

# Measuring the Brand Personality Dimensions of Modest Fashion Industry in Malaysia

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## Abstract

Brand personality is one of the key concepts in branding that can be used to create competitive differentiation. Brand personality scale by Aaker (1997) has been widely used however many studies has shown that the scale is not stable across various businesses. In view of that, this study examines the structure of brand personality dimensions in modest fashion industry in Malaysia. Samples of 400 respondents were surveyed to establish the dimensions of brand personality among the generation y female. Based on the Principle Component Analysis result, a new dimension emerged and expanded the original five dimensions; sincerity, excitement, competence, sophisticated and ruggedness. The motivation to focus on generation y female consumers is the assumption that they will be drawn to brands that reflect to individual personality. Validation of new constructs brings a significant interaction of measurements of brand personality. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach was employed to examine and validate detail proposed dimensions with a series of observed variables. The findings empirically support the reliability and validity of the scale developed. The result also revealed that the new dimension of brand personality can be a suitable enhancer to develop brand personality scale for modest fashion in Malaysia.

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## 1.0 Introduction

There are no standard definitions of Modest fashion as it resonates with people of many faiths. The interpretations of Modesty differ across religious boundaries and critically discussed as for women whose fashion appearance may share many elements of Modest styling but who do not regard their processes of self-fashioning in terms of religion or Modesty (Lewis, 2011). Furthermore, the shared interest in staying covered up while still looking stylish is enough to connect women across religious, racial and cultural boundaries (Whitney Bauck, 2016).

Fashion is a form of lifestyle for many women. Preference to fashion brands depends much on individual personalities. Aaker (1997) defined brand personality as the set of human characteristics that consumers associate with a brand. As far as using personality traits such as the five dimensions of brand personality by Aaker (1997); sophisticated, excitement, ruggedness, competence and sincerity, other characteristics such age, gender, fashion style and various other types of characteristics to describe a brand's personality (Heine, Atwal, Crener-Ricard, and Phan, 2018).

A study by Hassan and Harun (2016) explained that the fashion consciousness among the Muslim

women in Malaysia seek to exhibit their individual style that defines them personally. Despite that, they still do not compromise on the comfort, personality association, socially acceptance, personal satisfaction and compliance to special occasions. However, there are still shortage supply of Modest fashionable clothing that resulted them to look for fashionable clothing produced by western culture but improvise so that it will still be syariah-compliant wear.

Given the dimensions of brand personality by Aaker (1997), this study is exploring into the dimensions of brand personality that appeals to the Gen Y female. S. Krishnan et al (2017) and Janmohamed (2016) elaborated that the level of female customer awareness of E-Commerce issues in Malaysia is high especially on buying behaviour towards cosmetic and fashion product. Hassan and Harun (2016) emphasised that Muslim female has a quite distinctive fashion consciousness towards hijab styling. In short, to study the pattern of shopping behaviour in terms of fashion and cosmetic, female would be an ideal subject due to the robustness of shopping behaviour.

Lazarevic and Petrovic-Lazarevic (2009) deliberated that Gen Y were raised in the time whereby the lifestyle status was defined by their

brands of choice. Given their characteristic of being emotional, spontaneous, status driven but yet can have a certain degree of brand preference if they believe the brands could reflect their personality.

Gen Y have been mentioned as dynamic, challenging, different and unpredictable. However, they are also the largest and the most dominant consumer group in today's market (Naumovska, 2017). With those characteristics, Gen Y as being educated and more aware of common marketing tactics by brands made them a challenging group to market and capture as loyal consumers furthermore difficult to secure repeat purchase (Lazarevic and Petrovic-Lazarevic, 2009).

Observing the level of loyalty or disloyalty among the Gen Y, there are some contradiction in past studies. Bulk of studies focused on the disloyalty by the Gen Y, and the difficulties to satisfy their expectations (Hassanzadeh

& Namdar, 2018; Lazarevic, 2012). However, there are a few past studies that debated Gen Y as a loyal consumer group for luxury brands that makes them to be the most appropriate target compared to other cohorts (Eastman and Liu, 2012). The same study by Eastman and Liu (2012) also stated that Gen Y take a great deal of care when it comes to creating good social image or status in the community. For this, they are clearly the prime market for clothing brands and luxury status lifestyle brands.

Therefore, the objective of this study is twofold: determine the dimensions of the personality of modest fashion brands and verify whether the dimensions found in modest fashion brands are similar to those found by Aaker (1997) for consumer product brands.

## 2.0 Literature Review

Brand personality has been a focus in many studies of branding from associations of human characteristics with the respective brands. Brand personality is a set of specific meaning that describes the brand's characters (Allen and Olson, 1995). Furthermore, Aaker (1997) concurred by saying that brand personality as a set of human characteristics associated with the brands however the limitations are the human personality is developed individually and brand personality is developed through marketing communications and consumer feedbacks (Fournier, 1998 and Aaker, 1997).

Definition by Aaker (1997) is not short from many criticisms over the stability of the dimensions. Geuens et al (2009); Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013) suggested some contradictions on some of the brand personality dimensions are not transferrable to a brand and not empirically

justified. There were also criticisms on the semantic issues as the scales of the dimensions by Aaker (1997) only applicable in the American culture (Dikcius, Seimiene and Casas, 2018). In view of that, many studies were done to test the usage of the scale in different cultures such as in the study by Smith et al (2006) added innovation to the scale in Australia culture and Aaker et al (2001) added peacefulness and passion in Japanese culture. However, France, Germany and Italy rejected the original dimensions (Ferrandi., 2015; Bosnjak et al., 2007; Caprara et al., 2001).

Heine (2012) introduced a new dimension to the existing brand personality dimension by Aaker (1997) called luxury dimension. According to Heine (2012) luxury brands are regarded as the mental picture in the minds of consumers that comprise of associations with a high price, high quality, aesthetic value, exclusivity, rarity and specialty. The luxury dimensions can be explained by the following five distinct traits; modernity, eccentricity, opulence, elitism and strength.

Mohamad, Ishak, and Rashid (2017) elaborated product, price and quality elements have significant influence towards brand personality in turn will affect the brand loyalty of business. In conclusion, product features have power to form the buying behavior and influence customers' decisions making to keep buying in long-term period from the premises. A study by Kabu Khadka and Maharjan (2017) concurred that brand personalities such as its features, functions, reliability, sales activity and customer support are the most vital elements that can lead to preference and create the loyalties. Other than buying more product, customers will be drawn to brands that create social and commercial marketing service brands with personalities characterised by responsibility and activity, and with appeal of favourability and clarity. It can be concluded that brands need to portray friendly and warm personalities given the potential positive impact on the attitudes and behavioural intentions of service users (Gordon, Zainuddin, and Magee, 2016).

Moreover, a study by Akin (2017) also elaborated on the emphasis of humanising the brand as the effect will influence the Turkish consumers of automotive industry on their behavioral intentions and willingness to pay premium prices for the brand in automotive industrial. The research outcomes seen that the dimensions of brand personality and attitudinal loyalty have stronger correlations.

## 3.0 Methodology

Quantitative analysis study was conducted on 23 private and public universities in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. This study has used 400 samplings guided from the recommendations by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) of 384 sample size. The data was collected

using multistage sampling; stratified and purposive sampling. With stratified sampling, the universities were divided into smaller strata based from the total student populations (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Alvi, 2016). The female students were selected using purposive sampling based from the screening questions to ensure that they have a basic knowledge of modest fashions and modest fashion brands. From the screening questions, only the ones who passed will proceed with the remaining of the questionnaires (Sharma, 2017; Shalabh, 2014; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). This study emphasised by explaining the level of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophisticated and ruggedness in line with the scale from a past study by Banahene (2018). Five-point Likert Scale was used on the 39 items from the respective dimensions.

weak / low, (iv) .51-.70 medium, (v) .90-.71-powerful, and (vi).91-1.00 very strong.

Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to test the research instrument reliability with the value of .926. According to Hair et al., (2010), the value is in a high category of reliability index classification. As the questionnaire constructions were based from variety of sources, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method was used to identify and re-organise the large numbers of items into the respective construct. Structural Equation Model (SEM) using AMOS 23.0 was used as the final analysis in the construction of brand personality model. Moreover, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to determine the validation of items in brand personality and how well the construct explains (Awang, 2015). For the analysis using SEM, a construct is said to be fit when the index showed: (1) CMIN / df with a value between 1 and 5; (2) CFI index and TLI approaching 1.00; and (3) the RMSEA index is .08 or less.

## 4.0 Findings

### 4.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principle Component Analysis)

Factor analysis method was conducted on 400 female university students in Malaysia. Several procedures were conducted prior to testing the suitability of the items to run for the analysis. The tests are Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (KMO).

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed the correlations of items that is sufficient to run factor analysis with significant value of 0.000, indicating  $p < 0.05$ . In Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (KMO), the items were found to be suitable with no multicollinearity data issues with the value of .926 being greater than .50. Moving forward, Rotating Matrix Component Table was used to test the validity of each questionnaire construct and sort the items that measures each construct. It was found that there were 8 dimensions that exist after Varimax rotation. According to the Interpretation of Strength Correlation Between Factors Table by Chua (2009), which shows the scale of: (i)  $< .01$  no correlation, (ii) .01-.30 very weak, (iii) .31-.50

Table 2.0 Rotating Component Matrix Table for Testing the Construct Validity of the Questionnaire

	Excitement	Sincerity	Luxury	Sophisticated	Competence	Ruggedness
BPS1		.581				
BPS2		.691				
BPS3		.742				
BPS4		.684				
BPS5		.665				
BPS6		.596				
BPE11	.682					
BPE12	.669					
BPE13	.661					
BPE14	.676					
BPE15	.713					
BPE19	.528					
BPC20					.529	
BPC21					.675	
BPC23					.694	
BPC24					.580	
BPC26			.743			
BPC27			.604			
BPC28			.600			
BPSO29			.555			
BPSO30				.507		
BPSO31				.545		
BPSO32				.609		
BPSO33				.720		
BPSO34				.690		
BPR35			.710			
BPR37						.690
BPR38						.764
BPR39						.725

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

The results of the factor analysis in Table 2.0 indicated that all the items have been sorted in their respective dimensions with indication of dimension sincerity being the most prominent. The sincerity items were composed of BPS1: I rate this brand as ordinary. BPS2: I rate this brand as Muslim-oriented, BPS3: I rate this brand as honest, BPS4: I rate this brand as sincere, BPS5: I rate this brand as genuine, and BPS6: I rate this brand as decent. Item

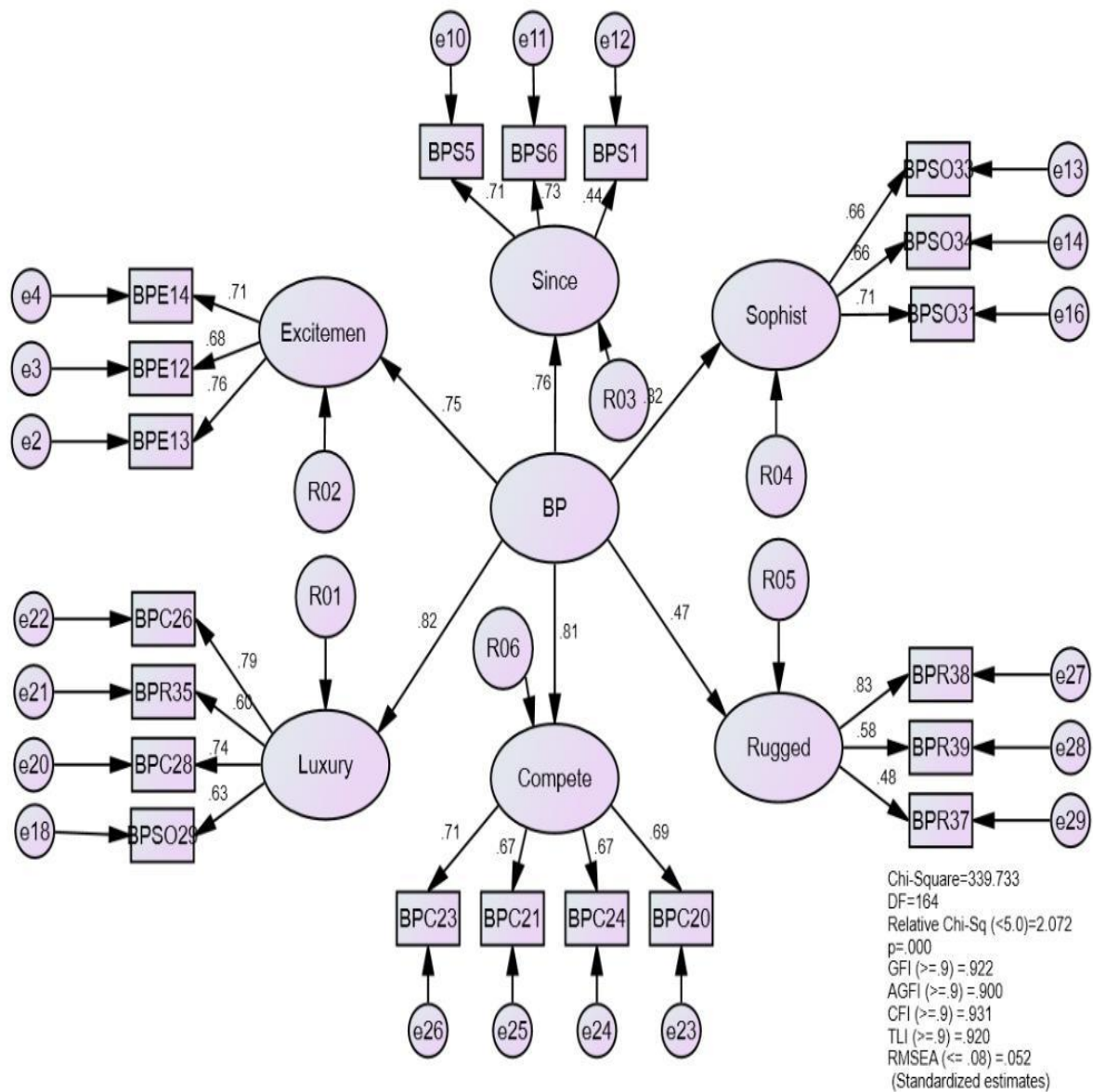
BPS7, BPE10, BPE18, BPC22, BPC25, and BPR36 is removed because of it did not appear in any given dimensions. Two dimensions were deleted as the items placed under each dimension were below 3 items (Zainudin, 2013).

#### 4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to analyse the correspondence measurement model with the survey data was conducted using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA was utilized to determine the items in the aspect of brand personality to measure the constructs of brand personality and to verify the basic factors that have been produced by the PCA and to validate those constructs (Awang, 2015). The normality and multicollinearity test were run before SEM and were found to have met the requirement of the study. Through the CFA analysis, this indicator variables represent the latent variables were proven. Testing for brand personality constructs showed the Chi Square Goodness-of-Fit  $F^2=339.733$ , with  $p<0.05$  and the RMSEA value less than .08 (Awang 2012, 2010). This has significantly indicated that the proposed hypothesized construct and the data collected matched. Other compatible (fit) criteria / indicators taken in was TLI = .90 which the construct indicated compatibility of more than 0.9. This showed the proposed regression model or construct matches the data.

Figure 1.0 showed the results of CFA of six-factor model that have met and fit to the criteria of goodness of fit indices. This has indicated that the brand personality scale has six factors in the modest fashion industry context.

Figure 1.0 Measurement model for the dimension of brand personality





## 6.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The main aim of this paper is to develop and validate a scale for the measurement of brand personality in modest fashion industry context. Results of exploratory factor analysis yielded six factors: Excitement, Sophisticated, Competence, Ruggedness, Sincerity and Luxury (See table 2.0). Results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that the scale retained the same variables with a new variable created that fitted well and met the criteria for goodness of fit indices ( $>.90$ ) and ( $RMR >.05$ ) (See figure 1.0). Reliability coefficient obtained by Cronbach alpha formula for the total score of the scale was 0.90 indicating that the internal consistency of the developed scale is satisfactorily reliable. As a result, reliability and validity of the developed measurement tool were ensured and can be regarded as adequate.

The luxury personality exists in modest fashion brand coincide positively to Heine et al (2018) that the luxury personality in a fashion brand can enhance the positive emotion of the customers especially among the younger generation. Luxury personality in a brand consist of associations with a high price, high quality, aesthetic value, exclusivity, rarity and specialty. With these findings, it can be recommended that to include the luxury personality in Modest fashion as one of the ways to enhance acceptance by the gen y female in Malaysia.

Recognizing luxury personality as one of the variables for brand personality for modest fashion industry, it was necessary to develop a suitable luxury injected style in the arrays of modest fashion clothing and attires. This study suggests for modest fashion clothing to emphasise luxury in form of high quality of fabric, up-to-date couture style and value-added services.

## 7.0 Limitations and Further Research

Despite the theoretical and practical importance of the present findings, there is a limitation concerning the sample, it was restricted to only female university students in the Klang Valley of Malaysia. Any generalization of the results should be treated with caution. More studies should be conducted to find out how different cultural background and other demographic variables affect the loyalty towards modest fashion industry. Respondents among the professional gen Y with careers may give different findings than this study. The construct validity of this short scale needs to be reconsidered and investigated using larger sample in further research.

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