

Brand Personality Communication of Thai Fashion Design Apparels

Chuenjit Changchenkit
Kasetsart Business School, Kasetsart University

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ABSTRACT

The Thai fashion design apparels business has a long and successful growth in the region. Distinctive brand characteristics and brand personality are the key success factors of the business. In particular, fashion designers' new collection concepts reflect target customers' personality through brand personality. This research aims to analyze the brand personality of Thai fashion design apparels, setting the brand personality communication through personal selling in each brand's store and making the guideline for salespersons to act and present. Qualitative research by focus group was employed with twenty fashion design apparel brands in Thailand. The results show that all of the fashion apparel designers attempt to communicate brand personality through salespersons' personality and characteristics. Personality guideline books have been divided into three parts: knowledge, skill, and attitudes towards the brand. The result and recommendation contributes to the real practices for sales personnel in effectively presenting the brand personality of fashion design apparels.

Keywords: Fashion design, Brand personality, Personal selling, Apparel.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thailand's fashion design apparels market has shown a rapid growth in the past five years. Most of the material of clothes have been imported from foreign countries, such as yarn and fibers and fabrics. In the first quarter of 2017, import of textiles increased 1.91% to 800.28 US dollars, comparing with the same period of 2016, especially textile yarn and thread. Thai fashion design apparel businesses have encountered a highly competitive situation, as well. One of the leader in this market, Company X has his own production unit, while some imported from various countries. Company X has launched its own house brand and sell some of the famous imported brand for customers' choice. Product differentiation and unique design are the main philosophy in the business. Therefore, product designer as well as brand manager have to co-create the value proposition and also the brand personality of each products. To make brand alive is to communicate brand personality via many contact points of communications, as well as salesperson, who are the main touchpoints in the business. Salespersons play an important role to reflect customers' personality through each products' brand personality. Salespersons' personality and presentation style have, therefore, been set to accomplish this goal. The research can help Company X set salespersons' training materials and personality guideline books to deliver brand personality of the products via salespeople.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze brand personality of Thailand 's fashion design apparels.
2. To set brand personality communication through salespersons' service personality practice.
3. To set brand personality training guidelines for sales person.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand personality is defined by Aaker (1997) that it is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Therefore, brand personality of products can be associated with human characteristics, including those of salespersons. Consumers can relate themselves to the brand personality traits of the products, which can be communicated via sales persons' personality practice. This research therefore initiate service personality practice model to make personal selling as a communication tools. As referred by, Tran,X., Dauchez, C., & Szemik, A.M. (2013) that brand personality is relevant to service quality.

Komaladewi and Indika (2017) stated that there are several psychological factors that exist in consumers, such as perception, motivation, learning, attiitudes and personality, which affect a decision to purchase.

Aaker (1997) initiated the idea of "The Big Five" brand personality, classified in five categories.

1. Sincerity can have personality traits as down to earth, honest, wholesome or cheerful.
2. Excitement can have personality traits as daring, spirited, imaginative or up – to –date.
3. Competence can have personality traits as reliable, intelligent or successful.
4. Sophistication can have personality traits as upper class or charming.
5. Ruggedness can have personality traits as outdoorsy or tough.

Service personality practice can be initiated from sales people themselves. To make people buy from salesperson starts from the principle that "People love to buy, but they hate to be sold, noted by Blount (2010). "People Buy You" concepts require five service practices from people, in this case, salesperson, as follows,

1. Be Likeable: Physical looks of salesperson by consistently smiling, cheerful, and polite.
2. Connect: Making customers feel that salespersons treat customers very important persons, by giving special interest as well as making a complete attention and listening before speaking any things to them.
3. Solve Problems: Helping customers get what they want, not because it is

the best interest of salespersons, but the best interest of customers.

4. Build Trust: Making customers count on salespersons. Feeling free to say apologize when making things wrong to customers.
5. Create Positive Experience: Spending the time and efforts to make customers feel good. Constantly thinking about how salespersons bring joy to the lives of customers and prospects.

4. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research has been employed through focus group method, with eighteen respondents from twenty leading brands in fashion design apparels , all working directly to set brand concept and brand personality in their responsibility, such as marketing department , product design or merchandising department.

5. DATA COLLECTION

1. Secondary Data

- 1.1 Product Information in Look Book or catalog of twenty leading brands.
- 1.2 Product Information of each collections.

2. Primary Data

Primary data has been gathered through focus group from eighteen respondents of twenty leading brands, namely brand A – T. All are from Company X.

6. SERVICE PERSONALITY PRACTICE MODEL

Service Personality Practice has been set to deliver brand personality through service from salesperson in store. As seen in Figure 1.

From figure 1, brand personality can be classified into five types, from sincerity ,excitement ,competence, sophistication to ruggedness. Twenty brands in this research will be judged by brand personality traits, to find out which types of personality traits they are in. Personality Practice under the principles of “People Buy You” concept has been employed for each brand personality traits. The output of this research is to elaborate brand personality training guidelines for sales persons.

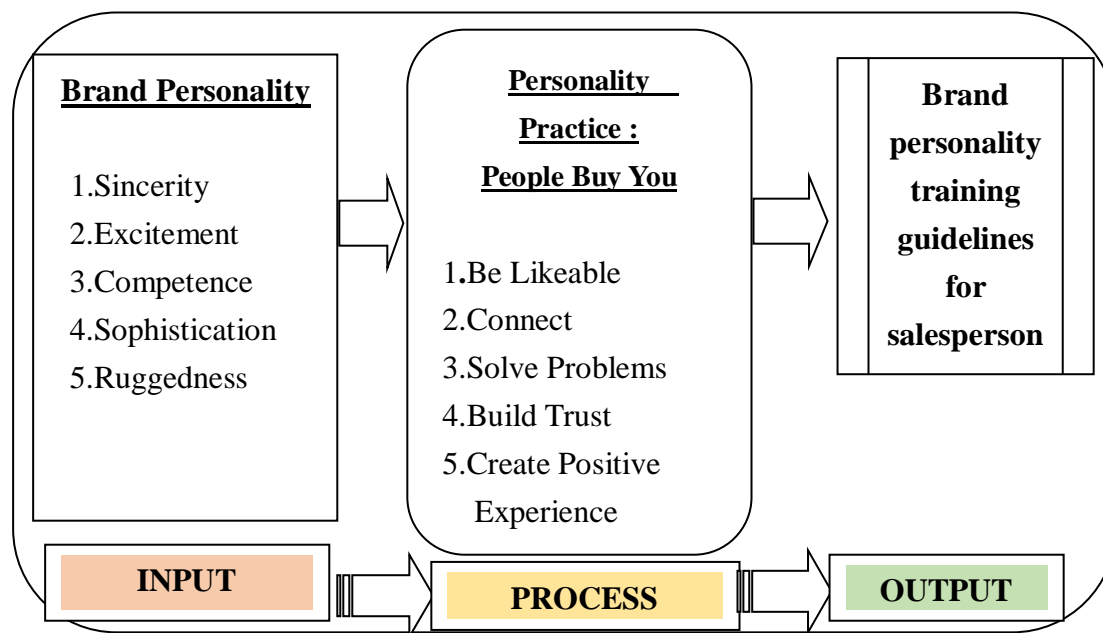


Figure 1 Service Personality Practice Model

7. FINDINGS

The result from this research contains into three parts.

Part 1 : Brand personality analysis.

Brand personality for each type has been analyzed separately with details from each own personality traits.

Table 1 : Analysis of Type of Brand Personality and Personality Traits of Thailand ’s fashion design apparels

Type of Personality and Personality Traits		Brand Name
Type 1 : Sincerity Personality		
1. Down to Earth	1.1 Down to earth	C
	1.2 Family oriented	-
	1.3 Small town	-
2. Honest	2.1 Honest	-
	2.2 Sincere	-
	2.3 Real	-
3. Wholesome	3.1 Wholesome	-
	3.2 Original	-
4. Cheerful	4.1 Cheerful	G, I, J, S, T
	4.2 Sentimental	-
	4.3 Friendly	J, R, S, T
Type 2 : Excitement Personality		

1. Daring	1.1 Daring	-
	1.2 Trendy	A , B , F , H , I , L,O
	1.3 Exciting	H , R
2. Spirited	2.1 Spirited	-
	2.2 Cool	C , I , P , Q
	2.3 Young	H , S
3.Imaginative	3.1 Imaginative	E , L
	3.2 Unique	E , M , T
4.Up-to-date	4.1 Up-to-date	H , M
	4.2 Independent	L , Q
Type of Personality and Personality Traits		Brand Name
Type 3 : Competence Personality		
1. Reliable	1.1 Reliable	-
	1.2 Hard working	-
	1.3 Secure	-
2. Intelligent	2.1 Intelligent	D
	2.2 Technical	-
	2.3 Corporate	-
3.Successful	3.1 Successful	-
	3.2 Leader	-
	3.3 Confident	I , M
Type 4 : Sophistication Personality		
1. Upper Class	1.1 Upper Class	D , K , P
	1.2 Glamorous	A , B , C , F
	1.3 Good Looking	G , K , N
2. Charming	2.1 Charming	F
	2.2 Feminine	G
	2.3 Smooth	I , P , Q
Type 5 : Ruggedness Personality		
1. Outdoorsy	1.1 Outdoorsy	G , H , I
	1.2 Masculine	N
	1.3 Western	-
2. Tough	2.1 Tough	R
	2.2 Rugged	-

As shown in Table 1 , brand names that are under the brand personality type of sincerity are only seven brands ,that is , brand C, G, I, J, R, S and T. Brand J, S and T strongly present themselves in sincerity brand personality type. It is noted that most of brand names , that is sixteen brands , in company X are under the brand personality type of excitement , especially trendy and cool personality traits. Brand H, L, I, E, Q and M strongly present themselves in excitement brand personality type. Besides, brand names that are under the brand personality type of competence are only three brands ,that is , brand D, I and M. No brand strongly presents itself in competence brand personality type. For the personality type of sophistication, it is found that brand

names that are under the brand personality of sophistication are eleven brands ,that is , brand A , B , C , D , F , G, I , K ,N , P and Q. Brand F , G , K and P strongly present themselves in sophistication brand personality type. Finally, brand names that are under the brand personality type of ruggedness are only five brands ,that is , brand G, H , I , N and R. No brand strongly presents itself in ruggedness brand personality type.

Part 2 : Brand personality communication through salespersons' service personality practice

This part shows service action for salesperson of each brand to represent brand personality traits and communicate to customers and prospects in five dimensions of “ People Buy You” principles. Salespeople should have to follow the basic service practice that can make customers and prospects buy from value proposition and personality reflection from salesperson. However, each brand personality requires its own pattern of behavior that can associate to salesperson personality. Table 2 shows what is the step of “ People Buy You ” principles that salespersons have to focus more when compared to other steps .

Table 2 Brand personality traits and service personality practice of Thailand 's fashion design apparels

Brand Name	Summary of Brand Personality Traits	Service Personality Practice
A	Trendy and Glamorous	Be likeable and Build Trust
B	Trendy and Glamorous	Be likeable and Build Trust
C	Down to earth , Cool and Glamorous	Connect and Solve Problems
D	Contemporary ,Intelligent and Upper Class	Be Likeable , Solve Problems and Build Trust
E	Imaginative and Unique	Solve Problems and Create Positive Experience
F	Trendy and Charming	Be Likeable and Connect
G	Cheerful , Good Looking and Feminine	Be Likeable and Create Positive Experience
H	Trendy , Exciting , Young ,Up-to-date and Outdoorsy	Be Likeable , Connect and Solve Problems
I	Trendy ,Cool ,Confident , Smooth and Outdoorsy	Be Likeable , Build Trust and Solve Problems
J	Cheerful and Friendly	Be Likeable and Connect
K	Upper Class and Good Looking	Build Trust and Create Positive Experience
L	Trendy , Imaginative and Independent	Be Likeable, Build Trust and Create Positive Experience
M	Up - to - date and Confident	Be Likeable and Build Trust
N	Good Looking and Masculine	Be Likeable and Connect
O	Trendy	Be Likeable
P	Cool , Intelligent and Upper	Connect and Build Trust

	Class	
Q	Cool , Independent and Smooth	Connect , Solve Problems and Build Trust
R	Friendly and Exciting	Connect and Solve Problems
S	Cheerful , Friendly , Young	Be Likeable , Connect and Create Positive Experience
T	Cheerful , Friendly , Unique	Be Likeable , Connect and Create Positive Experience

Part 3 Brand personality training guidelines for sales person.

Tools for training has been set to enhance salespersons' capability to communicate brand personality to customers and prospects.

1. Training materials and brand personality guidelines :

1.1 Knowledge

1.1.1 Product Knowledge : Salesperson should have knowledge on product concept in each collection of fashion design apparels..

1.1.2 Customer Knowledge : Salesperson should have skill to analyze customer characteristics and personality traits, knowing customers ' need , as well.

1.2 Skill

1.2.1 Fashion skill: Salespersons should be the ones who love to sell such fashionable products and be in good looking on their clothes and make-up, associated to the brand personality .

1.2.2 Communication Skill: Salesperson should be well prepared on their presentation style as well as have skill to listen to customers, skill to react to customers ' problems and help solve such problems.

1.3 Attitudes towards the brand and customers.

1.3.1 Attitudes towards Brand: Salesperson should have positive attitude towards product and its brand personality. Believe in products' concept design is a must. Trust building on product design concept should be communicated to customers.

1.3.2 Attitudes towards customers: Salesperson must have positive attitudes to customers, even they do not buy products at that time. Creating positive experience in every moments of customer interface is major responsibility of salespeople.

2. Log book:

Log book has been used to record customers' need and sales person commitment to make people buy from their own characteristics and personality.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Brand Personality of Thai fashion design apparels is so dynamic that no platform for brand personality communication could be implemented for a long term. Marketer or Brand Manager of Thai fashion design apparels should always adjust communication style in accordance to recent brand personality. Employee engagement to company to make salesperson feel like they are the owner of the brand and customers, can help them reflect the real brand personality into themselves and project the best picture of brand personality to customers.

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Freeform design platform is adopted by the apparel designers, manufacturers, and retailers to represent the complex geometry models of apparel products. Apparel products are essentially designed with reference to human body features, and thus share a common set of features as the human model. Therefore, the parametric feature-based modeling enables the automatic generation of fitted garments on differing body shapes. Apparel is often used for its symbolic value reflecting the personality and status of the user. When the apparel holds a designer or international brand, it may be perceived as an ostentatious display of wealth. Thus consumers are motivated by a desire to impress others with their ability to pay particularly high prices for prestigious products.