GENERATION X AND Y AND THEIR VIEW ON THE BRAND EXTENSION INTO NEW SEGMENTS

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Abstract

This paper is focused on associations associated with brand extension. The primary objective of the research was to determine which associations people form when a brand extends into a different segment and if there are differences in these associations between Generations X and Y. Six research questions were formulated. Participants in the research included academics from a number of European countries (Generation X) and Erasmus programme students (Generation Y). Data was collected using a questionnaire containing open questions and the results were analysed using content analysis. The results show different associations formed with respect to the original brands. Generation X rated the brands as overpriced, and Generation Y as high quality. Generation X had a more negative opinion of brand extension and often evaluated the new products as having inferior quality. Generation Y believed in the companies and that they would manage to produce the new products.

Introduction

Branding is the complex of all the actions that lead to building a successful brand. Building a brand requires a great deal of financial investment, as efforts are also made to use the brand for extension into other product classes. This is known as brand extension (Collins-Dodd and Louviere, 1999). The fathers of this theory are David Aaker and David L. Keller, who wrote the paper "Consumer Evaluations of Brand Extensions" in 1990. Successful brand extension is conditional upon several factors that have been the subject of many specialised articles (Hsieh and Li, 2008). It depends on which segment the parent brand is from and to how distant a segment the brand will extend. It is also important to know how well-known the parent brand is, what emotions it evokes in customers and from which country the customers come from (Pourazad, et al, 2019). Many authors state that one of the key factors in successful brand extension is emotion (Fedorikhin et al, 2008; Pourazad et al, 2019). Customers create salient schemas associated with the brand, which facilitate the creation of an emotional bond between the brand and the customer (Japutra et al, 2018). Typical emotional factors that are tested in brand extension models are brand associations (Pourazad et al, 2019). The associations creating the brand image in the eyes of customers are formed in connection with experience with the product thanks to marketing communication and in connection with specific situations when the brand was used by the customer. Associations are therefore highly individual (Keller, 2007). The question is therefore if associations may be very similar for a specific segment of customers and if they may vary between segments. Research conducted by Braciníková and Matušínská (2017) showed that brands, in general, are perceived differently by different generations of customers. Brands are much more important for members of Generation Y than for Generation X as they present and create their own personal image through these brands. However, the research did not demonstrate that brand perception was influenced by the gender of the customer or their level of education. As such, two generations of customers and their associations associated with brand extension are examined in this paper. **The primary objective of the research is to determine which associations people form when a brand extends into a different segment and if there are differences in these associations between Generations X and Y.** Generations X and Y were chosen due to their dominant position on the market. Generation X has

a 29 % share in the Czech population, and generation Y has a 20 % share. Together, both generations are the most purchasing power in the Czech Republic (ČSÚ, 2020). Research results were evaluated on the basis of the "Dimensions of brand knowledge" model from Keller (1993). Keller divides associations by type into attributes that are associated with the product and its quality, the benefits that the product brings to the customer when it is used, and attitudes that are associated with the emotional side of brand ownership. Furthermore, Keller distinguishes whether the associations are favourable (a positive association that improve brand image) or negative (deteriorating brand image), whether the association is strong, meaning whether it is the first association that comes to the respondent's mind, or the most frequent in the case of a group of respondents. The last evaluated category is the uniqueness of associations in relation to competition. This research has not addressed competition, so this dimension will not be evaluated.

Six research questions in two areas were formulated. These two areas were associations associated with the original brand and associations associated with the extended brand:

1) Associations with the original brand:

RQ1: What are the differences between Generations X and Y in the perception of the types of associations associated with the original brand?

RQ2: What are the differences between Generations X and Y in the perception of the favourable associations associated with the original brand?

RQ3: What are the differences between Generations X and Y in the perception of the strength of associations (the most frequent associations) associated with the original brand?

2) Associations with the extended brand:

RQ4: What are the differences between Generations X and Y in the perception of the types of associations associated with the extended brand?

RQ5: What are the differences between Generations X and Y in the perception of the favourable associations associated with the extended brand?

RQ6: What are the differences between Generations X and Y in the perception of the strength of associations (the most frequent associations) associated with the extended brand?

1 Theoretical background

1.1 Generation X

The name Generation X comes from the novel by Coupland (1991) "Generation X". The members of generation X include those who were born between 1965 and 1979. Authors Littrell et al (2005) refer to this generation as baby busters, post boomers. This generation is referred to as the slacker or invisible generation. It is a generation of rebels, independent people, entrepreneurs, ecologically-minded, anti-consumer, sceptical individuals (World Economic Forum, 2019). Typical attributes for the American and Western European generation X, according to (Accounting, 2010), is that they purchase property early, start a family later and prefer to build up their career.

According to Burešová (2018), when building loyalty to a brand on the internet it is ideal to opt for sales promotion, particularly in the form of discounts and competitions. When making purchasing decisions this generation also places great emphasis on word of mouth (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015).

The brand loyalty of representatives of generation X is very strong. This loyalty is helped by the current good financial situation of most members of generation X (Lissitsa and Laor (2021). Their loyalty to brands increases if a company exercises corporate social responsibility (CSR). If a brand is associated with CSR, this results in greater loyalty (Kim, et al., 2020). This generation shows the

greatest loyalty to brands involved in environmental activities. Another crucial factor in building loyalty is quality combined with customer service. This generation always strives to obtain the best quality/price ratio. If they do obtain it, their loyalty to the brand is high (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015). This generation is highly family-oriented. Therefore, for building loyalty to a brand an advertisement should ideally feature a family setting together with an emotionally powerful message (World Economic Forum, 2019).

1.2 Generation Y

The generational label "generation Y" was first used in August 1993 in "Advertising Age" magazine. This label follows smoothly on from the previous generation X. This generation is sometimes dated from 1979 to the late 1990s (Horváthová and Čopíková, 2015), although most authors (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Carter, 2008) claim that its members were born from 1982-84 to 2005. This generation is often described as the Millennials generation, which has been bombarded by commercial messages since birth. Generation Y is more globalised than the previous generation, and so information about it can be generalised worldwide. Some of the fundamental moments that defined this generation include: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the emergence and boom of the Internet, the September 11 attacks, the emergence of social media and the return of pop culture (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). This generation enjoyed a great deal of freedom in childhood. Therefore, it grew to be a more cynical, demanding, critical, narcissistic and unpredictable generation with its own opinion, which is difficult to overwhelm and impress (Van den Bergh and Behrer, 2016).

The brand loyalty of generation Y representatives is somewhat different from that of generation X. Members of generation Y are sceptical regarding traditional channels of communication, such as television, newspapers and the radio. They like to have full control over communication and want to be involved in the creation and personalisation of content. They also expect immediate feedback. This generation sees shopping as entertainment and a leisure pursuit that they seek out and which is a welcome form of relaxation (Berthon et al., 2012). According to Bilgihan (2016) this generation is highly loyal to local brands, but also shows a strong global way of thinking, thanks to is positive view of the world. Moreover, for this generation the brand is a way of connecting with a certain social group and reflects a certain lifestyle. According to a study by Van den Bergh and Behrer (2016), representatives of generation Y do not have blind faith in every brand. For them it is important to obtain information through social groups on social networks, not only from friends, but also from influencers, opinion leaders and discussions on forums. As many as 40 % of the members of generation Y keep up with their favourite brands on social networks. According to Keller (2013) and Lenhart et al. (2010), Millennials expect brands to be honest and unique, enabling them to communicate who they are. According to Batra et al. (2010), by using a particular brand they are trying to make themselves stand out from the crowd, but also fit in with a certain specific social group.

Lissitsa and Laor (2021) adds that members of generation Y are more oriented towards friends than family. They make groups with friends, sharing the same brands, and on social networks they are the faces of those brands. In contrast, generation X creates groups on the basis of social ties, with no precise link to brands (Ryan, 2014). Comparison of the two generations showed differences in the perception of brands and in the perception of marketing communication tools. Based on these findings it may also be expected that both generations will have different associations with a brand extension.

2 Methodology

The qualitative research was conducted which had two objectives. The first objective was to determine what associations generation X and generation Y have with six selected global brands. The second objective was to determine what associations generation X and Y has in connection with those brand extensions.

The logic of the qualitative research was inductive. The purpose of the research was explorative. The respondents for the qualitative research were chosen in a deliberate selection. The main characteristic of the selection was the country in which the respondents live. The aim was to always obtain answers from at least six students (generation Y) from eleven European countries studying at the Technical University of Liberec. The same goal was with academic staff (generation X) invited to the Technical University of Liberec in 2019 by the Erasmus program from the same countries. The 111 students and 95 academic staff were respondents of the research. In table 1, we can see the number of respondents from each European country.

Table 1: Overview of respondents' countries

Country	Number of students	Percentage	Number of academic staff	Percentage
Czech Republic	15	14.5	16	16.8
Slovak Republic	13	12.6	14	14.5
Poland	11	10.6	12	12.6
Germany	11	10.6	9	9.5
Austria	10	9.7	6	6.3
Romania	9	8.7	6	6.3
Estonia	9	8.7	6	6.3
Spain	7	6.8	6	6.3
Bulgaria	6	5.8	8	8.4
Portugal	6	5.8	6	6.3
Hungary	6	5.8	6	6.3
sum	**111**	**100**	**95**	**100**

Source table: *own elaboration*

For the research we selected the same brands and the same extensions to new product categories, as in the case of Aaker and Keller (1990). A problem arose with awareness of American brands in Europe. Although the original research used global brands, some brands are not well-known in Europe. Four of the brands had to be changed, with the American brands were replaced with European ones; we kept the same segment and product categories into which the parent brand was extended, as in the case of Aaker and Keller (1990). These four brands were identified as the most awareness from the list of brands. Before the primary research, we gave this list to the students and academic staff, and they chose the brands they recognised. Table 2 shows six parent brands, four of which were exchanged for more well-known brands; Heineken and McDonald's were left.

Table 2: Parent brands and their extensions

Parent brand	Product category	Close Product Class Extension	Different Product Class Extension
1. Heineken	beer	light beer	wine
2. Pandora	jewellery	wallets	skis
3. Algida	ice cream	candy bar	popcorn
4. Shauma	shampoo	sun lotion	sportswear
5. Colgate	toothpaste	mouthwash	shaving cream
6. McDonald's	fast food	frozen fries	photo processing

Source: Aaker and Keller (1990), own elaboration

Brand extension to new product categories was chosen the same as Aaker and Keller's case (1990). Brand extension to new product categories can be divided up into two levels according to the distance of the segment from the parent brand. These are an extension in a close product class and an extension in a different product class.

The data were collected in the form of a written questionnaire with open-ended questions. Due to the time-consuming of fill the questionnaire with open-ended questions the sample of respondents was relatively small and the research can consider as qualitative. The respondents were first informed of the research objective and then had to write the associations they have with six well-known brands and their two extensions to new product categories. The respondents had to write every association which they recalled. The assessment methods were a content analysis, which was applied using TextQuest software. The content analysis is a breakdown of the basic directions of the document. The content of the document, which is in natural language, expressed in words is then converted to factual selection data. The content analysis is followed by a synthesis, which reunifies the distributed information. In this case it merges the answers into final associations (Krippendorff, 2018).

3   Results

Subsection 3.1 is devoted to associations with parent brands and the following subsection 3.2 to associations with brand extensions.

3.1 Association with parent brands

The first partial aim of the qualitative research was to determine the main associations with six global brands and order them by frequency. The resulting associations are then compared between the two generations. The resulting associations and their frequency in generation X together with the resulting associations made by generation Y are presented in Table 3 here.

Table 3: Resulting association of global brands by generation X and generation Y

Heineken Beer				Pandora jewellery			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Expensive	44	Green bottle	41	Expensive	68	Luxury	50
High quality	24	Pub and party	40	Originality	33	High Quality	44
Green bottle/label	27	Football Champions League	33	Quality	28	Expensive	31
Imported	23	High quality	29	Stylish/fashionable	27	Fashion, elegance	25
European, Holland	23	Europe, Holland	25	Trendy	13	Precious metals	22
Good beer	15	Well-known brand	20			Originality	15

Algida ice cream				Shauma shampoo			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Expensive	55	Good tasting	44	Expensive	24	Gloss, fragrance	1
Good tasting	28	Exclusive brand	33	Good scent	15	High quality	0
Great flavours	20	Variety of flavours	26	Brown bottle	14	Cosmetics	9
Good ice cream	18	Summer, holidays	25	High quality	14	Beauty salon	5
High quality	16	Diet, high-calorie	25	French/French hair designer	13	Advertisement	2
Rich	17	Expensive	20	Fashionable	12	Well-dressed woman	9
Creamy	17	Quality	18	Used in salons	11		
High calories	13						

Colgate toothpaste				McDonald's Meal			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Cavity fighter	36	Fight against decay	46	Fast food	46	Fast food	44
Traditional	24	Dental hygiene	45	Cheap	45	*Junk food*	42
Tastes good	17	Tradition, brand	23	*Tastes bad*	23	Brand logo	42
Brand loyal	16	High quality	20	Good fries	20	America	39
		Nice taste	19	*Greasy*	19	*Poor quality*	30
			13	Golden Arches	13	*Obesity*	28

* Italics indicate negative associations
Source: own elaboration

As mentioned in the introduction, the results were evaluated according to the Dimensions of brand knowledge model from Keller (1993). The results show that respondents of both generations only assigned associations to the brands which can be included in the category of attributes. The Colgate brand is an exception, where Generation X mentions brand loyalty, and Generation Y mentions the brand tradition. Both of these associations are attitudes towards the brand. With this exception, the associations are associated with the product (its functionality and taste), price and quality. Respondents evaluate all brands favourably, except for McDonald's, where low quality, unhealthy or greasy food is mentioned. In this respect, the view does not differ fundamentally between the generations. This is not the case with the power of associations, where in most cases generations disagree. Generation X often stated that the strongest association was that a brand was expensive, while Generation Y mentions quality, taste or luxury. There are generational differences in the strength of association. The same strength of association only exists in both generations for the Colgate and the McDonald's brands, where their primary function, i.e. the fight against tooth decay and fast food respectively, comes first.

3.2 Association with brand extensions

The second part of the research related to associations linked to extensions of global brands. Six brands were extended to a total of twelve product class (close product class and different product class). Attitude toward the extension was then explored for each extension. Table 4 shows the associations for every brand extension and the number of mentions by generations X and Y. On the left side of Table 4 is a close product class extension, and on the right side is a different product class extension.

Table 4: Brand association for brand extensions

Close Product Class Extension				Different Product Class Extension			
1. Heineken Light Beer				2. Heineken Wine			
Generation X		Generation Y		Generation X		Generation Y	
Good taste	34	High quality	33	*Beer and wine are bad combo*	32	Bitter flavour, dry	35
High quality	32	For drivers	30	*Low or bad quality*	24	*Poor quality wine*	32
Fewer calories	24	For women	21	*Not much experience/ stick to beer*	17	*Impossible without experience*	22
Expensive	22	Fruity flavours	19	Good quality/good name	12	Green bottle	20
European	16	*Expensive*	15	*Expensive*	8	White wine	15
3. Pandora Wallets				4. Pandora Skis			
Generation X		Generation Y		Generation X		Generation Y	
Expensive	33	*Overpriced*	36	*Too expensive*	33	*Too expensive*	45
High quality	21	Quality	31	High quality	32	*Low quality*	22
Fashionable/ stylish	24	Original	22	Trendy/ fashionable	25	Very elegant	19
Original	15	Fashionable, stylish	15	No technical knowledge	12	For women	13
		Jewelled	12	*Stick to established manufacturer*	11		

5. Algida Candy Bar				6. Algida Popcorn			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Tastes good	32	*unhealthy food*	29	*Bad mix/ stick to ice cream*	31	Very sweet	28
Expensive	23	high quality	28	*Expensive*	23	Brightly coloured	20
Worth trying	17	chocolate	23	Flavors/sweet/rich	19	High quality	18
Chocolate	16	too sweet	21	All popcorn is the same	16	For children	15
Good quality	14	for children	15	High quality	13	Many flavours	13

7. Shauma Sun Lotion				8. Shauma Sportswear			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Expensive	19	Nice scent	29	Stylish/trendy/ fashionable	21	Comfortable	24
High quality	15	High protection	20	*No appeal/ would not buy*	19	Natural material	22
No technical knowledge	10	Quality	20	*Low quality*	29	Fragrant clothing	21
Fashionable/ glamorous	8	Many types	12	*Expensive*	16	Soft	15
Low quality	8	Average quality	11	*Stick to hair care*	12	*Poorer quality*	15

9. Colgate Mouthwash				10. Colgate Shaving Cream			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Good like toothpaste	35	High quality		Same as others	20	*Cream doesn't work*	21
Fights cavities	23	Fresh taste		*Stick with toothpaste*	20	*Burning cream*	21
High quality/ works well	18	Effective		Good product	15	Pleasant scent	18
Tastes good	11	Hot		Good quality	10	*Irritates the skin*	12
Tastes bad	10	Disinfection		Reasonably priced	9	Good quality	11

11. McDonald's Frozen French Fries				12. McDonald's Photo Processing			
Generation X		**Generation Y**		**Generation X**		**Generation Y**	
Good quality	29	High quality	59	*Stick to food/ no credibility*	33	*Inappropriate, untrustworthy*	55
Not as good as real thing	25	Excellent taste	23	*Low quality*	29	Fast	38
Bad/ gross	19	Suitable for travelling	19	Fast	20	*Low quality*	35
Greasy	11	*Unhealthy*	12	*Would not use*	16	Extensive network	19
Convenient	8			Cheap	15		

* Italics indicate negative associations
Source: own elaboration

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As in the case of associations to the original brands, respondents only mention associations in the category of attributes that are associated with the product, its taste, quality or price. Only the associations mentioned in the McDonald's extension to the product category of frozen fries can be included in the benefits category, where Generation X mentioned convenience and Generation Y mentioned suitability for travelling. Both generations assessed frozen fries as a good idea that would make the lives of customers easier.

The results show that Generations X and Y share a dimmer view of more distant brand extensions. They agree that the company does not have the knowledge and appropriate equipment to produce a product so removed from its existing range of products. This extension is often rated as low quality, even though the original product was perceived as high quality. More negative associations in both closer and more distant extensions can be seen in Generation X. Generation Y is only more critical concerning the extension of the Colgate brand to shaving foam, where the associations associated with burning and skin irritation predominate. Generation X presented more negative associations in all other cases.

High price was the strongest association associated with an original brand among Generation X. In the case of a brand extension into other product categories, the high price is only mentioned most often in two categories: specifically, Shauma sunscreen and Pandora wallets. Again, high price is more often mentioned by Generation X than Generation Y. Comparing the strength of association (the most frequent responses) in both generations, we cannot observe any large differences. In this case, we state that the strength of the associations is practically the same for both generations.

4   Discussion

The primary objective of the research was to determine which associations people form when a brand extends into a different segment and if there are differences in these associations between Generations X and Y. The data were evaluated based on the theory of Keller (1993), who defines three types of associations, further evaluates whether the associations are positive or negative, and also focuses on the strength of the associations. Associations were first evaluated for the six original brands. The results show no fundamental differences between the generations in the perception of the types of associations (RQ1) nor any fundamental differences in the perception of the positivity of associations (RQ2). On the contrary, differences were identified in the perceived strength of associations (RQ3), when Generation X reflected the high price of brands much more strongly, in contrast to Generation Y, which perceives brands as high-quality or luxurious. This result is consistent with research Global Blue (2018) that has found that representatives of Generation Y have no problem buying luxury brands that they like and that make them feel good about shopping. In many countries, Generation Y is currently the largest segment in purchasing luxury goods and thus surpasses Generation X, which does not perceive luxury as a necessary part of its image (Global Blue, 2018). Generation Y is happy to pay extra for quality goods. Quality is the essential attribute for most of them, while price remains the sticking point for Generation X (Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008). Therefore, this and other research show that a strong association with the original brand is a price for Generation X and is quality and luxury for Generation Y.

In the second part of the research, associations with the extension of brands into closer and more distant product lines were evaluated. The results showed no fundamental differences in the perception of the type of associations between the two generations (RQ4). As with the associations with the original brand, both generations mainly mention attributes that focus on functional associations associated with the product. Emotions such as sympathy, satisfaction or brand loyalty did not appear among the most common associations. The respondents assessed the extension of brands purely pragmatically. The result may be influenced by the fact that the respondents did not have to be customers of the brands, they only had to know the evaluated brands. For this reason, many respondents may not have any emotional attachment to brands that they would transfer to a new product category.

Furthermore, it was found that there are differences between generations in the degree of positive associations associated with brands (RQ5). Generation X was much more negative, both for extension to a closer segment and for extension into a more distant segment. This generation often mentioned the high price of products, along with doubts about whether the company would be able to produce the extension into a new product category. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2015), this generation wants the brand to have a balanced price-quality ratio. Based on a number of negative associations associated with the extension of the brand, it can be concluded that Generation X does not trust companies to produce a new product category with quality and at a reasonable price. In contrast, Generation Y is much more supportive of brand extension. As Lenhart et al. (2010), members of this generation trust international brands more than previous generations. When they rate the original brand as high-quality or even luxurious, these associations pass on new product categories. Both generations perceive the extension to a more distant product category more negatively, mainly due to the lack of confidence that the company will be able to produce such a different product. This finding corresponds with the study of Pourazad, et al (2019).

The strength of the associations for the extended brands was practically the same for both generations (RQ6). No significant differences were observed.

Conslusion

The research was conducted, which identified associations with parent brands and brand extensions. Brand extensions to new products were divided up into close and distant segments. The associations thus obtained were merged into clusters, and listed in the table by frequency. The evaluation was based on Keller's theory (1993). The results show that the price of products is more important for Generation X and their quality for Generation Y. This is an essential finding for marketers who should set up a different marketing mix for each generation. Generation Y, who usually believes that the company can produce a new product well, is more favourable towards brand extension. Brand extension is therefore recommended for customers of this generation. Extension may be problematic for Generation X, mainly due to a lack of confidence in the quality of new products. In a situation where brand extension is implemented for this segment, emphasis must be placed on communicating the good quality of the new product. Both generations have a negative opinion of brands extending into more distant product categories. Such extension must be considered very carefully and properly communicated if implemented. Otherwise, there is a risk that customers will associate negative associations with the new product, even if they evaluate the original brand positively.

The research focused on respondents from European Union countries, so the results need to be verified among the public in other countries. Furthermore, the research did not require the respondent to be a customer of the tested brands simultaneously. For this reason, respondents did not often mention the benefits or attitudes associated with the brand. The research would be suitable for the customers of the examined brands, where there is a presumption of a greater emotional connection with the brands. As a result, the results may differ. The research outcomes are not representative for all generations X and Y populations but only for university students and academic staff. Braciníková and Matušínská (2017) did not find out the different brand perceptions by the gender of the respondents or their level of education. On the other hand, it will be helpful to conduct new research with a heterogeneous sample of respondents and find out if the outcomes are the same or different.

Research has shown some differences between Generation X and Generation Y, so it is recommended to approach the two generations differently and consider what possible brand extension is permissible for a given generation and whether it will bring about negative associations that would jeopardise the marketability of a new product.

Source:

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