

**THE EFFECT OF STRATEGIC FACTORS AND THE ROLE
OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AS MEDIATOR ON
BRAND EQUITY OF AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

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ABSTRACT

Building brand equity in today's competitive markets is important for organizations. A number of strategic factors such as advertising, product innovation, product quality, and country of origin have affected brand equity significantly. Equally important is the role of relationship quality in building brand equity. Although past researches have examined the effect of these strategic factors on brand equity, only limited research has investigated the role of relationship quality as a mediator between such strategic factors and brand equity. This research was planned to fill this gap by investigating the effect of the said mediating variable between strategic factors and brand equity. This research focuses on brand equity, relationship quality and the strategic factors of the automotive industry in Malaysia. The data was collected through questionnaires which were distributed to passenger car users in Malaysia. The research employed systematic sampling technique and structural equation modeling (SEM) using the AMOS software to draw inferences and make conclusions. The results indicated that product innovation and country of origin had significant positive effects on brand equity. However, product quality had a negative effect on brand equity. Moreover, the effect of advertising on brand equity was insignificant. It was also found that relationship quality had a significant positive effect on brand equity. The results also revealed that relationship quality mediated the relationship between strategic factors and brand equity. The results of this research have further strengthened the theory and related literature on brand equity and put forward recommendations for car manufacturers about the best approaches to build brand equity by using strategic factors as independent variables and relationship quality as mediating variable. Future research is recommended to integrate other strategic factors which may strengthen the theory besides enabling management to make better decisions.

Keywords: advertising, brand equity, country of origin, relationship quality, product innovation.

ABSTRAK

Pasaran kompetitif masa kini menitikberatkan pembangunan ekuiti jenama bagi sesebuah organisasi. Beberapa faktor strategik seperti pengiklanan, inovasi produk, kualiti produk dan negara asal pengeluar telah dikenal pasti mampu memberi kesan yang signifikan kepada ekuiti jenama. Di samping itu, kualiti hubungan juga mempunyai peranan yang turut menyumbang kepada pembangunan ekuiti jenama. Walaupun kajian-kajian lalu ada menyelidiki kesan faktor-faktor strategik berkenaan terhadap ekuiti jenama, namun kajian terhadap peranan kualiti hubungan sebagai faktor perantara adalah terhad terutamanya di antara faktor strategik dengan ekuiti jenama. Justeru, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengisi lompong berkaitan. Kajian ini menyelidik kesan pemboleh ubah perantara tersebut terhadap hubungan di antara faktor-faktor strategik dengan ekuiti jenama. Kajian ini memberi fokus terhadap ekuiti jenama, kualiti hubungan dan faktor-faktor strategik dalam sektor automotif di Malaysia. Data dikumpul melalui penggunaan borang soal selidik yang diedar kepada pengguna kereta penumpang di Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan teknik persampelan sistematik dan kaedah permodelan kesamaan berstruktur melalui perisian AMOS bagi melakar inferensi-inferensi dan rumusan yang berkaitan. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan inovasi produk dan negara asal pengeluar mempunyai kesan signifikan yang positif terhadap ekuiti jenama. Manakala, kualiti produk mempunyai kesan negatif terhadap ekuiti jenama. Di samping itu, kesan pengiklanan terhadap ekuiti jenama menunjukkan hubungan tidak signifikan. Namun begitu, kualiti hubungan juga didapati mempunyai kesan signifikan yang positif terhadap ekuiti jenama. Keputusan-keputusan tersebut menjelaskan bahawa kualiti hubungan menjadi perantara kepada hubungan di antara faktor-faktor strategik dan ekuiti jenama. Hasil kajian ini turut menguatkan lagi teori dan kajian-kajian terdahulu berkaitan ekuiti jenama di samping mengetengahkan cadangan-cadangan kepada para pengeluar kereta tentang pendekatan yang perlu diambil untuk membangunkan ekuiti jenama berdasarkan faktor-faktor strategik sebagai pemboleh ubah tidak bersandar dan kualiti hubungan sebagai perantara. Oleh itu, kajian masa depan disyorkan agar mengintegrasikan faktor-faktor strategik lain yang boleh memperkuat lagi sumbangan kepada teori di samping membantu pihak pengurusan untuk membuat keputusan yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: pengiklanan, ekuiti jenama, negara asal pengeluar, kualiti hubungan, inovasi produk.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Branding concept has emerged in the literature for the first time 60 years ago and since then, it has become among the most important topics in strategic marketing (Keller, 1998). Powerful brand plays a very important role in marketing strategy, and is considered as one of the main assets and sources for organizational differentiation and competitiveness (Harun, Kassim, Igau, Tahajuddin, & Al-Swidi, 2010). Kotler (1994) thought about a brand as a symbol, name, term, sign, design, or a blend of them that aims to classify or differentiate the products or services of an organization from other organizations. A memorable brand plays important role in differentiating a firm from its competitors and can help it to create better customer loyalty (Nedeljković-Pravdić, 2010).

Consumers evaluate a brand based on their past experiences about whether product or service of such brand meets their expectation (Aaker, 1996a; Siddiqi, 2011). In highly competitive business environment, organizations realize that they must constantly monitor, develop, and reinforce their brands as to ensure consumers received intended value as planned on the long-term basis (Yang, 2010). As a result, being able to position a brand successfully in the minds of customer creates several benefits and one of them is a formation of brand equity.

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only

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