that are quality, prestige, values and influence of others. Consumers emphasize the importance of the four factors stated in influencing their decisions Ito buy personal care items.

(Personal Apparel Product)

	Perceived Quality	Prestige	Value	Influences of others
Perceived Quality	1	.492"	.512"	.301"
Prestige	.492"	1	.728"	.530"
Value	.512"	.728"	1	.505"
Influence from others	.301"	.530"	.505"	1

Table 7: Correlation Analysis (Personal Apparel Item)

From the results, we can see that all the values are also positively correlated to each other. This indicates that the decision to purchase foreign personal apparel product is positively correlated to the attributes stated that are quality, prestige, values and influence of others. Consumers emphasize the importance of the four factors stated in influencing their decision to buy personal apparel items.

5.5 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

	Dependent Variable Purchase intention on personal care
Independent Variable Perceived Quality Prestige Value Influence from others	- 0.059 0.049 - 0.045 0.172
F Value	2.558
R2	0.066
Adjusted R2	0.040

Table 8: Regression Analysis (Personal Care)

The value of R2 in this study is 0.066. This shows that 6.6% of the purchase intention for personal care product can be explained by the changes in independent variables.

Adjusted R Square value gives the most useful measure of the success of the model. In this case, the adjusted R Square value is 0.040 and therefore it has accounted for 4% of the variance in the criterion variable.

From the table above, it shows that perceived quality and value does not enhance purchase intention on personal care because of the negative value of beta. While prestige and influences of others can enhance purchase intention, the effects are found to be lesser. Young people normally are more inclined to social and normative influences (Bearden et al., 1989).

	Dependent Variable
	Purchase intention on personal apparel
Independent Variable	
Perceived Quality	0.267
Prestige	- 0.204
Value	0.077
Influence from others	0.040
F Value	5.998
R2	0.142
Adjusted R2	0.118

Table 9: Regression Analysis (Personal Apparel)

The value of R Square obtained in this study is 0.142. This shows that 14.2% of the purchase intention for personal apparel product can be explained by the changes in independent variables. Adjusted R Square value gives the most useful measure of the success of the model. In this case, an adjusted R Square value of 0.118 has accounted for 11.8% of the variance in the criterion variable.

From the table above, it shows that prestige does not enhance purchase intention on personal apparel because the negative value of beta while perceived quality, value and influences of others do enhance purchase intention on personal apparel product but in lower value. Steenkamp, Batra and Alden (2002) argued that the influence of prestige on purchase intention is stronger when the product is conspicuous such as clothes, shoes and others.

5.6   SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTED

Hypotheses	Result

H1:
Is there any relationship between perceived quality, prestige, value and influences of others with young consumers' purchase intention toward foreign personal care products?
 	
       Perceived Quality
       Prestige
       Value
       Influence from others
	
	Supported
	Not Supported
	Not supported
	Supported

H2:
Is there any relationship between perceived quality, prestige, value and influences of others with young consumers' purchase intention toward foreign personal apparel products?
 	
       Perceived Quality
       Prestige
       Value
       Influence from others
	
	Supported
	Supported
	Supported
	Not Supported

Table 10: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

6.0   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The expectation of this study was to see whether perceived quality, prestige, value and influences of others would affect young consumers' purchase intention toward foreign products. Previous research conducted in Turkey by Ergin and Akbay (2010) found that consumers' purchase intention on personal care products have been influenced by the perceived quality, prestige, value and influence from others. The same study was used to test the result from the Malaysian perspective. The result of this study shows that purchase intention on personal care has been influenced by the prestige and influence from others. This result is slightly different to the situation in Turkey because of the difference in the Malaysian respondents' background. People with modern lifestyle normally were more exposed to buying foreign products rather than buying local products (Leong, 2000).

The result of this study also shows that prestige influences the young Malaysians' purchase intention on personal care product. It is because certain consumers prefer to buy foreign products because it can

enhance their self image as being cosmopolitan (Friedman, 1990).

The different lifestyle of respondent may influence their purchasing behavior. In this study, students were chosen as respondents due to the modern lifestyle exposed to them. Previous studies have also discovered the social influence. A study conducted by Leong, (2000) showed that adolescents were more influenced by social approval rather than by their own evaluation. This study also shows that influence from others was one of the factors that affected young Malaysian consumers 'purchase intention on personal care products.

As for personal apparel items, results showed that perceived quality, value and influences from others were more dominant in influencing young Malaysian consumers 'purchase intention on personal apparel product rather than on personal care item. This is due to the result shown that perceived quality, value and influence from others has the relationship towards purchase intention on personal apparel product. Bhuian (1997) found that consumers have positive perception towards products from the USA, Japan, Germany, UK, Italy and France.

Perceived quality has been known as the primary influence of purchase intention (as cited in Zhou and Wong, p. 473, 2008). Result of this study shows that perceived quality influence Malaysian young consumers purchase intention on apparel products. It is because they have positive relationship with the purchase intention on personal apparel products.

Solomon (1994) found that items that are limited in supply as having a high value compared to items that are easily available. This means people are prone towards foreign product because of its limited supply compared to local products that are readily available in the market.

Influence from others also affected young Malaysian consumers purchase intention on personal apparel products. Findings from the research show that they have positive relationship towards purchase intention on personal apparel products.

Consequently as a conclusion, based on this study and analysis, it can be concluded that prestige and influence from others affect young Malaysian consumers purchase intention on personal care product. Thus,

the findings of this study are useful for personal care manufacturers to improve their products to attract young Malaysian consumers in purchasing their products.

As for consumers' purchase intention towards foreign personal apparel product, it can be concluded that perceived quality, value and influence from others also affect the young Malaysian consumers' purchase intention towards such items. So the findings of this study are useful for personal apparel manufacturers to be creative in order to attract young Malaysian consumers to purchase their products rather than purchasing foreign products.

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