URBAN MALAYSIAN CONSUMER'S PURCHASE INTENTION ON EROTICISM IN FASHION ADVERTISEMENTS

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RAKESH SARPAL A/L SODARSHAN KUMAR

A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in
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ABSTRACT

Many researchers had tried to answer the question “Does Sex Sell?”, as for this research, “Does Sex Sell in a multicultural environment?” will be answered. Implementing sex appeal or erotic appeal is straightforward in a single culture environment. Malaysia (Klang Valley) being a multicultural environment with great cultural diversity, such techniques must be used with caution. This research explores the arousal concept and measurement on erotic print fashion advertisements and analyses its relationship with advertisement thoughts, advertisement attitude and purchase intentions. This research studies how various level of arousal in the print advertisements will have an impact on these variables. Focus groups and survey techniques were combined in the research methodology. The findings indicate that regardless of the arousal levels indicated in the advertisements, it had a strong impact on all other variables. There was a similarity on how Malay and Indian consumers perceive the advertisements. However, the attitude of Chinese consumers indicated to be somewhat different. Results also suggested implications for advertisement design and further research areas to enhance the study of erotic appeal.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised / read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, as a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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Signature of Candidate: **Date**: **20 September 2019**

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HARE KRISHNA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PLS	PARTIAL LEAST SQUARES
SEM	STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING
RO	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
H	HYPOTHESIS
FCB	FOOTE, CONE & BELDING
TPB	THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR
RGT	REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE
SPSS	STATISTICAL PACKAGE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE
CR	COMPOSITE RELIABILITY
PCA	PRICIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS
EFA	EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS
HTMT	HETEROTRAIT MONOTRAIT RATIO
f^2	EFFECT SIZE
R^2	EXPLAINED VARIENCE
Q^2	PREDICTIVE RELEVANCE
N	NUMBER
GOF	GODNESS OF FIT
VIF	VARIANCE INFLATION FACTOR
α	ALPHA
SRMR	STANDARDISED ROOT MEAN SQUARE RESIDUAL
B	BETA
t	T- VALUE
LL	LOWER LEVEL
UL	UPPER LEVEL

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The use of sex appeal advertising is becoming increasingly popular and it had been seen to be used across a variety of product categories, such as toiletries, FMCG's, automobile, tobacco, alcohol beverages, beauty products and fashion (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). Among all the categories it is used, fashion brands used it most frequently and it is noticeable in lifestyle and women magazines. Brand tends to embed the element of sexuality in the advertisement and associate it with sex appeal. Female consumers that are exposed to such ads might think and feel that they too will be sexy if they consume the brand (Belch & Belch, 2018).

It is important to understand how male and female consumer response towards such advertisements could vary in the areas of cognition, emotions and behavior. Cognition is the logical and rational stage that takes place upon viewing the advertisement, at this stage the consumer will interpret the appeal used and the message. Attitude formation about the advertisement and brand will be formed. Emotions will be developed later and will reflect on how the consumer feels about the advertisement which will influence the behavioral outcome. If there is positive brand, advertisement and emotions will translate to purchase intentions (Lang et al., 2001). There are a number of studies (Hill and Malamuth, 1996; Schachner & Shaver, 2004; Birnbaum, Reis, Mikulincer, Gillath, & Orpaz, 2006). Abroad that has looked into the responses of male and female consumers (Grazer & Keesling, 1995). Some local research such as Saleh et al. (2013), had identified that the effectiveness of such advertisements depends on the relevance to the product advertised and the brands association with desire and sexual attraction must be present. Furthermore, the findings also identified that softer and mild sexual is preferred. However, local studies (Wazir & Ezaz (2012); Krishnan

& De Run (2011); Uma and Earnest (2011); Run et al. (2007) in Malaysia among Malaysian consumers are limited and more research in this area is needed.

The response of consumers could also vary according to different levels of advertisement sexuality used. Based on Reichert (2003) there five definitions of sex appeal ads which are:

1. Nudity stage.
2. Behavioral, pose, age, physical contact.
3. Physical beauty and attractiveness.
4. Sexual references
5. Sexual embeds targeting the subconscious.

This research had examined the influences of sexual themes on Malaysian consumers for the purchase of fashion garments and will incorporate the five definition identified earlier. The concern is to understand how local Malaysians respond when exposed to a variety of sex appeal advertisements with different intensity and identify the influencing variables.

Model of cognitive response had been used as a guide to determine the influencing factors. The gaps in the current framework had been looked into and a new adapted framework had been developed.

Primary data had been collected from respondents in the Klang Valley region to gain local perspective on the responses of sex appeal fashion garment advertising. Quantitative data had been used to analyse and determine behavioral influences by conducting hypothesis testing. Relevant research findings from other similar studies had been compared with this research finding

Identifying the influences that affect consumer buying decision is important as marketers will be able to understand how Malaysians had respond to sex appeal advertisement in the local context. Advertising to local consumers indeed needs localization of advertising style as advertising regulations, lifestyle, culture and society differs. Most local fashion publications localize the content and advertisements in accordance to the Malaysian Advertising Code however, a large number of international magazines are imported without any adaptation.

The use of sex appeal advertising particularly erotic advertisements is common in the fashion industry over the past few decades. The use of such method of advertising is on the rise and some brands are using extreme erotic imagery to gain attention and beat the advertising clutter. According to Lascu et al. (2016), such method of advertising is highly prevalent and had become an indispensable part of contemporary fashion advertising. Another finding by O'Barr (2011), indicated that the use of sex appeal in fashion advertising had pushed the envelope with the use of sexual explicit content. Notably, brands such as Calvin Kline, American Apparel, Abercrombie & Fitch and many more are common had applied such tactics to make their brand memorable. Hence, for this research, the focus had been primarily on fashion advertisements and it does not include other product categories.

Klug and Vigar-Ellis (2012) claim that sex appeal advertisements could be categorized in the types which are partial nudity, nudity and eroticism which subconsciously affect the target audience. Eroticism portrays the relationship between the same or opposite sex and nudity focusses on exposure of the body.

1.1 Erotic advertisements and the fashion industry

Consumers are mainly driven by the desire to be attractive and to appeal to other people be it to attract a partner or to prevent our insecurities from showing up in a social setting. A main part of that attraction is derived from how we visually present ourselves. Various academic researches reveal that people formulate their opinions based on the first three seconds of seeing a person; one’s appearance shapes this process. It is also known that statistically, a person that looks attractive – subject to interpretation – is more likely to be popular and rapidly grow in their business (Winser, 2013). Desire to look attractive is the concept of needing to depict ourselves as sexual creatures. Regardless of whether we currently have a partner, to utilize a fundamental anthropological terminology, the tendency to be wanted by others does not leave. Indeed, even as a smothered yearning, and adjusted to suit our own ways of life and time of life, the need is always in some way or another in most of us.

There are numerous brands at present and each and every one of them is endeavoring to be unique in a swarmed market place. From the fabulous, worldwide luxury brands to top street franchises, sex is utilized as a significant selling approach. Furthermore, it works when utilized suitably (Reichert, 2003).

In the present arena of social networks, brands are inclined to trend on social media and to pull in followers on their pages, yet that is not genuine brand commitment. It is communication, however it is is probably not going to transform into sales.

According to Sivulka (2003), had indicated that there is an escalation of eroticism in advertising and there are four common directions of these kinds of advertisements. First type is when the ad appeals to the idealization or motive to emulate or associate with beautiful people. Second type is when the advertisement functions as an erotic fantasy. Third type is when the women are presented as sex objects and lastly where the men are projected as sex object. Sivulka (2003), suggest that there is a possibility that the younger generation are less shocked by open sexuality and might be unimpressed with sex as a selling point.

1.2 Changing lifestyles and global trends

As indicated by Djelic and Ainamo (1999), the fashion sector has basically grown in the past two decades, and the sector has extended quickly worldwide. Top brands have stopped large scale manufacturing increment in number of design seasons, and have adjusted auxiliary attributes in the supply chain have constrained retailers to want minimal cost and adaptability in design, quality, delivery, as well as speed to the market place (Doyle, Moore, & Morgan, 2006). Marketing and capital investment have also been identified as the driving forces of competitiveness in the fashion apparel industry (Sinha, 2006). According to Franks (2000) ‘sense and respond’ is the key strategy to maintain a profitable position in the increasingly dynamic and demanding market. A key defining characteristic of rapid responsiveness and greater flexibility, in this context, is to maintain closer relationships between suppliers and buyers (Wheelright & Clark, 1992).

Fashion retailers today compete with others by ensuring speed to market with their ability to provide rapidly the fashion trends revealed by fashion shows and runways. According to Taplin (1999), such retailers could be credited with the adoption of ‘quick fashion’ that is an outcome of an unplanned process on the reduced time gap between designing and consumption on a seasonal basis. Brand had extended from their conventional four season range to multiple seasons within a year to increase store traffic. According to Sydney (2008), products will have a shorter life span and profits