A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE BRAND PREFERENCES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS STUDYING SPORTS IN TURKEY AND PORTUGAL

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to find out and compare the factors effective in brand preferences of the students of Ondokuz Mayıs University Yaşar Doğu Faculty of Sport Sciences in Turkey and Instituto Politecnico da Guarda Faculty of Sports in Portugal in terms of sports products. 266 students (170 male, 96 female) attending sports faculties in Turkey and Portugal participated in this study. A questionnaire about the sports products preferences developed by Tozoğlu (2009) was used in order to find out the brand preferences of students. Student t-test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between sport faculty students in Portugal and in Turkey. Chi square analysis was used to find out whether the students' reasons for preferring a brand differed in terms of the schools, they were attending. Differences were found between the factors that affected the brand preferences of the students of Ondokuz Mayıs University (OMU) Yaşar Doğu Faculty of Sport Sciences and Instituto Politecnico da Guarda (IPG) Faculty of Sports in sports products. It was found that when compared with the students of IPG, students of OMU preferred brands since they provided quality guarantee, they were indicators of status and they gave a sense of security. It was found that students of OMU and IPG paid attention to the price while buying a brand product. Turkish students were found to be more dependent on brands when compared with Portuguese students. In addition, the price factor in the purchase of branded products is becoming a common element of the students of both countries. The tendency towards branded sporting products can manifest itself in increasing or decreasing proportions relative to advertising and promotional activities. The

management of this orientation as a healthy process can be achieved by the effects of planned school education on the cultural structure.

Keywords: brand, preference, sport

1. Introduction

Brand is constituted by the name, concept, and symbol, design which differentiate the products from the rivals or several components of them. Without the brand, the products are deemed as having the same qualities in the eyes of consumers and this causes the consumer to choose the cheapest one. The enterprises use the brand to attract the attention of consumers and to re-promote its own product to the consumers (Arnold, 2001).

For Kotler, everything is a brand. Coca-Cola, FedEx, Porshe, New York City, Madonna and even you… Each label with a meaning and association is a brand (Kotler, 2007). Doyle puts importance on the successful brand concept rather than the brand concept. For Doyle, 'successful brand is a name, symbol, design which defines the product which has the sustainable differentiated advantage of a definite institution or a concept which is beyond these points' (Doyle, 2001).

Grant accepts the brand as a phenomenon regarding the cultural idea because culture is a broad field which has the extraordinary variation including culture, traditions, customs, beliefs, handicrafts, the habits regarding the life styles, worships, family, business, economic transactions, information and many other elements. Grant argues that the brand concept is the same (Grant, 2006).

Brand is not only different than the product; but also it is more than the product (Bartle, 2001). Brand is actually a whole. It is the entirety of features generating the satisfaction of people taken from the purchased product. These are the real or fictional, rational or emotional, visible or invisible criteria creating the brand (Ambler, 1997).

The increasing consumer consciousness reveals the need for better analysis on consumer behaviors to be executed by the enterprises today. From this point of view, better analysis on consumer behaviors by the enterprises have made the consumers to better understand the value to be ensured by the preferred products and services. Pre-assessing the consumer behaviors means to collect the information ensuring that the marketing compound to be developed is compatible with the demands and needs of them (Odabaşı and Barış, 2003).

In sports sector achieving to the broad fields, it can be stated that the youth which is seen prominent in sports activities in general and the university students in specific scope are determinant (Tozoğlu, Serarslan, Kabadayı, Bostancı, 2011).

With this study, it is aimed to determine the factors affecting the brand choices of university students in Turkey and in Portuguese. Thus, the research is built on the main hypothesis that of the differentiation in brand choices of consumer groups with different cultural structures (Turk and Portuguese) and by this means, it is tried to reveal the similarities and differences in the preferences of two different consumer groups.

2. Material and Method

This study was executed in 2013-2014 education period with totally 266 students as 161 students from Ondokuz Mayıs University, Yaşar Doğu Sports Sciences Faculty in Turkey (100 male, 61 female) and 105 students from Instituto Politecnico da Guarda in Portugal (70 male, 35 female).

Survey method was used in collecting the date required for the research. Survey method can be defined as the systematic date collection technique by asking questions to the resource people creating the population or sampling depending on the hypothesis or questions determined in a definite topic (Balcı, 2004). The surveys used in the research were adapted from the survey form used by Tozoğlu (2009) in his doctorate thesis and were prepared both in Turkish and in English.

The statistical assessment of the data within the scope of research was made in computer environment by using SPSS (Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences) 21.0 program. Within this framework, the condition whether the data is distributed normally by the variables or not was determined with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($P>0,05$). Defining statistics was taken as the average, standard deviation, frequency and percentages. With the aim of determining whether there is a significant difference or not between the Turk and Portuguese students, independent two sampling t test (Student *t*-test) was used. K Square analysis was executed with the aim of determining whether the brand preference reasons of students change by the schools, in which they have the education or not. The significance level was found as $P \leq 0,05$.

3. Findings

Table 1: Distribution of Students Attending to the Research by Gender

University	Distribution	Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
OMU	n	61	100	**161**
	%	37,8	62,2	**100**
IPG	n	35	70	**105**
	%	33,4	66,6	**100**
Total	**n**	**96**	**170**	**266**
	%	**36,1**	**63,9**	**100**

96 of students (36,1% attending to the research (%36,1) are female and 170 of them (63,9%) are male. 61 of female students (20,%6) are from Ondokuz Mayıs University (OMU) and 35 of them (21,7%) are from Instituto Politecnico da Guarda (IPG) and also, 100 of male students (%58,8) are from Ondokuz Mayıs University and 70 of them (41,1%) are from Instituto Politecnico da Guarda.

Table 2: The factors Affecting the Research Students in Preferring the Branded Products

Options	Uni.	Definitely Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Definitely Agree n (%)	Ki-Square	P-value
Reflecting the personality	OMU	14 (8,8)	26 (16,4)	17 (10,7)	55 (34)	49 (30,2)	32,68	<0,001
	IPG	17 (16,3)	21 (20,2)	25 (24)	38 (35,6)	4 (3,8)		
Status Symbol	OMU	22 (13,8)	45 (27,7)	25 (15,7)	41 (25,2)	28 (17,6)	22,57	<0,001
	IPG	18 (17,1)	40 (38,1)	23 (21,9)	24 (22,9)	0 (0)		
Psychological well feeling	OMU	11 (6,9)	18 (11,3)	15 (9,4)	56 (34,6)	61 (37,7)	42,71	<0,001
	IPG	12 (11,5)	33 (31,7)	19 (18,3)	33 (31,7)	7 (6,7)		
Brand of Celebrities	OMU	39 (24,2)	44 (27,3)	22 (13,7)	36 (22,4)	20 (12,4)	12,51	<0,001
	IPG	27 (25,7)	35 (33,3)	25 (23,8)	14 (13,3)	4 (3,8)		
Visualization	OMU	13 (8,1)	13 (8,1)	17 (10,6)	61 (37,5)	56 (35)	30,01	<0,001
	IPG	7 (6,7)	28 (26,7)	19 (18,1)	38 (36,2)	13 (12,4)		
Trusted	OMU	7 (4,4)	14 (8,8)	22 (13,8)	61 (37,7)	57 (35,2)	28,39	<0,001
	IPG	9 (8,6)	11 (10,5)	35 (33,3)	39 (37,1)	11 (10,5)		
Quality	OMU	2 (1,2)	5 (3,1)	9 (5,6)	60 (37,3)	85 (52,8)	8,74	<0,001
	IPG	1 (0,9)	5 (4,8)	11 (10,5)	51 (48,6)	37 (35,2)		
Resistant	OMU	3 (1,9)	3 (1,9)	10 (6,2)	52 (32,3)	93 (57,8)	13,08	<0,001
	IPG	1 (0,9)	4 (3,8)	9 (8,6)	53 (50,5)	38 (36,2)		
Safe	OMU	3 (1,9)	9 (5,6)	11 (6,8)	64 (39,8)	74 (46)	17,48	<0,001
	IPG	0 (0)	9 (8,6)	15 (14,3)	54 (51,4)	26 (24,8)		
Healthy	OMU	1 (0,6)	10 (6,3)	19 (11,9)	59 (36,3)	72 (45)	23,03	<0,001
	IPG	1 (0,9)	13 (12,4)	22 (21)	51 (48,6)	18 (17,1)		
More useful products	OMU	3 (1,9)	3 (1,9)	7 (4,4)	59 (36,9)	89 (55)	51,86	<0,001
	IPG	0 (0)	11 (10,5)	23 (21,9)	52 (49,5)	19 (18,1)		

More Designed	OMU	4 (2,5)	9 (5,6)	7 (4,3)	54 (33,5)	87 (54)	98,53	<0,001
	IPG	1 (0,9)	21 (20,2)	44 (41,3)	32 (30,8)	7 (6,7)		
Image	OMU	7 (4,3)	24 (14,9)	23 (14,3)	52 (32,3)	55 (34,2)	19,91	<0,001
	IPG	12 (11,4)	18 (17,1)	19 (18,1)	44 (41,9)	12 (11,4)		
Fashion (Updated)	OMU	13 (8,1)	24 (14,9)	33 (20,5)	39 (24,2)	51 (31,7)	13,94	<0,001
	IPG	10 (9,5)	24 (22,9)	31 (29,5)	26 (24,8)	14 (13,3)		
Continuous service	OMU	5 (3,1)	16 (9,9)	21 (13)	57 (35,4)	62 (38,5)	53,86	<0,001
	IPG	2 (1,9)	17 (15,4)	43 (40,4)	39 (37,5)	4 (3,8)		
Addresses to every age groups	OMU	8 (5)	19 (11,8)	26 (16,1)	58 (36)	50 (31,1)	38,61	<0,001
	IPG	6 (5,7)	16 (15,2)	37 (35,2)	44 (41,9)	2 (1,9)		
Explains the use features	OMU	9 (5,6)	22 (13,7)	33 (20,5)	56 (34,8)	41 (25,5)	43,83	<0,001
	IPG	5 (4,8)	26 (24,8)	50 (47,6)	21 (20)	3 (2,9)		
Being the leader in the field (the best)	OMU	9 (5,6)	17 (10,6)	25 (15)	55 (34,4)	55 (34,4)	28,19	<0,001
	IPG	4 (3,9)	12 (10,7)	39 (37,9)	38 (36,9)	12 (10,7)		
Habit	OMU	14 (8,8)	27 (16,9)	29 (17,5)	48 (30)	44 (26,9)	22,98	<0,001
	IPG	5 (4,9)	9 (8,7)	34 (32)	47 (44,7)	10 (9,7)		
Increases the performance (physically)	OMU	9 (5,7)	29 (18,2)	22 (13,8)	45 (27,7)	56 (34,6)	29,45	<0,001
	IPG	3 (2,9)	15 (14,4)	29 (27,9)	48 (45,2)	10 (9,6)		
The price is expensive	OMU	58 (36,3)	47 (29,4)	16 (9,4)	20 (12,5)	20 (12,5)	10,60	<0,001
	IPG	37 (35,2)	24 (22,9)	19 (18,1)	20 (19)	5 (4,8)		

Table 2 shows that there is a significance in all the options in terms of the branded product choices of students from OMU and IPG (P<0.001).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the factors affecting the brand choices of students from Ondokuz Mayıs University and Instituto Politecnico da Guarda which have different cultural and economic structure were compared.

It was determined in the study that the students from both universities prefer the branded products. Within this regard, it is true that the dress is the factor playing the significant role in constituting the identity as one of the most visible aspect of consumption. (Ayhan, 2009).

On the other hand, the study reveals that the students from OMU prefer the "*compatibility with the personality*" condition more than the students from IPG. Similarly, in the study of Tozoğlu et al. (2010); it is indicated that there is a statistical change in favor of the Turk students when compared to the Indian students (students from Indıana University) in the point that "*I prefer the brand in sports products because of its suitability with my personality*" (Şebin and Karahüseyinoğlu, 2010). In this regard, the

findings of these two studies are compatible with each other and there is the relation between brand choices and personalities of Turk students.

There is no significant statistical difference among students by means of the ideas directed to the assumption of *"comparing the importance of price in purchasing the branded product"* among the students attending to the research. According to this finding, it is determined that price is significant in brand preferences of students from OMU and IPG. However, this may be negative in the eyes of customer and sometimes, this may be positive because of giving the signals for high quality (Aaker, 1996). Thus, the enterprises may affix the prices which are more than the market levels on the branded products (Kotler, 2004). It is certain that the brand can provide the determination in prices and can improve the product qualities and can provide more innovation to protect the firm from imitations (Tek, 1990).

However, despite of all these points, price variable is one of the elements taken as prominence for all the cultures in terms of the purchase behavior.

According to the results of this study, it is seen that the students from IPG are affected by the visualization in brand preferences less than the students from OMU. It is known certainly that visualization is significant in brand preferences (Akpınar and Yurdakul, 2008). However, it can be said that, the features of products such as functionality and durability should be taken into consideration rather than the visualization in brand loyalty. Yet, visualization should be taken into consideration as a quality which is about fashion and which may change any time. In this regard, showing more attention on visuality and showiness is accepted as a point for all the cultures.

In this research, there is a high significance level of OMU students when compared to the IPS students in terms of preferring the brand for quality guarantee. This can be deemed as an indicator that Turkish students have a strong relation between brand and quality warranty. This situation also explains the reason why Turk students prefer the branded products in the platforms where the consumer rights are not guaranteed comprehensively. Aktuğlu and Temel (2006) come to the agreement on the condition that for the great part of public employees, brand product quality means the guarantee and institutional prestige in the research on the factors affecting the dress brands with the participation of employees in public sector. On the other hand, Çivitçi (2011) indicates in his study that the factor for offering the quality warranty is not important for the brands. Thus, brand gives the option to the consumers to try the products about which they have information and to repurchase the ones which provide satisfaction or on the contrary, to abstain from purchasing the ones which do not provide satisfaction (Islak, 1997). Thus, offering such options in an effective and broad

manner develops the purchasing behavior of consumer and also provides option for improving the brand image.

Perceiving the brand as a status indicator in sports products shows high preferences for the students from both countries. Besides, there is a significant difference between Turk students and Portuguese students in this regard. In other words, Turk students assess the brand as a significant status indicator. It is clear that the brand provides the option for consumers to easily define and differentiate the products (Cop and Bekmezci, 2005). On the other hand, the youth put more importance on brand in clothing because of their desire to be accepted in life flow during the development of identity and personal development (Erdal and Uzundal, 2013). However, it should be taken into consideration that showing the loyalty like the captive of the brands or relating the personality with brand should not be adopted as a pathological belief, attitude and behavior. It can be also said that the issue should be handled with the integrity of education in the axis of personality and purchase behaviors.

Similarly, a significant statistical difference is observed between the students from these universities in terms of preferring a brand because of it gives confidence and because it represents their images in the research. In both assumptions, there is the significant difference in favor of Turk students when compared to the Portuguese students. When compared to the students from Portugal, Turks prefer the brand both because it gives confidence and it represents their styles. There is no doubt that the brand purchase decisions provide the confidence to the consumers entirely (Aaker, 2008). The act of consumer as adopting the brand as quality and as demanded design is the clear indicator of confidence shown for the brand (Güçdemir, 1998). Besides, it is seem that the consumers make decision by connecting their own images with the image of brand in their preferences for clothes (Azavedo and Farahangmehr, 2005). Thus, the consumers are closely interested in the meaning and value added to their lives in purchasing the brand (Uzun and Erdil, 2002). Actually, all these perceptions are seen increasingly or decreasingly in the individuals relatively depending on the advertisement and promotion activities of branded products in the relevant culture. Keeping these effects in acceptable level can be ensured with the impacts of planned school training on cultural structure.

In the study, there is a significant difference between OMU students and IPG students in preferring the brand in sports products because of increasing the performance. The students of OMU share the idea that the branded products provide great contribution in showing or developing sportive performance. Really, as a result of the increase in life styles of people in parallel with the technological developments; the expectations of sports people from clothes and other equipment used in sports are

beyond the resistance, design and fashion elements and performance and cloth comfort become the most important expectations (Devecioğlu and Altıngül, 2011). Today, materials, equipment and other materials have great importance in extending the performance borders. However, this is not valid for all type of products. Thus, it is the natural result of widespread promotion efforts that the relation between branded products and performance has a place in the mind of individuals. It is though that, the individual's adaptation for such attitudes is related to the amount of market for many times.

The results of this study show that the attitudes shown by the Turk and Portuguese students having sports education as the representatives of different cultures against the branded sports products may be different. Actually, the tendency to branded products can be defined as a behavior observed in entire word. However, the promotion and advertisement campaigns executed in line with the dimensions of markets in some countries may turn the attitude against branded products in a more positive side. In this study, it can be said that Turk students have more radical brand loyalty when compared to the Portuguese sports students as a result of their culture and education conditions.

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