Innovative Branding: The University Tartan

Jaeha Lee & Amelia Estepa Asperin
North Dakota State University

University Branding and Its Tartan

Universities market themselves through branding. One popular method of branding a university is producing university-licensed merchandise. The market for university-licensed merchandise is growing. It is predicted that one-fourth of the goods sold through licensed sports apparel stores in 2012 will be university-licensed merchandise (Mamudi, 2012). It encourages universities to increase product offerings. Some universities are designing the school’s official tartan and developing university tartan merchandise. It can be used as a product line extension strategy to increase product offerings.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to address marketing strategies for new university-licensed tartan product lines, by investigating influences on purchase intention of university tartan merchandise. Purchase intention can be affected by purchase behavior of university-licensed merchandise, perception about the university or university-licensed merchandise, or perception about the image of the new product, the university tartan in this case.

Purchase Intentions of University Tartan Merchandise

Park and Park (2007) found that perceived university prestige and social acceptance of wearing university-licensed apparel influenced attitude toward university-licensed apparel consumption. Kwon, Trail and James (2007) found a relationship between perceived value of merchandise and purchase intention in the team-licensed apparel consumption. In addition, purchase behavior such as shopping frequency and spending on university-licensed merchandise can influence purchase intention of university tartan merchandise. Positive image of university tartan can encourage current university-licensed merchandise customers to also purchase university tartan merchandise.

Hypotheses

- Perceived University Prestige
- Perceived Social Acceptance of University-Licensed Merchandise
- Perceived Value of University-Licensed Merchandise
- Purchase Behavior of University-Licensed Merchandise
- Perceived Image of University Tartan

Methodology

The major target market for university-licensed merchandise, students and alumni from a Midwestern university participated in an online survey. A URL took participants to a letter explaining the research, followed by a questionnaire. Although 565 surveys were completed, only 525 were used in data analyses. Approximately 70 percent of the participants were women. Fifty-five percent of the participants were students and fort-five percent were alumni. Almost half of the participants shop for university-licensed merchandise more than twice a year (48.2%) and wear university-licensed apparel more than once a week (46.1%).

Results

Multiple regressions were used for hypothesis testing. Perceived university prestige ($t = 2.36, β = .12$), perceived value of university-licensed merchandise ($t = 3.71, β = .20$), purchase behavior of university-licensed merchandise ($t = 2.03, β = .10$) influenced purchase intention of university tartan merchandise, $F (4, 448) = 19.78, p < .0001$, supporting H1, H2 and H3. However, perceived social acceptance of university-licensed merchandise was not related to purchase intention of university tartan merchandise, rejecting H2. Perceived image of university tartan did not moderate the relationship between purchase behavior of university-licensed merchandise and purchase intention of university tartan merchandise, rejecting H5. Since most of the participants (84.6%) perceived that the image of university tartan is positive, perceived image of university tartan could not perform effectively as a moderator.

Discussions and Implications

Students and alumni who are proud of their university tend to purchase university tartan merchandise. Students and alumni would purchase university tartan merchandise if they believe the value of university-licensed merchandise. These results were consistent with previous studies. However, perceived social acceptance of university-licensed merchandise was not related to purchase intention of university tartan merchandise. A possible reason for this is that the tartan merchandise is not only a university-licensed merchandise, but also is a new line of merchandise. Therefore, the purchase intention may have been affected by an individual’s tendency of trying new products in general, and not necessarily the tendency of purchasing socially-acceptable products. Results showed that students and alumni who shop more for university-licensed merchandise are also likely to purchase university tartan merchandise regardless of their perception of the university tartan. Thus, advertisements of a new line of university-licensed merchandise (i.e., university tartan merchandise) should appeal to the consumer’s pride in the university, emphasize the value of the merchandise as an extension of the university brand, and maintain consistency with the current university-licensed merchandise.

References