

An Empirical Study on the Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and the Influencing Factors of Brand Sensitivity

Xumei Zhang¹ Zili Guan¹ Wei Li² Xiangyu Liu¹

¹College of Economics & Business Administration, Chongqing University, Chongqing 400044, China

²Chengxian College, Southeast University, Nanjing 210008, China

Abstract

Brand consumption has developed into a kind of culture accepted by more and more consumers. The study on the consumer brand sensitivity behavior can provide guidance to the brand marketing of enterprises. The consumer brand sensitivity behavior is affected by some factors, which will vary from different demographic characteristics. In this paper, the author explores the relationship between demographic characteristics and the influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity with the empirical study. The result of variance analysis indicates that the differences between the factors of different socio-subgroup are obvious.

Keywords: Brand sensitivity; Demographic characteristics; Customer behavior analysis

1. Introduction

In recent years, abundant successful brand strategies have proved that brand is the cognition of consumers to the products, and for a certain brand, consumers may associate the product value with its brand culture simultaneously. Brand helps consumers to reduce the cost of time and energy on selecting goods and

meets with deeper emotional needs, which gradually become the most important factor for some consumers to choose product. Those consumers, whose choice is strongly influenced by brand, are called the brand sensitive consumers.

Brand sensitivity was first proposed by Kapferer in 1983, which was defined as a critical role played by brand in the purchase decisions. And then, many scholars began to study on the effect of brand on consumer's purchase decisions. For example, Tulin and Joffre (2004) found that consumers' brand trust can reduce the degree of price sensitivity under information asymmetry^[1]; Sun and Zhang (2011) pointed out that brand name can influence consumers' attitude towards advertising and then influence their purchase decisions^[2]. Besides, some scholars also studied the determinants of consumer brand sensitivity. Beaudoin and Lachance (2006) investigated the brand sensitivity of consumer to clothing and found that fashion innovation was one of the determinants^[3]. Guo and Zhang (2010) focused on the influence of Chinese culture and proposed that traditional culture, especially Confucianist culture, was an important influencing factor to consumer brand sensitivity^[4].

However, until now, few literatures have analyzed the relationship between

demographic characteristics and the influencing factors. Thus, this paper will fill the blank through empirical methods.

2. Research Model

In reference [5], we gave the main influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity. This paper keeps using the five influencing factors and innovatively analyzes the demographic characteristics from 5 aspects, including gender, age, income, social position and education degree. The research model is built as shown in Fig. 1.

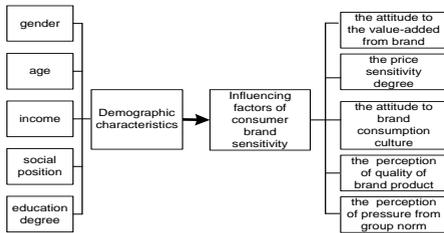


Fig. 1 The model of the relationship

Table 1 Sample characteristics

| Age | Percent | Income level | Percent | Educational level | Percent | Gender | Percent |
|-------|---------|--------------|---------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <20 | 0.64% | < 1000 | 10.29% | <= high school | 9.32% | Males | 53.38% |
| 20~30 | 53.34% | 1000~2000 | 23.79% | Junior College | 13.83% | | |
| 30~40 | 31.51% | 2000~4000 | 31.51% | Bachelor | 38.26% | | |
| 40~50 | 11.90% | 4000~6000 | 18.33% | >= master | 38.58% | | |
| > 50 | 2.61% | > 6000 | 16.08% | | | | |
| | | | | | | Females | 46.62% |

4. Variance analysis

4.1. The relationship between gender and the influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity

Through the multivariate analysis of variance, we find that males and females have obvious differences in the price sensitivity degree and the attitude to brand consumption culture. For male consumers, the average score of price sensitivity is far higher, which suggests that they have

3. Sample selection

We select clothing as research object, because brand and non-brand clothing are obviously different in price and purchase place. In addition, the value-added of brand clothing is clearly felt by consumers, so the collected data can be more consistent with actual conditions. We sent out 358 questionnaire and retrieved 311 available questionnaire (response rate was 86.87%). Most of the respondents are ordinary Chongqing white-collar workers. The specific sample characteristics are shown in Table 1.

lower price sensitivity when buying clothes. On the question of whether would like to pay more money for the top-brand clothes than ordinary clothes, the average score of male consumers is also higher. That is, compared with male consumers, female consumers are not willing to pay more for top-brand clothes. Besides, male consumers also get higher score on the attitude to brand consumption culture, which indicates that they can accept the culture of brand consumption more objectively.

4.2. The relationship between age and the influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity

From variance analysis, consumers with different age have different price sensitivity degree. The average score of 30 to 40 and 40 to 50 years old consumers are higher than the mean value. This result reveals that 30 to 50 years old consumers have lower price sensitivity when buying clothes. We think the main reason is that 30 to 50 years old consumers have a higher average income to afford brand consumption than the other age groups, thus they should be the target consumers of brand marketing.

4.3. The relationship between income and the influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity

Through the method of Least Significant Difference (LSD), we find that the price sensitivity degree is obviously different in the 5 groups with different income level. Consumers with average disposable monthly income (hereinafter abbreviated as monthly income) above 4000 Yuan get average score higher than the mean value. Specifically, compared with the average score of consumers with monthly income above 6000Yuan, the score of consumers with monthly income within 4000 to 6000 is 0.6 points lower, the score of consumers with monthly income within 2000 to 4000 is 1.1 points lower, the score of consumers with monthly income within 1000 to 2000 is 1.56 points lower and the score of consumers with monthly income below 1000 is 1.97 points lower. Higher score means lower degree of price sensitivity. That is, while other factors stay the same, consumers' price sensitivity degree is negatively correlated to their income.

4.4. The relationship between social positions and the influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity

Considering that students are a special group, we regard them as a social class independently. From variance analysis, consumers in different social positions have obvious differences in the attitude to the value-added from brand, the price sensitivity degree, the attitude to the brand consumption culture and the perception of quality of brand product.

Firstly, about the attitude to the value-added from brand, the average score of lower-middle class consumers and upper class consumers are higher than the mean value but the other 3 classes' are not, especially that the students get the lowest score. Compared with other classes, students hold negative attitudes toward the viewpoint that brand clothing can help raising personal appearance. But, for the upper class consumers who get the highest average score, brand products can bring them additional utility.

Secondly, through comparison test, we find that students have obvious differences in price sensitivity with middle class, upper-middle class and upper class consumers. Besides, lower-middle class consumers have obvious differences with upper-middle class and upper class consumers. Moreover, the average scores of all these five groups have an upward trend, which suggests that the price sensitivity becomes lower with the improvement of social positions.

Thirdly, for the attitude to brand consumption culture, the average score of students and upper class consumers exceed the mean value. The result indicates that compared with the other 3 classes, more of them accept the culture. Through analysis, we find that brand means social positions and tastes to upper class consumers; students as the younger generation are more receptive to new things.

Both of their lives have been heavily influenced by brand consumption culture.

Moreover, on the perception of brand products' quality, both of students and upper class consumers average higher than the mean value. However, through analysis, we find that in the consumers of other 4 classes except students, the differences are not obvious, although the upper class consumers get positive scores. The result suggests that only most of students approve the quality of brand product.

4.5. The relationship between education degree and the influencing factors of consumer brand sensitivity

Consumers with different education degree have obvious differences in the price sensitivity and the attitude to the brand consumption culture.

For the price sensitivity, the average score of consumers with master degree or above is higher than the mean value, which suggests that they have the relatively low price sensitivity.

Besides, Table 2 shows the similarity subsets of the attitude to the brand consumption culture. Consumers with the high school degree or below are obviously different, which suggest that they have negative attitude to the brand consumption culture. Moreover, the similar possibility of the other consumers is about 50%. Investigating its reason, the lower education degree makes them regarding the brand consumption as a bad social phenomenon; the lower income makes them having inimical mentality to the brand consumption culture.

Table 2 Similarity subsets of the attitude to the brand consumption culture

| Education degree | Sample size | Similarity subset | |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------|
| | | 1 | 2 |
| >=high school | 29 | -0.49 | |
| Junior college | 43 | | -0.09 |
| Bachelor | 119 | | 0.02 |
| >=master | 120 | | 0.13 |
| Significance probability | | 1.00 | 0.50 |

5. Conclusion

In this paper, demographic characteristics are analyzed from 5 aspects, including gender, age, income, social positions and education degree. The empirical research of the relationship shows that the attitudes towards the value-added from brand and the perception of the quality of brand product are related with consumers' social positions. Besides, the price sensitivity degree is related with consumers' gender, age, income, social positions and education degree; the attitudes to the brand consumption culture are related with consumers' gender, social positions and education degree. But there is no obvious relevance between consumers' perception of pressure from group norm and their demographic characteristics. Thus, it is important for enterprises to adopt different marketing strategies for different consumer groups.

6. Acknowledgements

This work was financially supported by Natural Science Foundation of China (71172084) and National Science and Technology supporting Program of China (Grant Number 2012BAF12B09).

7. References

- [1] E. Tulin, S. Joffre, and L. Jordan, "Brand Credibility, Brand Consideration, and Choice" *Journal of Con-*

- sumer Research*, pp. 191-198, 2004, 31(1).
- [2] J. Sun and H. X. Zhang, "Effect of brand name suggestiveness on consumer decision making—An empirical evidence from Chinese service industry" *Journal of Management Science*, pp. 56-69, 2011, (5).
- [3] P. Beaudoin and M. Lachance, "Determinants of adolescents' brand sensitivity to clothing" *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, pp. 312-331, 2006, 34(4).
- [4] X. L. Guo and M. X. Zhang, "The Cultural Values Drivers of Brand Sensitivity: the Moderating Role of Product Benefits" *Research on financial and economic issues*, pp. 97-105, 2010, (11).
- [5] W. Li and X. M. Zhang, "An Empirical Research on the Influencing Factors of Consumer Brand Sensitivity" *Chinese Journal of Management Science*, pp. 34-38, 2006, 14(Special).