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EXPRESS BRAND PERSONALITY AS PERSONAL BRANDING

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Abstract

This study investigates the brand personality dimensions functioning as personal brand and the implementation of it. This main objective is to identify the brand personality dimensions applied by Datuk Seri Vida to demonstrate her personal branding and how does she performs the dimensions through YouTube. A content analysis was done in a checklist form based on Aaker's Brand Personality Dimensions and two inter-coders from the marketing and communication backgrounds and knowledge were involved in data gathering. Essentially, the results exposed that the three main personality dimensions practiced by her are 'Sincerity', 'Excitement' and 'Sophistication'. It has also been found that there is a new item that emerged in the existing brand personality; 'responsible' under 'Sincerity'. The way she carried out these dimensions is by being responsible in providing information of her products and put on smiles as a mean to be sincere, she wore wise choice of colors that in accordance to the theme of her product, keeping excellent eye-contact to the camera and portraying expensive and fashionable image by wearing crown and exclusive accessories. The implication of this study is awareness should be fostered earlier so that marketers and entrepreneur may gain the initial knowledge out of it and make it adjustable to their own context and needing. A replication of this study is needed in other situations and possibly in other eastern countries to determine whether or not the results of this study applicable and acceptable in other settings.

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1. Introduction

Marketing strategies are essential to face competition in placing a brand into the market. According to Zarkada (2012), personal branding is a new marketing concept in connection with the marketing strategy that one adopts in order to encourage the main features of their characteristics. The concept of personal branding was introduced by Peters (1997) in which he explains everyone can have the powers of their own brand. Montoya and Vandehey (2002) and Arruda (2003) are among the founders that define the strengths and potentials of constructing a strong personal brand. It is widely used by those who seek social integration, support or uniqueness.

Brand personality is a number of characteristics that is attached to a particular product and it should be properly built and consistently upgraded wherever the need arises. Aaker (1997) has developed a model used to assess the personality of the brand. The model identifies several dimensions of personality that are most likely associated with the brand in the mind of consumers. The dimensions are grouped into five main categories: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Therefore, this study is inspired by a study done by Shaker and Hafiz (2014) which stated that these personalities dimensions are significantly vital to display the early stage of 'personal branding' process since it is found no previous studies indicates proofs on this.

This study focused on Datuk Seri Vida, Malaysia's successful entrepreneur and billionaire from Kelantan, who own a company of beauty and health, Vida Beauty Sdn. Bhd. She has become a phenomenon and is widely criticized for her appearance that always ever 'light', 'shine', 'blink-blink' and exaggeration from head to toe which can be claimed as unique. Datuk Seri Vida action to 'brand' herself by highlighting herself more than the product itself is a means of forming her personal branding to be stand out from the competitors that are more and more penetrating the market now. She has often been seen appearing on TV with her unique appearance and has a distinctive style of her own to mention her product tagline. She herself is seen frequently appear in promoting her products in any of her product advertisements. Some writers, including bloggers have written negative remarks and did not like her appearance which they considered excessive. However, this proved that she has successfully implemented her own personal branding as she managed to attract the attention of Malaysians with remembering the image and taglines she displays.

As the world increasingly shifted to *online* trend, channels selection in portraying personal branding is vital. The right channel will allow personal branding process to become more effective. Apart from appearing on TV regularly, Datuk Seri Vida's company also own a YouTube account that are loaded with compilation of her products ads that featuring herself in almost all of the ads. Datuk Seri Vida maintained her unique image and tagline in every appearance she made in the ads videos. The increasing number of viewers is evident that personal branding practiced by her through her videos has succeeded. The company's YouTube account has been updated often from time to time with the latest videos. In this case, YouTube is regarded as a good channel for Datuk Seri Vida to display her personal branding application through the advertisements uploaded in her YouTube account, not just to Malaysian viewers but throughout the world. Hence, this study seeks to know what are the personality dimensions applied by

Datuk Seri Vida and how she performs the dimensions to demonstrate her personal brand via the virtual world, mainly the YouTube.

2. Problem Statement

The personality dimensions of a brand proposed by Aaker (1997) may function as the supplement to the core identity of a brand and define the brand by its characteristics. Meanwhile, as described by Shepherd (2005), a personal brand identity is significantly relevant to the concept of 'human identity'. In constructing human identity, individuals set free their extended identities through the selection of social qualities or set of personal characteristics that attach certain meaning to the individual self. Shaker and Hafiz (2014) affirmed that the personality dimensions are likewise important in the beginning stage of developing 'personal branding'. Despite articles and books on personal branding rarely emphasize how personal brands are constructed; this is to be examined by this study of how the five personality dimensions can supplement the individual's personal brands as well as performing it.

However, the studies of brand personality in Malaysia context only discussed on the development of brand personality scale and its traits to test the relationship between brand personality and other customer related variable (Mohtar, 2013). In addition, the study tested the brand personality focused on determining attributes of city brand personality that influence strategic communication (Ahmad et al., 2013). Little is found testing the brand personality dimensions on local business, mainly functioning as human personality. Therefore, there is a gap about how brand personality dimensions can serve as a person's personal branding.

Meanwhile, study on brand personality dimension is discussed in western context as in relating with celebrity endorsement field in marketing (Roy & Moorthi, 2009). However, so far, there are a few local entrepreneurs who have ventures into it, for example Datuk Aliff Syukri, the founder of D'Herbs beauty and health products but there are no studies have been found conducted to determine the application and also the success rate of it. The gap of the application of brand personality dimension in Malaysia context exist since there is no attempt in relating the dimensions in developing a person's personal branding. Therefore, focusing on these particular gaps, this study concentrated on Datuk Seri Vida as the successful local entrepreneur, to determine what are the dimensions applied by her as personal branding via her YouTube product advertisements, and also to comprehend how those dimensions are well performed by her that she managed to place herself as the product in others views via through YouTube ads.

3. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the personality dimensions applied by Datuk Seri Vida to demonstrate her personal branding through YouTube?
- How does Datuk Seri Vida perform the dimensions as her personal branding through YouTube?

4. Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- To identify the personality dimension applied by Datuk Seri Vida as her own personal branding through YouTube.
- To comprehend the way Datuk Seri Vida performs the dimensions as her personal branding through YouTube.

5. Research Methods

Qualitative research is claimed as an attempt to have a broader and deeper understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social life (Hancock et al., 2009). The qualitative research appears to compliment the purpose of this study which is to identify strategies used by Datuk Seri Vida and to have an in-depth understanding of how she practiced those identified personal branding from the personality dimensions of hers through the YouTube.

5.1. Content Analysis

According to Carley (1993), the center of attention in content analysis is on how frequent the words and concepts occur in the text or within the text. Given the purpose of this study is to seek the personal branding strategies of Datuk Seri Vida via YouTube, hence the content analysis process started with defining the research questions of this particular study. The main instrument of the study is the checklist structuring an observation or assessment of the achievement or the artifacts. A checklist was prepared and was adopted from Aaker's Five Personality Dimension (1997) into a checklist form. As for this study, a checklist used as to guide the researchers for data collection process. The five dimensions covered 'Sincerity', 'Excitement', 'Competence', 'Sophistication' and 'Ruggedness' as the coding scheme for identifying the strategies used by Datuk Seri Vida.

After the checklist was developed, the researchers first a preliminary study to test the checklist reliability before it is officially used. The checklist is featured with the coding sheet of list of personal branding criteria that was adapted from the University of Wolverhampton (2013) to match the five brand personality dimension. The researchers then selected an inter-coder with marketing and communication background to do cross check with the checklist to help strengthen the findings of the study. Researchers then selected the content from Datuk Seri Vida YouTube channels, namely those that featured her in promoting her products. Therefore, the researchers focused on the existence and also the frequency of the underlying concepts which occurred from all the videos content.

Two related videos were chosen to run the preliminary study. Next, the researchers seeks for experts' validation for the checklist to be used for the study. Only then, researchers selected five videos from QuPuteh Beauty channel and used the checklist as the instrument in identifying the strategies. The videos selected are Vida Beauty 2014-WHI (16 June 2014), Vida Beauty – WHI (28 August 2014, Iklan Qu Puteh (Million Cell- Oct 20, 2015),: Iklan Qu Puteh (Mineral Glow & Mineral Lipstick - Oct 21, 2015) and *Jus Pamoga (Khasiat & Cara Pengambilan* - Oct 21, 2015)

The reason of selection is because Datuk Seri Vida started to be noticeable and went viral by the end of 2014 and early of 2015. The gathered videos from QuPuteh Beauty YouTube channel are expected to have potentials that enabled researchers identify the strategies of personal branding applied by Datuk Seri Vida. The checklist functions as a guide for the researchers to identify the strategies through any meaningful actions or words which are presented in each video.

5.2. Data Analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying the themes or patterns. As for this study, researchers have decided to conduct a qualitative content analysis specifically on videos content from YouTube channel of QuPuteh Beauty as a procedure for analyzing the data. The summative content analysis approach was used as best compliment this study because the purpose of it is to explore the usage of the words or indicators in an inductive manner (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The coding process starts with the calculation of real words or content, then extend the analysis was extended to include the latent meanings and themes. This method has lent itself productively to identify and analyzed the actual of content in communication. The application of this method, allows this study to have an in-depth understanding how Datuk Seri Vida practiced her personal branding through content analyzing the content of the videos. Analysis is made based on the five personality dimensions as mention in the checklist before. All the finding of it will enable researchers to report on how Datuk Seri Vida applied her personal strategies and will be utilized in this field.

6. Findings

6.1. What are the personality dimensions applied by Datuk Seri Vida to demonstrate her personal branding through YouTube?

Basically, the findings revealed that there are three main personality dimensions that are practiced by Datuk Seri Vida in her videos. The first dimension is 'Sincerity'. It is found that both coders agreed that Datuk Seri Vida is being responsible and cheerful throughout the product promotion. In line with Aaker (1997) conclusion, one of the set of facets in the 'Sincerity' dimension, cheerfulness is one of the quality that Datuk Seri brings in as her attitude which having a tendency to be happy or in good spirits. In this context, being cheerful in product promotion may give a major positive influence in comprehending power of relationship; make extension and engaging with the world openly. It can be explained that being cheerful can boost up one's self-confidence as a person rejects the introverts, shyness and reluctance in oneself, relate well with others and build relationships of mutual support that pushed both sides to a higher level. All these are proven in the development of Datuk Seri Vida videos from 2014 to 2015. Throughout 2014, the coders stated that she started her speech with humbleness by greetings the audience in the Islamic way, mannerly but switched a more energetic and cheerful speech in 2015. Therefore, both her speech and she appeared to be more attractive.

Meanwhile, this study also found that she has expressed the sense of responsibility as a mean of being sincere. However, this is not found in Aaker (1997) 'sincerity' facets. Responsibility is the act of

being mature and reliable, and it is a personality trait desirable for anybody to possess. According to Williams (n.d), responsibility represents the readiness to respond to a plurality of normative demands. However, Malmelin (2010) proved that many agencies nowadays are not paying attention on responsible business as part of their daily operation and decision making but only to ensure profitability. Datuk Seri Vida by herself carries the responsibility in obligation of disseminating and demonstrating information of her products. Considering it is a good practice because when people rely on someone to do something, it means that people believe the person is responsible enough to handle the task. Hence, Datuk Seri Vida indirectly gained the customers' trust and confidence in her product.

The second dimension is 'Excitement' in which she has worn a wise choice of clothes' colors in each of the videos as stated by the coders. She wore different colors of clothes in each of the videos. They are either in relation with the theme of the product or the product packaging itself and it can be considered compatible to the facets of 'Excitement', which is 'imaginative', 'spirited' and 'up-to-date'. According to Beany (2005) an imaginative person is the person who can think of new possibilities, to do something in an extraordinary, making the relationship between ideas of different things, describing different ways of seeing or doing things and asserting themselves from what is remarkable. Therefore, there are people who have a creative imagination. At the same time, by doing so, she took the approach of keeping herself updated. Lastly, the 'Sophistication' dimension is also practiced by Datuk Seri Vida as she's portraying the expensive look and fashionable image in every appearance in the videos. Datuk Seri Vida attempted to wear luxurious accessories and heavy dress such as pearl accessories, crown and dress that full of gems, is an act of showing herself associated with both facets under sophistication; upper-class and charming. Both facets bring their own purpose, namely the status of a person.

6.2. How does Datuk Seri Vida perform the dimensions as her personal branding through YouTube?

This study also seeks to know of how Datuk Seri Vida perform the practiced dimensions as the remark of her personal brand. As for the 'Sincerity' dimension, both coders agreed that she brings on the cheerful attitude right at the start to introduce the product and carry herself in energetic sensation making the promotion fun and thrilling. The coders claimed that it somehow displays her confidence and exudes positive vibes to the audience. Among the benefits of being cheerful are it may increase a person's charisma and charm, and building a bridge to deeper relationships among ourselves. This is the qualities that Datuk Seri Vida strives to improve as the results indicate how she transformed herself from somewhat a timid and orderly person in her early appearance, to an energetic and cheerful person. By doing so, she increased confidence in herself and make herself comfortable. At the same time, she managed to attract the attention of customers and make them feel comfortable as well. According to McPherson (2008) stated that a cheerful environment may influence others to keep up with us.

In addition, she elaborates well of the products' ingredients and contents to ensure that any potential customers would acknowledge the specialties and efficacy of her products. Besides, she put efforts not just by explaining, but also by demonstrating the functions and ways of using her product herself. As agreed by both coders, it is the act of portraying her concerns, in order to gain the trust of potential customers and hence, encourage the 'target market'.

The 'Excitement' dimension is demonstrated by Datuk Seri Vida wearing wise colors of clothes that are in relation with the theme of the products as approved by the coders. Psychological researches have proven that excitement is the most powerful and interesting area for the effective marketers to deal with. Sabate et al. (2014) stated that by understanding human psychology, marketers are guided to raise their level of emotional engagement that brings about content engagement which might result in more comment, more shares, more likes and more of the content marketing KPIs that most marketers craved for. Sabate et al. (2014) also mentioned that in order to achieve it, the marketers need to comprehend how excitement functions, where it starts from the brain first that will give strong psychology responses. Thus, Datuk Seri Vida in her videos wears bright pink in one of the videos that highlight her confidence. She also wears black in color clothes in which the coders found that it reflects the sad vibes and are not suitable for a beauty product promotion. However, the choice of black colored clothes carries a reason behind it as she wants to highlight the pearl accessories because pearl is one of the main ingredients of that particular product. Meanwhile, in her make-up product promotion video, she chooses to wear peach in color clothes.

7. Conclusion

The findings exposed the three main personality dimensions that had been found practiced by Datuk Seri Vida; i.e. the 'Sincerity', 'Excitement' and 'Sophistication'. The result also revealed new facets found in her 'Sincerity' practice that is 'responsibility'. Besides, the findings found the way she carried out these dimensions is by being responsible in providing information of her products and putting on smiles as a mean to be cheerful, she wore wise choice of colors that in accordance to the theme of her product, keeping excellent eye-contact to the camera and portraying expensive and fashionable image by wearing the crown and exclusive accessories.

It can be concluded that the findings of the study have a significant implication particularly to the marketers and entrepreneurs. They will assist them in comprehending of how brand personality is applicable to the founder to develop their own personal brandings. This indicates that awareness of it should be fostered earlier so that marketers and entrepreneur may gain the initial knowledge out of it and make it adjustable to their own context and business needing and the extensive study could be done if the next researcher can focus the personal branding toward the difference culture.

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