Perceived Brand Personality of Premier Soccer League (PSL) Teams among African Generation Y University Students: A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceived brand personality of premier soccer league (PSL) teams among African Generation Y male and female university students. The current study employed a descriptive research design using a self-administered questionnaire measuring African Generation Y students' perceived brand personality of Premier Soccer Teams. A sample of 450 students from two South African public higher education institutions situated in the Gauteng province was drawn to gather the required data for a study. The findings suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between how African Generation Y male and female students perceive the brand personality of their favourite PSL teams in terms of successfulness and sophistication. In the case of ruggedness and sincerity, however, results were not statistically significant different among African Generation Y students.

Keywords: Branding, Brand, Brand Personality, PSL, South Africa.

Introduction

Football, popularly known as soccer, is the most popular sport in South Africa (Yeros, 2022). Correspondingly, several studies (Morgan, 2013; Bevan-Dye, Dhurup & Surujlal, 2009; Khumalo, 2009) indicated that soccer is the most watched sport in South Africa. This sporting code is administered by Premier Soccer League, abbreviated as PSL, which was established in 1996 (Premier Soccer League, 2022). There are 16 teams participating in the PSL in a given season. There are 30 games played in PSL by South African teams. All PSL teams meet each other twice in home and away fixtures (Mofokeng & Bevan-Dye, 2014). Three points are awarded to a winning team and one point given to both teams, if played for a draw (Mofokeng & Bevan-Dye, 2014). The first team awarded a PSL championship title was Manning Rangers (1997). Mamelodi Sundowns leads all PSL teams in South Africa, managing to win the PSL Championship title 11 times already (Mamelodi Sundowns, 2021).

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Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs managed to win the PSL Championship title four times each (SoccerWay, 2022). Other teams, who managed to win PSL titles, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: PSL TITLES HISTORY

Season	Winners
2020/2021	Mamelodi Sundowns
2019/2020	Mamelodi Sundowns
2018/2019	Mamelodi Sundowns
2017/2018	Mamelodi Sundowns
2016/2017	Bidvest Wits
2015/2016	Mamelodi Sundowns
2014/2015	Kaizer Chiefs
2013/2014	Mamelodi Sundowns
2012/2013	Kaizer Chiefs
2011/2012	Orlando Pirates
2010/2011	Orlando Pirates
2009/2010	SuperSport United
2008/2009	SuperSport United
2007/2008	SuperSport United
2006/2007	Mamelodi Sundowns
2005/2006	Mamelodi Sundowns
2004/2005	Kaizer Chiefs
2003/2004	Kaizer Chiefs
2002/2003	Orlando Pirates
2001/2002	Santos
2000/2001	Orlando Pirates
1999/2000	Mamelodi Sundowns
1998/1999	Mamelodi Sundowns
1997/1998	Mamelodi Sundowns
1996/1997	Manning Rangers

Source: SoccerWay (2022)

Branding

According to Tsiotsou (2012), a professional sport is a brand and must be managed like any other brand. Brand refers to any element of a name, term, symbol or combination of these (American Marketing Association, 2017). All PSL teams have some branding elements. Klopper et al. (2006) emphasised that a name should be afirst consideration in branding. Brand name is what can be pronounced or written. For example, Kaizer Chiefs is the brand name of a team. According to Landa (2011), a logo is s a graphic design application that combines parts of all brand elements. For example, a hand forming a seven is the logo of Mamelodi Sundowns. Teams in the PSL do not compete to win the PSL Championship title only, but compete for recognition and brand image. Brand image is a mental construct, where

consumers form connections and associations with a brand (Danes, Hess, Story & York, 2010). In the sport industry, brand image is enhanced by success from winning games (Walsh, Chien, & Ross, 2012). Likewise, a PSL sports team such as Mamelodi Sundowns has created a strong brand image by winning the PSL Championship title more than any other team in the history of the PSL. Brand image may be influenced by product-related attributes and consumer perceived benefits (Bauer, Sauer & Exler, 2005). In a sport setting, product-related attribute refers to team performance, while consumer perceived benefits can be entertainment. Equally so, most PSL teams strive to offer a good performance and entertainment to their fans before and after the game. Brand image can be enhanced by brand personality.

Brand Personality

Aaker (1997) defined brand personality as a set of human characteristics assigned to a brand. In other words, a brand is treated like a human being. Brands such as Jeep and BMW cannot be perceived the same way if they were human beings. According to Carlson, Donavan and Cumiskey (2009), Jeep is perceived as tough, while BMW is perceived as sophisticated. Similarly, Nike is perceived as trendy, sincere and exiting, while Adidas is perceived as friendly, charming and intelligent (Chandel & Tewari, 2015; Su & Tong, 2015). Professional sports teams are brands and have brand personality, like any other brand (Tsiotsou, 2012). Therefore, professional sports teams have unique brand personality.

Mamelodi Sundowns and Kaizer Chiefs are perceived as more successful, hard-working and reliable (Fletcher, 2010; PSL, 2015e). Such personality traits evolve from team performance. Mamelodi Sundowns is known as a successful team for winning more PSL Championship titles than any other teams in PSL. Kaizer Chiefs is known as a hard-working team for winning more domestic cup competitions than any other teams in PSL. Clearly, both Mamelodi Sundowns and Kaizer Chiefs are competitive. Competitiveness is the ability of a sports team to win and achieves its goals (Tsiotsou, 2012). Brand personality can be beneficial to a professional sport. Therefore, brand managers of a sports team must understand fans' perception towards a sports team.

Understanding the importance of brand personality will be beneficial to sports marketers. In doing so, managers will be able to position and market their brands successfully (Braunstein & Ross, 2010). According to Louis and Lombart (2010), a brand positioned through its brand personality can be easily communicated to the target market. Consumers associate themselves with brands that reveal their own brand personalities (Arora & Stoner, 2009; Lin, 2010). Consumer buying intentions are higher for brands exhibiting favourable brand personalities compared to other available brands (Wanget al., 2009). Consequently, brand preferences and purchasing behaviour will improve for such brands (Punyatoya, 2012). As the brand grows, business can introduce brand extensions (Diamantopoulos, Smith & Grime, 2005).

Professional sports teams can use brand personality to distinguish the team from competitors (Carlson et al., 2009; Braunstein & Ross, 2010; Schade, et al., 2014). In PSL,

Mamelodi Sundowns can position itself as successful, while Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates can position themselves as hard workers. However, gender differences regarding perceived brand personality of PSL teams is unknown. Therefore, marketers of these PSL sports teams are advised to understand gender differences before incorporating these brand personality perceptions in the marketing communications strategies. Otherwise, this will impact the marketing communication strategies negatively. Therefore, this study is investigating gender differences regarding perceived brand personality of PSL teams in South Africa.

Gender Differences

Studies about gender differences are important for marketers to understand consumer behaviour. Few studies (Lee & Kim, 2017; Romero and Paz, 2012) have been conducted investigating gender differences on perceived brand personality. The study of Lee and Kim confirmed the differences of perceived brand personality among consumers in the hotel industry. Romero and Paz (2012) confirmed that perceptions of males and females of goods marketed as masculine and goods marketed as feminine differed. In contrast, studies by Ekhlassi, Nezhad, Far and Rahmani (2012), and Palomba (2016), revealed no gender differences regarding perceived brand personality. Ekhlassi et al. (2012) found no gender differences for brand personality in the cellphone market. Similarly, Palomba (2016) tested gender difference on video game brands and found no differences. The present study aims to contribute to a better understanding of consumer behaviour by exploring gender differences on perceived brand personality of Premier Soccer League teams among Generation Y students in South Africa.

Theoretical Background
Self-congruence theory

The foundation of brand personality is the function of self-congruity (Klipfel, Barclay & Bockorny, 2014). Kim, Lee and Ulgado (2005) define self-congruity as the similarity between consumer self-concept and brand personality that consumers feel or experience, while forming a consumer-brand relationship. This is the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as having a personality congruent with their own self-image, and can influence the brand's perceived personality (Klipfel et al., 2014). Correspondingly, the self-congruence theory claims that consumers prefer those brands carrying symbolic value that allow them to represent or boost their actual or desired self-image to derive emotional benefits (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010).

According to Keller and Richey (2006), consumers use brand personality to express their actual or idealised self-image in respect of a specific brand. Consequently, this theory supports the idea that brand personality derives from self-congruence. This could be the same for perceived brand personality of PSL teams among African Generation Y university students. For example, Mamelodi Sundowns has won more PSL Championship titles than any other team in PSL. Such winning records have a potential to influence fans to perceive the team as successful and attract individuals, who perceive themselves as successful. The objective of this study is to investigate gender differences regarding perceived brand

personality of PSL teams in South Africa. Understanding the congruence theory clearly, shows that perceived brand personality of PSL teams may differ between males and females. Therefore, the theory of self-congruence is found to be more useful to investigate gender differences regarding perceived brand personality of PSL teams in South Africa.

Hypothesis Testing

H1: African Generation Y students' brand personality perception of PSL teams' successfulness differ between males and females.

H2: African Generation Y students' brand personality perception of PSL teams' sophistication differ between males and females.

H3: African Generation Y students' brand personality perception of PSL teams' ruggedness differ between males and females.

H4: African Generation Y students' brand personality perception of PSL teams' sincerity differ between males and females.

Methodology

A descriptive research design and quantitative research method were employed in this study to achieve the formulated research objectives. Convenience sampling of non probability sampling was used during the data collection process. University students labelled as Generation Y were the targeted population of this study. These students were registered at two South African public higher education institutions; one categorised as a traditional university, and the other one categorised as a university of technology. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. A total of 450 questionnaires were completed; consequently, this sample is believed satisfactory for the type of analysis required in this study (Malhotra, 2010; Blanche et al., 2006). In this study, female participants (60%; N=270) dominated male participants (40%; N=180). Nevertheless, such figures will not affect the outcome of the study, because the numbers of male and female are large enough to conduct an analysis.

The questionnaire used in this study included two sections (section A and B). Section A included demographic information of all the participants, while section B included items in the form of questions to be rated using a Likert scale (1-7) ranged 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Items used in the scale of the study in capturing the responses of Generation Y students were adapted from the previously validated scales (Swanson et al., 2003) – five items measuring team identification and (Braunstein & Ross, 2010) 42 items measuring perceived brand personality. The statistical program IBM SPSS version 25 for Microsoft Windows was employed to analyse the collected data for this study. The statistical analysis included T-test to investigate gender differences among Generation Y university students regarding perceived brand personality of premier soccer league teams.

Results

Out of 450 questionnaires distributed, only 435 questionnaires were completed in full. In other words, the study had a 97% completed response rate. The majority of the participants for this study were from three provinces, namely Gauteng (51%), Limpopo (16%) and Free

State (12). In terms of year of study, third-year students dominated the study (38%), followed by first-year students (33%). Regarding gender, females (60%) dominated males (40%). Lastly, the majority of the participants were 21 years old (25%) and 20 years old (20%). Sample description for this study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample description

Province	Percent (%)	Year of Study	Percent (%)	Gender	Percent (%)	Age	Percent (%)
Eastern Cape	2	1st year	33	Male	40	18	7
Free State	12	2nd year	18	Female	60	19	13
Gauteng	51	3rd year	38			20	18
KwaZulu-Natal	3	4th year	10			21	25
Limpopo	16	Post grad	0			22	20
Mpumalanga	7	Not specified	1			23	14
Northern Cape	1					24	3
North West	7						
Western Cape	1						

The Cronbach alpha and correlation coefficients were computed for each brand personality dimensions. Values for all Cronbach alphas were above the 0.6 threshold as per Malhotra's (2010) recommendation. Therefore, the study presented an acceptable internal consistency reliability presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability and correlation results

Variables	(α)	TI	BP 1	BP 2	BP 3
Team Identification	0.788	1000			
Successfulness	0.916	0.372	1000		
Sophistication	0.836	0.311	0.604	1000	
Ruggedness	0.805	0.316	0.508	1000	
Sincerity	0.785	0.341	0.478	0.526	1000

The study used a two independent samples t-test to investigate if there is any significant difference between male and female respondents, regarding perceived brand personality of PSL teams. The significance level was set at the conventional 0.05 level. T-statistic and p-value for the genders regarding brand personality perceptions of PSL teams are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of Gender Difference between Male and Female Respondents

	Male Mean n=157	Male Std. Dev.	Female Mean n=174	Female Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value	Results
Successfulness	5.2514	0.75104	5.0517	0.77636	2.666	0.008*	Supported
Sophistication	5.0903	0.68638	4.9369	0.86101	1.972	0.049*	Supported
Ruggedness	4.8057	0.98473	4.9103	0.89691	-1.147	0.253	Not supported
Sincerity	4.9451	0.75458	4.8462	0.81834	1.276	0.203	Not Supported
* Statistically significant at p < 0.05 ** Small effect, practically non-significant *** Medium effect and moving toward practical significance **** Large effect, practically significant ***** Cohen's D-statistic not calculated as the variable was not statistically significant							

P-value of p<0.05 was calculated for the statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of perceived brand personality of their PSL favourite teams. Construct 1 (successfulness; p=0.01<0.05) suggested that male and female African Generation Y students have statistically significant differences in respect of perceived brand personality of their PSL favourite teams' successfulness and sophistication. This suggests that Ho3a can be rejected and Ha3a accepted. In the same way, Construct 2 (sophistication; p=0.05<0.05) suggested that male and female African Generation Y students have statistically significant differences in respect of perceived brand personality of their PSL favourite teams' successfulness and sophistication. These results suggest that Ho3b can be rejected and Ha3b accepted. The overall conclusion is that African Generation Y students' brand personality perceptions of PSL teams' for both the constructs successfulness and sophistication differ between males and females.

P-value of p>0.05 was calculated for the statistical difference between male and female in terms of perceived brand personality of their PSL favourite teams. Construct 3 (ruggedness) indicated that male and female African Generation Y students have no statistically significant differences in respect of perceived brand personality of their PSL favourite teams. Therefore, this (p=0.253>0.05) suggests that Ho3c can be accepted and Ha3 rejected. Similarly, Construct 4 (sincerity) indicated that male and female African Generation Y students have no statistically significant differences in respect of perceived brand

personality of their PSL favourite teams. Therefore, this (p=0.203>0.05) suggests that Ho3d can be accepted and Ha3d rejected. The overall conclusion is that African Generation Y students' brand personality perceptions of PSL teams for both the constructs Ruggedness and Sincerity do not differ between males and females.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

The findings of this study suggested that African Generation Y university students' brand personality perception of PSL teams' successfulness and sophistication differ between males and females. To be successful in retaining male and female university students supporting a sports team, brand marketers must always ensure that both genders are satisfied with the team's success. For example, males might perceive success of a sports team as winning many games and titles in a season, while females might perceive success of a sports team as employing popular star player/s. Males can perceive sophistication of a sport as stylish in the field of play, while females might perceive sophistication of a sports team as attractive based on the uniform and players. From a marketing perspective, it is important for marketers to know their target market personality and give them a brand with corresponding personalities (Ekhlassi, 2012). As such, sports team marketers must never incorporate success and sophistication together in their marketing communications campaigns because of differences between male and female. The campaign will not be meaningful to the target market of Generation Y university students and will destroy the entire marketing communication strategy.

In contrast to Successfulness and Sophistication, males and females of Generation Y university students regarded the two constructs Ruggedness and Sincerity similarly. In other words, both males and females Generation Y university students perceived PSL teams the same in terms of Ruggedness and Sincerity. The strength of a sports team is perceived the same by both males and females, for example the ability to defeat other sports teams. In addition, both genders perceive the level of genuineness expressed in media statements of a sports team the same. From a marketing perspective, a brand with brand personality perceptions without gender differences leads to purposeful advertising and targeting both groups in the same ads (Ekhlassi, 2012). Therefore, the two constructs ruggedness and sincerity can be featured in all marketing commutation strategies of a sports team as they are perceived the same by Generation Y university students.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study presented limitations, like any other studies. The study employed a non-probability sampling method. Since the target population was Generation Y university students, this was not a true reflection of the population. Future research must include real soccer fans as the target population. In addition, this study used only Premier Soccer League teams; future research must be conducted and include other sporting codes such as rugby or cricket.

Conclusion

The competitive world of sports marketing is increasing and South African PSL teams need to remain vigilant in the way they appeal to sport fans (Mofokeng & Bevan-Dye, 2014). This study presented the importance of understanding perceptions of a sports team. This will help sports marketers to strive for and incorporate relevant brand personality traits that communicate directly with the target market. Brand personality renders a team unique and sets it apart from competitors. Furthermore, brand personality of a sports team will attract fans with similar personality traits as the sports team and companies sharing similar characteristics for sponsorship deals. Therefore, PSL teams must strive to establish a unique brand personality.

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