Purpose and Background

- Brands offer three benefits for a consumer: functional, experiential, and symbolic, each of which play different roles in the study of marketing, consumer behavior, and related fields (Keller, 1993).
- An application of the symbolic benefit is the production of university-licensed merchandise which are representations of the university, often using trademarked symbols, words or phrases, and school acronyms.
- This line of merchandise has become a very effective way for universities to market themselves via a recognizable brand.

- Research has shown that identification (Kwon, Trail, and James, 2007), perceived university prestige and social acceptance of wearing university-licensed apparel (Park and Park, 2007) influenced attitude toward university-licensed apparel consumption.
- The current study looks beyond attitude and assesses the actual purchase behavior in relation to these antecedent.
- This study explored the influence of university identification, university prestige, social acceptance, and value on purchasing behavior (purchasing frequency and average spending on university-licensed merchandise) for students and alumni.
- Exploring different purchase behaviors of University-Licensed Merchandise between students and alumni is important in developing pinpoint marketing strategies as well as maintaining the university’s brand equity.

Method

- A survey questionnaire was developed and administered online to students and alumni.
- The student survey link was shared with undergraduate students who distributed it to their student peers via e-mail, Facebook, and face-to-face contact. A student sample was chosen for this research because they compose one of the major target markets for university-licensed merchandise (Park and Park, 2007).
- The alumni survey was distributed to a random selection of alumni through the university’s alumni foundation listserv. Alumni were chosen for their ties to the university.

- Scales
  - Multiple 5-point Likert scales were adapted from previous research (Kwon and Armstrong, 2002; Kwon, Trail, and James, 2007; Park and Park, 2007) to measure identification, prestige, social acceptance, and perceived value.
  - Frequency of shopping was measured with an ordinal scale ranging from more than once a week to less than once a year.
  - Annual spending on university-licensed merchandise was measured with an ordinal scale ranging from less than $20 to $200 or more.
  - Demographic information was also collected.

Results of Regression Analyses

Results support Park and Park (2007) to varying degrees depending on classification (alumni versus student), showing that there is a difference in antecedents to purchase behavior between the two groups.

- For student sample
  - Value (t = 6.05, β = .37) and identification (t = 2.04, β = .12) influenced frequency of shopping. [F (2, 254) = 27.60, p < .0001]
  - Value (t = 5.02, β = .33) and prestige (t = 2.48, β = .16) influenced spending. [F (2, 254) = 27.76, p < .0001]

- For alumni sample
  - Social acceptance (t = 5.20, β = .36) and prestige (t = 2.04, β = .14) influenced frequency of shopping. [F (2, 194) = 21.93, p < .0001]
  - Social acceptance (t = 3.79, β = .20) and value (t = 2.33, β = .18) influenced spending. [F (2, 194) = 18.75, p < .0001]

Conclusions

- Results indicate that tiered pricing and targeted product designs for university-licensed merchandise are needed to address the market demands and to appeal to the behaviors of students and alumni.
- To increase frequency of shopping and annual spending for the student group, marketing promotions should focus on displaying university identification and prestige through value-conscious university-licensed merchandise. That is, design products that will allow students to show school pride in a cost effective manner.
- For the alumni group, social acceptance is the common denominator for increasing both frequency and annual spending. Targeted marketing campaigns focused on social acceptance cues would be the most effective. An example may be a promotion showing a multigenerational family of alumni wearing various merchandise across price-points.

References


