

Explore Customers' Perceptions of U.K. Fast Fashion Retailers' Identities

Authors : Ranis Cheng

Abstract : Corporate identity is an asset of a company that is unique, valuable and provides a source of competitive advantage. This research taking a holistic view to explore all dimensions of corporate identity and influence of each on customers' shopping experience in the fast fashion retail sector in the U.K. Unfortunately these issues have not been explored sufficiently in the extant literature, especially in the area of the identity gap. To date, there is still a lack of empirical research on corporate identity, especially in the retail sector despite the importance of the concept to all organisations. Furthermore, although customer group is one of the essential audiences of organisations and the importance of customers in corporate identity management cannot be ignored, to date limited studies have been conducted in order to understand how customers interpret and perceive corporate identity (perceived identity). Therefore, this research investigates customers' perceptions of corporate identity in the fast fashion retail sector. 1) To explore customers' perceptions of fast fashion retailers' corporate identities; 2) To uncover the important constructs of corporate identity which contribute to the U.K. fast fashion retail sector. 40 semi-structured interviews with the fast fashion consumers have been carried out to identify their perceptions of fast fashion retailers' corporate identities. Secondary research on retailers' websites and press releases have been evaluated to identify their desired corporate identities. The findings have revealed that there are significant gaps between how fast fashion retailers present their identities and how their consumers perceive them. This has posed customers' negative perceptions towards the retailers and their shopping experience as a whole. This study has studied how the corporate identity constructs could be applied in the fashion context and has helped retailers to shed lights on how to minimise the gap between desired and perceived identity.

Keywords : corporate identity, fast fashion, fashion retailing, identity gap

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