LUXURY STATUS OF MALAYSIAN CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian consumer identity has become a luxury brand phenomenon itself which is acknowledged through two consumer behavior theories “Expected Confirmation Theory and “Theory of Planned Behavior” for this study. This phenomenon is credited with philosophy of anthropology, perception, psychographic segmentation, business economics, environmental / social sciences, fashion management and consumer behavior studies to improve fashion and management knowledge. This thesis specifically spreads awareness on the brand factors being brand sustainability, brand congruence, brand identity, brand advertisement, brand perception and consumer identity and its relation to the dependent variable luxury brand awareness which were not exerted enough by fashion professionals in identifying a consumer status in Malaysia. How luxury brands over powers Malaysian consumer fashion identity to form associations such as a western fashion belonging, western fashion appreciation, western social acceptance and status as their only common fashion identity. Problem statement being lack of luxury fashion awareness on luxury brand advertisements by the Malaysian fashion professionals for consumers to blindly confine to other society fashion statements is potentially diminishing the Malaysian consumer fashion confidence.

The commonly preferred luxury identities from which fashion professionals could gain knowledge is supported through the exploratory quantitative field work of a purposively sampled questionnaire in Bukit Bintang Malaysia. Research objectives and research questions foregrounded the selection for field work in four malls around Kuala Lumpur region namely Suria KLCC, Times Square, Pavillion and Sangai Wong with only 302 respondents valid to prove the consumer luxury identity preferences of Malaysian consumers. Such a selection became pivotal to show that Malaysian consumers prefer being accepted as a western luxury style icon rather than initiating their personal fashion creation at first. How intense luxury brand advertisement numbs Malaysian consumer fashion preference and leads them to have a western status, pride, rank, class or belonging as their personal fashion statement before product purchase. How intense luxury brand advertisements impact consumer personal fashion initiation further adding value to fashion institutes in Malaysia is the backbone of this study.

Keywords: Luxury Brands, Consumer Identity, Status, Awareness, Brand Advertisement, Fashion Professionals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Luxury brands in Malaysia have influenced the consumer identity through the intense luxury brand advertisements maintaining a westernized social status and has always been a marvelous key for fashion public policy maker and controlling consumer identity. Sharing culture and experience through an apparel is what defines the nature of a fashion worn by the consumer. Study of luxury brand annual reports helped identifying awareness on brands factors control over consumer identity. Reason of luxury brand awareness for Malaysian consumers in PhD (Philosophy of Management) is because it needed an advanced academic perspective on fashion perception rather than focusing on the respondent's purchase intentions that have given enough attention by fashion professionals. This perception phenomenon was not exerted enough by fashion media, managers, professionals in Malaysia for a productive fashion/ identity development. It allowed the research to encompass a wider variety of disciplines including aesthetics, design, product development, economics, global business, marketing, consumer perception, operations, anthropology, psychology and sociology. Awareness is on the dependent variable being luxury brand awareness influenced by the respective independent brand factors brand sustainability brand congruence, brand identity, brand advertisement, brand perception and consumer identity in Malaysia to improve fashion knowledge for its individual fashion professional. Which demanded analysis on highlighting awareness on how Malaysian fashion consumers have come to such an understanding of fashion that results in disregarding their cultural/ personal image. Also enhancing the local Malaysian fashion designer's awareness of the consumer demand of luxury brand perception as their personal fashion statement.

It is a post positivist research which believes in portraying that luxury fashion brands being the style and status receptacles plays a crucial role in identity development and lowering Asian fashion confidence, it is a silent language that grasps a direct influence on consumer perception and outcomes of fashion prepost-behaviour. Socially aware fashion professionals should rightfully inform such outcomes in their brand advertisements. According to researcher's fashion knowledge, the dissertation focused on spreading awareness on luxury brand factors influencing Malaysian consumer identity in Bukit Bintang mall city, Klia airport and Langkawi to gather knowledge for questionnaire from an international fashion culture feedback. Basing on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) theory of sample size 302 respondents were selected to prove such a practice. Statistical Analysis of the study is done through SPSS 25.0 version further evaluated through reliability, validity, Pearson correlation. Which proved the study's objectives, research questions and problem statement to help improve the future fashion industry in Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Often consumers themselves do not know exactly how influences start to take place in their fashion inspiration before product purchase. "The human mind does not work in a linear way" says Kotler (2009, 160). Here they will be given more in depth knowledge on how a brand advertisement impacts consumer perception to implement a western luxury identity e.g instant change as the new consumer identity e.g Time Square Mall, Sangai Wang in Bukit Bintang;

Kuala Lumpur and loss of personal/cultural fashion identities due to intense marketing of luxury brands. This phenomenon not being endeavored by fashion industry professionals, designers. The researcher will discuss the significance of the the negative or positive impact of the brand factors on the dependent variable being luxury brand awareness to improve fashion professional's knowledge" and the independent variables brand sustainability, brand congruence, brand identity, brand advertisement, brand perception and consumer identity.

After referencing through literature review on the world's top influential fashion brand luxury perceptions that are being mostly advertised in Malaysia are, Fendi, Channel, Michael Kors, Kate-Spade, Prada, Armani I Exchange AIX, Christian Dior, Ralph Lauren, Gucci, Burberry, Louis Vuitton, Tiffany & Co, Manolo Blahnik, Coach, Tom Ford and Saint Lauren. Treat it as an introductory handbook on the influence of luxury brand advertisements numbing consumer identity and highlighting Malaysian fashion designers and consumers thought process fashion industry. Every brand has a look to sell and on every look you are accepting it to create a high-end personal class distinction which is quite evident in Malaysian fashion consumers.

2.1. Malaysian Luxury Designer Fashion Shows from 2013-2019

Their content is gathered from the videos found on social media platform YouTube from 2014-2018 to match with variables of the questionnaire. Due to confidentiality reasons of designers and them accepting the truth is always a tiring process the researcher found an alternative way to spread awareness on the dependent variable of this research. Each point of the dependent variable luxury brand awareness is supported with the evidence found on the fashion shows present form 2013 till 2018 KLFW. KLFW (Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week) is a platform for both old and new emerging designers of Malaysia from different ethnic Asian backgrounds. Andrew Tan being the co-founder conceptualized the platform to enhance Malaysian design platforms on 2013 for both Malaysian young and old designers to showcase their Ready to Wear Collections and highlight the creativity of Malaysian fashion industry to the local and international Consumers. But according to the data found through KLFW 2014-2018 fashion show videos on You Tube show cased majority European models which adds to the awareness focused for the purpose of this research. Yes, there is a minimal evidence of local models but not enough to showcase Malaysian luxury fashion statement. Since mostly Malaysian consumers confine to the idea of the model behind the product rather than the product itself .Out of 20 there are only 2 to 3 Malays models the rest all from Kazakhstan, European, Spain backgrounds. This evidence can be seen in a sequence according to the designer categorization and their choice of models in their fashion shows.

1. Designer Malinda Looi

In 2018 KLFW Malaysia published on August 10th,2018 the designer just used total 15 models among which 3 Malay models and 12 European models to showcase her collection. Again supporting the dependent variable being Malaysian fashion professionals value a western luxury status over their ethnic style.

2. Designer Fizi Woo

In 2018 KLFW Malaysia published on August 10th, 2018 the designer used total of 24 models among which 3 Malaysian, 4 Asian and 17 European models to show case his collection. And in The Wedding KL show all models were European. Supporting fashion professionals valuing status more than style.

3. Designer JubahSouq

In 2018 KLFW Malaysia published on August 10th, 2018. The designer used total of 21 models among which 4 male Malay and 17 European models supporting status more than style.

4. Designer A-Jane

IN 2018 KLFW Malaysia published on August 18th, 2018 by Budiey Channel. The designer used total 9 models among which only one was a Malay model.

5. Designer Farah Khan

In 2017 KLFW Malaysia published on August 18th, 2017 the designer used 13 models among which only 2 were Malays and the rest all European models.

6. Designer Nurita Harith

In 2018 KLFW the designer published on August 10th, 2018 used in total 16 models and all were European and fair Asian models that supports the western idea of beauty in Malaysia.

7. Designer Zang Toi

In his 2018 Spring Summer collection in New York published on Dec 11th, 2017 by FF channel. He also showcased all European models to present his collection.

8. Designer Khoon Hooi

In his 2018 Fall/Autumn Show published on May 7th. 2018. He used in total 14 models among which 4 were fair Asians, 2 African Models and 8 European models. Again showing the percentage of western idea of beauty more as compared to the local talents and other ethnic cultures in terms of model selection.

9. Designer Bernard Chandran

In his 2018 Bridal Spring fashion show published on November 30th 2017. He used 21 models among which only 1 was black, 1 was Indian and 17 were European and 2 were fair Asians.

10. Designer Jimmy Choo

In his 2018 campaign advertisement published on November 8th, 2017 with famous iconic model Cara Delevigne raised a lot of media concerns of women safety. Again showcasing western fashion control over Malaysian fashion professionals.

11. Respondent Joe Shia

On 18th June 2014 KLFW fashion show published by KLFW on 22nd, July 2014. Mostly used all European models instead of a few Asian heritages with 2 Malays.

12. Designer Alai Bastamam

Alia Bastamam at KLFW 2017. Designer In total 17 models 3 were Asian, 2 Malays and 12 European models.

13. Respondent Afiq Mohammed

On 2015 KLFW fashion show published on August 17th, 2015. The designer in total used 12 models among which 3 were Asians, 1 Malay, 1 Indian and 7 were European. Showing a western idea of beauty that justifies the study's objective and matches with the results on consumer perception regarding the fashion professionals of Malaysia.

14. Respondent Jovian Mandagie

In 2013 KLFW fashion show published by KLFW on October 3rd, 2013. The designer used 9 models among which only 1 was Malay and 8 were European models.

15. Respondent Silas Liew

Silas Liew in KLFW 2013 published by KLFW on August 29th, 2013 in total used 10 models among which only 2 were Asians, 1 Malay and 7 were European.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research methodologies and techniques used during the journey of the study including research design, proposed model, instrument used, sampling technique, data collection and analysis approach. This randomized control trial experimental study was carried out on consumers of Bukit Bintang area Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A total 302 adult subjects (both male and females) of aged ≥ 31 -45 a for this study.

Research Design: Quantitative

Research Type: Exploratory Descriptive, using Excel and SPSS version 25.0

Independent Variable: *Brand sustainability, Brand congruence, brand identity, brand advertisements, brand perception and consumer identity*

Dependent Variable: Luxury brand Awareness

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Showing the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable.

Research Location: This study was based in Bukit Bintang Kuala Lumpur, KLIA airports and Langkawi Malaysia. Bukit Bintang is the area where most of the fashion consumers shop due to abundant variety of both international and local mall culture. All the high-end brands are mostly located in these vicinities of Malaysia.

Research Duration: April 2014 to July 2019.

Sample size: 302 patients. According to Krejice and Morgan theory of sample size.

Sample size calculation: The sample size was estimated on the basis of purposive sampling techniques according to the researcher's knowledge.

Subjects & Selection method: The researcher targeted a few fashion industry locations individuals through the modelling experience and the other population was drawn mostly from s Bukit Bintang, KLIA airports and Langkawi Malaysia. Because it contains all the high-end luxury brand outlets in malls. The respondents were mainly youth age ranging from 31-35 and above; around 190 females and 112 males.

Research Instrument

After literature review and field work for this study, a well-designed questionnaire was used to collect the data of the respondents respectively around the Bukit Bintang, KLIA airports and Langkawi. The questionnaire included two sections demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, marital status, education level, salary range and work experience; section 2 covering the perception preferences of respondents for high-end brands support through the 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. This 5-point Likert scale helped not only in gathering data on five preferences but made the findings for data evaluation quicker and less time consuming.

This type of instrument supported the nature of the study keeping the questions closed ended to find the exact problem statements and enhance knowledge on the research questions and objectives. Since every question was covering the basic fashion behaviors to which mostly consumers are attracted to e.g. rapid change, interaction, word of mouth, acceptance, satisfaction, recognition, association, conservativeness of high-end style, inspiration, quality, price, status, durability, loyalty, social media activity, impression, confidence, consciousness and freedom to be anyone you want through fashion. All these research questions were answered to support the objective through the association of these words into the questionnaire. Keeping the English simple in its pronunciation and wording so that consumers from all ages and races could comprehend the nature of the questionnaire easily. Few respondents had a difficulty in which was compensated through the self-administered questionnaire. Respondents protection was secure at times since the name was never asked for in the first place. This study did not require the name as it was focusing more on gender and age fashion preferences to spread awareness for fashion professionals

Likert Scale				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Source: Sekaran (2003)

5. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The table below shows the respondents responses towards the Luxury brands preference in Malaysia.

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Regression - Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.995	.631		6.327	.000
1. I only get attracted to high-end brands that show celebrities	.000	.069	.000	-.005	100%
2. I seek for a high-end brand look when it comes to work, events, meetings and social gatherings	-.001	.072	-.001	-.010	99%
3. Price is not important to me when it comes to high-end brands	.007	.069	.007	.102	92%
4. High-end brand personalities stimulate my liking for the brand	.010	.070	.009	.138	89%
5. I trust quality more when brands have celebrities in their advertisements	.012	.071	.011	.164	87%
6. I follow high-end brands on social media for latest trends	-.023	.073	-.022	-.313	75%
7. High-end brand personality traits sometimes	-.025	.078	-.022	-.318	75%

	show similarity to my lifestyle					
8.	High-end brand look makes people remember me	-0.023	.065	-.024	-.345	73%
9.	Celebrities make the brand image look high-end	-0.023	.067	-.022	-.348	73%
10.	High-end brands boost my confidence	-0.026	.076	-.025	-.348	73%
11.	High-end brands guarantees a good product experience	-0.027	.069	-.027	-.392	70%
12.	It matters to me to take time to dress as it conveys my fashion sense	-0.030	.073	-.027	-.416	68%
13.	Celebrity brand ambassadors bring positive brand image through word of mouth	-0.034	.068	-.034	-.497	62%
14.	Are you satisfied with a high-end brand experience in a week month	-0.037	.073	-.035	-.506	61%
15.	High-end brands satisfy my social status	-0.038	.073	-.036	-.522	60%
16.	All high-end brand personalities mostly advertise European people	-0.040	.069	-.036	-.571	57%
17.	High-end brands at times advertise my needs, desire and taste	.039	.066	.038	.593	55%

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18. High-end brands stimulate value for personal satisfaction	-.051	.074	-.047	-.682	50%
19. All high-end brands value high quality	.063	.068	.061	.919	36%
20. I prefer high-end brands since it maintains value for my self-image	-.066	.070	-.065	-.942	35%
21. I follow high-end brands because at times it reflects my personality	.066	.065	.067	1.007	31%
22. I prefer a high-end brand experience with consistent versatility	.078	.073	.068	1.066	29%
23. High-end meaning, they have good reputation	-.088	.076	-.081	-1.162	25%
24. High-end brands make the first expression	.110	.082	.094	1.339	18%
25. High-end brands use celebrities because they value status	-.104	.071	-.099	-1.474	14%
26. I follow high-end brand due to the personality more than the product	.105	.068	.107	1.544	12%
27. High-end brands guarantee good customer service	.110	.070	.105	1.573	12%
28. I prefer a high-end brand look as it affects how people	-.135	.069	-.131	-1.961	5%

complement me					
29. High-end brands mostly advertise a western idea of beauty	-.151	.071	-.141	-2.113	4%
30. I prefer high-end brand look because it provokes curiosity regarding my ethnicity	.217	.067	.222	3.249	0%

The factor that were considered initially for the study were gender, age, work experience, race, education level, marital status. The statement *Price is not important to me when it comes to high-end brands* showed a significance of 92%. Salary range which is an indicative that the salary has no impact on the consumption of high end brands. It was found that the age and education levels are linked as mostly the individuals from the bachelors or diploma level are from 20-25 years of age and their need for high end brands is influenced by the presence of celebrities in the commercial or the portrayal of the advertisement creating a persona that someone who follows the high end brands are socially accepted. Mostly the reasons for the high – end brands have nothing with the personality of an individual but it's more because of the social constructs that exists in the culture in Malaysia. It focuses more on the social acceptability rather than the self-image. People tend to seek social acceptance & according to the perception held by the individuals' high end brands guarantee that.

6. RESULTS

Correlations								
		Awareness of Fashion Brands (DV)	Brand Sustainability (IV-1)	Brand Congruence (IV-2)	Brand Identity (IV-3)	Brand Advertisement (IV-4)	Brand Perception (IV-5)	Consumer Identity (IV-6)
Pearson Correlation	Luxury Brand Awareness (DV)	1.000	.582	.572	.680	.703	.678	.121
	Brand Sustainability (IV-1)	.582	1.000	.296	.355	.266	.217	.050
	Brand Congruence (IV-2)	.572	.296	1.000	.370	.267	.306	.142
	Brand Identity (IV-3)	.680	.355	.370	1.000	.418	.371	.099
	Brand Advertisement (IV-4)	.703	.266	.267	.418	1.000	.541	.152
	Brand Perception (IV-5)	.678	.217	.306	.371	.541	1.000	.292
	Consumer Identity	.121	.050	.142	.099	.152	.292	1.000

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	(IV-6)							
Sig. (1-tailed)	Luxury Brand Awareness (DV)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.018
	Brand Sustainability (IV-1)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.191
	Brand Congruence (IV-2)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.007
	Brand Identity (IV-3)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.043
	Brand Advertisement (IV-4)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.004
	Brand Perception (IV-5)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	Consumer Identity (IV-6)	.018	.191	.007	.043	.004	.000	

7. RECOMMENDATION

After reviewing scholarly literature and the dissertation findings it is recommended for fashion professionals to develop a balanced selection of models in their fashion shows, fashion awareness campaigns, conferences and fashion institutes should design a program for college students covering all industries to implement a fashion conscious behavior. Since all measures were based on self-reporting and respondents could choose whether to provide their responses, social desirability bias might exist in the results, particularly when high-end fashion sense is commonly promoted and encouraged by Malaysian designers as a socially desired status to enhance their fashion statements.

The study has shown that people are quite fond of developing a high-end status rather than a socially conscious fashion status. Which is adapted mostly by generation Y (millennials) the most susceptible to the vulnerability of adapting any new trends and not maintaining to one style. This phenomenon is succeeding to fragment their personal identities due to the desire for an instant new look, demotivating cultural values and personal fashion perception. If Malaysian fashion professionals do not propose a socially responsible fashion environment, then the consumers will slowly evolve towards adapting to a common western high-end self-image.

The overall results obtained from the respondents mainly agreed to the fashion issues and other half being neutral. In most of the previous literature researches the middle point option in most occasions is neglected for having the exact impact of positive to negative from the survey or a questionnaire for a precise data evaluation. It is recommended for the fashion researchers to use the neutral position as it affects attitude response, showing the uninvolved respondents due to the lack of knowledge for the specific issue. Neutrality from the findings emerged to spread awareness on the ambivalent respondents that represented lack of fashion knowledge (Si and Cullen 1998). Neutrality of the research commands attention for future fashion professionals to not overlook this middle point but to investigate it further as a separate scale to enhance previous research gaps in fashion knowledge to evaluate attitude of the ambivalent respondents or generation Y (millennials).

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