

Strengthening of a Private Brand: the Aspect of a Store's Image

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According to many scientists a brand is one of the most important sources of acquiring competitive advantage. This attitude is confirmed by the fact that there are many scientific works on brand image. But there is a lack of theoretical and empirical research on the formation and strengthening of an image of a private brand. It should be noted that theoretical and empirical research, performed by Reda (2002), Ailawadi et al. (2003), based on Batra and Sinha (2000), Garretson et al. (2002), Burton and Lichtenstein (1998), confirm that factors that influence the formation and strengthening of the image of a private brand have not been sufficiently analysed.

The scientific problem of this article is formulated with the help of the following questions: what is the influence of a store's image and factors that determine it on the image of a private brand?

The aim of this article is to analyse and summarize factors that form private brand image theoretically, and to test them empirically with the help of the example of the store "Aprangos galerija". The methods of comparative analysis of scientific literature and systematization were used in order to reach the set aim. Quantitative research method (survey) was applied for empirical research of private brand image strengthening in the aspect of the store "Aprangos galerija". Factor analysis was used for data analysis. Multiple linear regression was used for identification of causalities between variables.

Based on the analysis of scientific literature, having summarized the results of the performed theoretical and empirical research it is stated that one of the sources of competitive advantage for stores is the creation of a positive and strong private brand image in consumers' consciousness. It should be noted that brand identity elements and associations, related to the product itself and its perceived quality and emotions, form a positive private brand image.

Having revealed the conceptual essence of an image, having analysed the structure of a company's image, having identified factors that determine a store's image and based on the results of scientific theoretical and empirical research it is stated that a store's image depends on the following factors: services, convenience, quality, product variety, product prices, and store atmosphere.

The results of the performed empirical research have shown that factors forming a store's image (convenience and store atmosphere) have the biggest influence on a positive private brand image. It should be noted that factors determining a store's image such as product variety and price also form a positive private brand image. Based on theoretical provisions and results of empirical research a conclusion is made that in order to strengthen a private brand image it is necessary to make decisions related to the store's place, atmosphere, stock formation, and pricing.

Keywords: *brand, private brand, a store's image, factors that determine a store's image.*

Introduction

According to marketing theoreticians a strong private brand image is one of the factors that determine consumer satisfaction and their loyalty to a certain store. Performed scientific research confirms that there are links between a private brand and a store's image. Seeking to act successfully in inner and global markets retail chains have to assess the influence of a store's image on the private brand image and to make decisions to strengthen it.

It should be noted that Reda (2002), Ailawadi et al. (2003), based on theoretical and empirical research, performed by Batra and Sinha (2000), Garretson et al. (2002), Burton and Lichtenstein (1998), confirm that factors that influence the formation and strengthening of a private brand image have not been analysed sufficiently.

Reda (2002), Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003), and Dhar and Hoch (1997) state that store image influences the private brand image. Starting with the works of Martineau (1958), store image has been analysed by many scientists.

In the scientific works of Linguist (1974), Bearden (1977), Ghosk (1990), Chang and Tu (2005), and Pajuodis (2005) factors that influence store image are distinguished. But it must be emphasized that the above-mentioned scientists distinguish different factors that determine a store's image. Bearden (1977) states that the following seven factors define a store's image: price, product quality, stock, atmosphere, place, car parking possibility, and friendly personnel. Chang and Tu (2005) assessed only four factors that influenced a store's image in their work: infrastructure, services, provided by the store, store activity, and convenience. Vahie and Paswan (2006), summarizing the results of theoretical and empirical research of Martineau (1958), Lindquist (1974), Doyle and Fenwick (1974), Bearden (1977), Chowdhury et al. (1998), Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000), Kim and Jin (2001), Chang and Tu (2005), state that six factors that influence a store's image are: services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price, and store atmosphere.

But it should be noted that there is no unanimous point of view that would define the influence of a store's image on the image of a private brand. Therefore it is thought that it is purposeful to ground theoretically and test empirically the possibilities of strengthening the image of a private brand in the aspect of a store's image. *The identified problem situation provides a possibility to formulate the scientific problem with the help of the following question: what is the influence of a store's image and factors that determine it on the image of a private brand?*

The aim of the article is to analyse and summarize theoretically factors that form the image of a private brand and then to test them empirically with the help of the example of the store "Aprangos galerija".

In order to reach this aim the following tasks were raised:

- to reveal the conceptual essence of a private brand image, presenting its conception and the factors that form it;
- to analyse and summarize factors that determine a store's image;
- based on the summarized methodological provisions, to perform empirical research of a private brand image and to summarize its results with the help of the example of the store "Aprangos galerija".

Research methods. The methods of comparative analysis of scientific literature and systemisation were used when performing theoretical studies of private brand image strengthening in the aspect of a store's image. Quantitative research method (survey) was used for empirical research of private brand image strengthening in the aspect of the store "Aprangos galerija".

Links between private brand identity and image

A strong brand has a big influence on the implementation of sales goals and strategy. There are various conceptions of a brand in scientific literature. Each author proposes and interprets conceptions of a brand differently, but most of them agree that it is a sign, given to a certain company or a certain product (or product group) that is easily recognisable by consumers. According to Janonis and Virvilaite (2007) consumers identify a brand with a company's intangibles that need to be managed for effective use.

Summarizing conceptions of a brand, presented by Keller (2003), De Chernatony (2005), Gudaciauskas (2004), Doyle and Stern (2006) and other scientists, it is possible to state that a brand is a combination of words and symbols that defines products or services of one company and that distinguishes them from a competitors' product. In order to understand the importance of a brand better it is necessary to discuss brand strategies.

Kotler and Keller (2006), Pranulis et al. (2008) distinguish the following brand strategy alternatives:

- the manufacturing company does not give a brand (a product is sold based only on the general product name, or a product is sold with a private brand);
- a group brand is given (that corresponds to the company name or does not correspond to the company name);
- an individual brand is given;
- a double brand is given.

The results of theoretical and empirical research, performed by Reda (2002), Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003), Vahie and Paswan (2006), confirm that in order to attract more consumers/buyers and to distinguish themselves from competitors stores create combinations of a manufacturer brand and a private brand. Most stores sell products with various manufacturer brands as well as private brands. It should be noted that manufacturers seek to strengthen brand image, but sellers also find it important to create a positive image of a private brand in consumers' consciousness. According to Corstjens and Lal (2000), Reda (2002), Vahie and Paswan (2006), lately private brands have started to receive special attention, because this way products are differentiated, and a possibility to increase sales volume by attracting more consumers and buyers appears, besides, a possibility to reduce costs and create consumers' store loyalty arises.

Vahie and Paswan (2006), based on Aaker (1991), Keller (1993, 2003), Faircloth et al. (2001), state that it is very important for store managers to create a positive brand image, because brand image and its value are directly related. Scientific research, performed by Keller (1993), Faircloth et al. (2001), Ailawadi et al. (2003), emphasize the importance of a private brand image for increasing consumer loyalty. Batra and Sinha (2000) confirm that in order to retain loyal consumers it is necessary to strengthen the image of a private brand.

According to Keller (1993, 2003) a brand image as well as a private brand image is defined as a whole of associations in a consumer's consciousness, linked with the product, that determine brand perception. These associations related to a brand image encompass many factors. They may be emotional factors as well as factors of perceived quality.

The above-mentioned scientists state that a private brand image is directly related to certain associations. Associations, related to a brand, are classified into certain categories. In many models associations are grouped into two categories: functional associations – tangible features of products or services; emotional or symbolic associations – intangible features that reflect consumer's influence on social acceptance, self-expression and self-esteem. Other authors present also a third category – experience. These associations are related to what consumers feel when they use the product (Park, 1986).

Keller (2003) states that brand associations or the entirety of brand values create a certain brand image. A brand that is well established in a market will have an attractive position from the point of view of competition, based on strong associations. The more associations a brand raises, the more valuable it is. Associations determine a consumer's decision to buy and brand loyalty, help to receive and process information about a brand, help to distinguish it from competitors, create a reason to buy, a positive attitude and emotions, and create a base to develop a brand.

According to Aaker (1995,) brand associations may be divided into two groups:

- associations related to a product;
- associations related to an organisation.

Associations related to a product are divided into:

- functional (product characteristics, perceived quality and functional benefit);
- non-functional (symbolic, emotional, price/value, consumer/consumption situations).

Associations related to an organisation are divided into:

- corporate ability (employees' expertise, ability to manufacture and deliver products properly, advantage in technological innovations, development, orientation towards consumers, leadership, etc.);
- corporate social responsibility associations (environmental protection, community involvement, promotion of cultural events, attention to social problems).

Summarizing the results of theoretical and empirical research, performed by Aaker (1995) and Keller (2003), De Chernatony (2001) and other scientists, it is stated that when creating brand image associations related to the product, perceived price quality and emotional associations (intangible features that reflect consumer's impact on social acceptance, self-expression and self-esteem) are important. It should be noted that Vahie and Paswan (2006), Weiner (2000), Faircloth et al. (2001), Ailawadi et al. (2003), based on Aaker (1995) and Keller (2003), de Chernatony (2005), state that perceived quality and emotional associations influence a private brand image.

Brand identity is the revelation of promises and an active part of the process of image creation. According to Bagdoniene and Hopeniene (2006) brand identity reveals how the object is wanted to be perceived.

According to de Chernatony (2001), the concept of brand identity suggests a possibility to position the brand better and stimulates a strategic attitude towards its management. A well-managed identity system gives a competitive advantage. Currently society is closely linked to communication. Everybody wants to communicate or is even unwillingly involved in the process of communication.

In conclusion it could be stated that the brand identity concept encompasses brand uniqueness, meaning, purpose, values, individuality, and provides a possibility to position a brand better, thus acquiring a competitive advantage. Brand identity, the limits of its strength and weakness, brand contents and its inner values are defined by six elements of identity – product, name, symbol and logo, communication, character and founder.

Having performed theoretical studies of brand image formation, based on the results of the theoretical and empirical research of Kapferer (2003) Aaker (1995), Keller (2003), Hankonson (2005), Bagdoniene and Hopeniene (2006), De Chernatony (2001, 2005) and other scientists, a conclusion may be made that brand identity elements and associations, related to the product itself and its perceived quality and emotions, form a positive brand image.

Factors that determine a store's image

According to Kuvykaite and Maščinskiene (2010), when introducing a brand in a new market, at first attention should be concentrated on the increase of the brand's awareness, and only later – on brand image. According to many scientists it is not easy to define the concept of a store's image. The complex of tangible and intangible elements and links between consumers and sellers has been acknowledged quite a long time ago. One of the first ones

to analyse store image was Martineau (1958), Lindquist (1974) developed analysis of differences between functional qualities and psychological attributes, and Oxenfield (1974) stated that a store's image is a concept that is more than the sum of its components. It reflects interaction of characteristics and encompasses secondary elements. Besides, it has a certain emotional contents, a combination of factual and emotional elements. In order to explain this concept in the context of advertising, Kapferer (1986) states that a store's image consists of physical, individual, cultural aspects, a connections' aspect, a reflection aspect and aspects of user's personal interests', encompasses functional and symbolic elements, and emphasizes the importance of decoding these aspects for consumers. Interaction of these tangible and intangible elements and complete interpretation of their user based on earlier knowledge and experience is considered to be essential seeking to define a store's image.

Vahie and Paswan (2006) state that scientists distinguish different factors that determine a store's image. Martineau (1958) distinguishes four main factors that determine a store's image: layout and architecture, symbols and colours, advertising, and sales personnel.

Martineau (1958) defines a store's image as an attitude, formed in consumers' consciousness, that is partly determined by practical characteristics (related to functionality), and partly – by psychological factors (Martineau, 1958). Lindquist (1974) explains a store's image as a structure that encompasses nine elements: products, services, clients, physical environment, convenience, promotion, a store's atmosphere, a company's popularization, and after-sales service. Doyle and Fenwick (1974) distinguish five factors that determine a store's image: product, price, stock, physical environment, and place.

Vahie and Paswan (2006), summarizing the results of the theoretical and empirical research of Martineau (1958), Lindquist (1974), Doyle and Fenwick (1974), Bearden (1977), Chowdhury et al. (1998), Kim and Jin (2001), Chang and Tu (2005), distinguish six main factors that determine a store's image. They are:

- services, encompassing the operating personnel, possibilities of return, credit and delivery services;
- convenience, related to a store's place;
- quality – it shows consumer/buyer satisfaction with product characteristics;
- product selection variety;
- product prices;
- a store's atmosphere.

According to Vahie and Paswan (2006) a store's services are supplementary services, related to the selling of products, provided before buying products, during the process of buying or after buying, which are meant to stimulate and promote product sales. Services that are directly related to sold products may be distinguished. These are product home delivery, ordering of products by phone or by other communication means, selling of products on credit, etc. According to Salciuviene, Auruskeviciene and Lee (2009) it is widely acknowledged that it is cheaper and more beneficial to continue business relations with present clients than to look for new clients.

Another important factor that forms a store's image is convenience – the store's place. Pajuodis (2005) notes that when a place is chosen, also the environment for work is chosen (potential buyers, competitors, accessibility, etc.). A store that is in a more convenient place has more possibilities to achieve better activity results, when other conditions are the same.

Product quality is determined by *performance of the main function, versatility, performance of auxiliary functions* (convenience to clean, store, etc.); *reliability* (this property ensures that the product will perform its function for a certain period of time); *safety* (the product's use under use conditions set by the manufacturer does not cause any risk or danger to users' health) and other properties (Kuvykaite, 2001).

When preparing and implementing its stock policy, each store has to keep to a certain strategy with regard to stock width and depth as well as product quality, price level, new and fashionable products. According to Sirtautas and Sirtautiene (2009) the young generation (teenagers) stands out from others the most – active, consumerist way of life is dominating there; they like to buy advertised unusual products. So when forming stock policy it is advisable to first consider the addressees' age, which influences the whole structure of consumer features, especially their behaviour.

According to Pajuodis (2005), price policy is characterized by several features, namely: price policy actions may be quickly implemented, buyers react to price policy means a lot faster than to other marketing actions.

According Chang and Tu (2005), a store's atmosphere is understood as its visual and acoustic elements, smells and temperature that stimulate buyers' emotional condition and product perception and that influence their behaviour.

Theoretical grounding of private brand image strengthening in the aspect of a store's image

According to Maiksteniene and Auruskeviciene (2008) the biggest Lithuanian retail chains introduce their own brands of higher quality into the market more and more often, and the price of these brands matches manufacturer brands or even surpasses them. Summarizing the results of the theoretical and empirical research of Reda (2002), Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003), Vahie and Paswan (2006), it is stated that in order to attract as many consumers/buyers as possible, stores create combinations of manufacturer and private brands. Most stores sell products with various manufacturer brands as well as with private brands. Based on the results of theoretical and empirical research of the above-mentioned scientists, a conclusion is made that in order to attract more potential buyers and to keep existing ones, it is necessary to form a positive private brand image and to strengthen it. According to Jagelaviciene, Stravinskiene and Rutelione (2006) image must be managed because it can be used to influence consumer behaviour.

It is stated that two private brand identity elements are chosen for private brand image research – perceived quality and emotional associations. Having summarized results of scientific research and agreeing with Vahie and

Paswan (2006), a conclusion is made that the following factors influence a store's image: services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price, and store atmosphere.

Based on methodological provisions, summarized by Vahie and Paswan (2006), *a hypothesis is raised: private brand (PB) identity elements – perceived quality and emotional associations – form a private brand image and are related to factors that form a store's image (SI) – services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price, and store atmosphere.*

Additional hypotheses are raised in order to confirm the above-mentioned hypothesis:

H1a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and the SI factor – service;

H2a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and the SI factor – convenience;

H3a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and the SI factor – quality;

H4a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and the SI factor – product variety;

H5a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and the SI factor – product price;

H6a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and the SI factor – store atmosphere;

H1b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, and the SI factor – services;

H2b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, and the SI factor – convenience;

H3b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, and the SI factor – quality;

H4b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, and the SI factor – product variety;

H5b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, and the SI factor – product price;

H6b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, the SI factor – a store's atmosphere.

Vahie and Paswan (2006), based on Corstjens and Lal (2000), Reda (2002), Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003), Pettijohn et al. (1992), Porter and Claycomb (1997), make an assumption that selling of products marked with manufacturer brands influences a private brand image and a store's image. *Based on methodological provisions of the above-mentioned scientists, a hypothesis is raised: there is a link between identification of a manufacturer brand and a private brand (MBPB-identification) and identity elements that form a private brand (PB) image – perceived quality and emotional associations.*

Additional hypotheses are raised in order to confirm this hypothesis:

H7a. There is a negative link between the PB element – perceived quality, and MB's favour;

H8a. There is a positive link between the PB element – perceived quality, and MBPB-identification;

H9a. There is a negative link between the PB element – perceived quality, and MBSI-identification;

H7b. There is a negative link between the PB element – emotional associations, and MB's favour;

H8b. There is a positive link between the PB element – emotional associations, and MBPB-identification;

H9b. There is a negative link between the PB element – emotional associations, and MBSI-identification.

Empirical research is performed in order to confirm or negate the hypotheses. Empirical research is performed with the help of the example of the store “Aprangos galerija”.

Research of a private brand image: the image aspect of the store “Aprangos galerija”.

The aim of the research is to determine consistent patterns of causalities between a private brand image, its determining factors, and a store’s image.

The procedure of sample selection and research progress. Convenience sampling was used for sample selection (Bush; Burns: 2006), therefore the composed sample may not reflect the population precisely. According to Kardelis (2002), the results of such research are sufficiently reliable, if the researcher is not planning to make generalisations for the whole population beyond the limits of the researched group.

The survey was performed at the Kaunas University of Technology. Senior students were chosen as respondents. This sample is considered to be suitable for research, because students spend a sufficient amount of money on purchases (Roberts and Jones, 2001), and they are less loyal to one or several brands (Weiss, 2003). Questionnaires were distributed to students during classes, where they filled them in and returned them. Therefore the questionnaire’s return quota was 100 %. 215 respondents were questioned. Research data were analysed with the help of the software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

Research method. Quantitative research (a survey using a questionnaire) was chosen for testing of the theoretical model. Research may be divided into prospective, descriptive, and causal research. The type of this research is causal, because its essence is identification of causalities between variables with the help of the method of multiple linear regression.

Closed questions are used in the questionnaire. Closed questions provide a possibility to interpret responses of all respondents in the same way, and it is possible to perform comparative analysis based on the responses. An attitude measurement scale – the Likert scale – is presented in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was drawn up, using the five-point Likert scale, thus leaving the respondents the possibility to choose the answer “Neither agree nor disagree”. Several types of questions blocks were used.

Data analysis is performed using the method of factor analysis. This is a statistical method used for identifying correlation links between related variables (factors), and a correlation link between these factors and the formed variable is identified (Vaitkevicius, Saudargiene, 2006).

Analysis and summation of the results of the private brand image research: the image aspect of the store “Aprangos galerija”

In order to assess, what influence six factors (services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price, and store atmosphere) have on the image of the store “Aprangos galerija”, separate question blocks for assessment of each factor were formed.

All six factors that determine a store’s image were analysed with the help of factor analysis, using the

software SPSS. It is noted in the table, presented below, that only the value of the index convenience is less than 0.5. In another case this variable would have to be eliminated from data analysis because it does not have sufficient weighing value. But in this case it is not eliminated, but a conclusion is made that it has the smallest influence on a store’s image. The statistics, used probably most often to assess sampling adequacy for factor analysis, is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO). This measure is an index for comparing the magnitudes of the empirical correlation coefficients to the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients (Cekanavicius and Murauskas, 2000). IF the value of the KMO measure is small, factor analysis of the analysed variables is not useful. A statistical value of KMO that is less than 0.5 is unacceptable. KMO values from 0.5 to 0.7 show that sample sufficiency is average. In our case KMO measure value is 0.692, so sample sufficiency to perform the exploratory factor analysis is average.

Table 1

Results of factor analysis and factors that determine a store’s image

Factors that determine a stor’s image	Factorial weight	I/t	Correlation				KMO	
			Mean	Min	Max	%		
Ind_product_price	0,836	0,646	0,374	0,118	0,944	49,131	0,782	0,692
Ind_quality	0,834	0,628						
Ind_product_variety	0,772	0,633						
Ind_store_atmosphere	0,620	0,491						
Ind_services	0,614	0,461						
Ind_convenience	0,444	0,327						

Summarizing factors that form the image of the store “Aprangos galerija”, a conclusion may be made that most respondents agree that the most important factors for them are quality, product variety, and product price in the stores “Aprangos galerija”. In other questions respondent opinions were distributed evenly, i.e. they did not have a unanimous opinion about the services, provided by the stores “Aprangos galerija”, their convenience, and the store’s atmosphere.

During the research it became clear that respondent opinions were strongly diverged, therefore it was decided to test this using the software SPSS. The respondent attitude towards a manufacturer brand and a private brand image was checked. While processing data with the above-mentioned programme, it became clear that respondents were divided into two groups. One group of respondents has a negative attitude towards the manufacturer brand as well as the private brand image. Another group, on the contrary, has a positive attitude. A hypothesis was raised that respondent attitude towards the manufacturer brand as well as towards the private brand image was the same. The Mann and Whitney U test had to be performed in order to confirm or negate the hypothesis.

The results of the chosen Mann and Whitney test are presented in Figure 1.

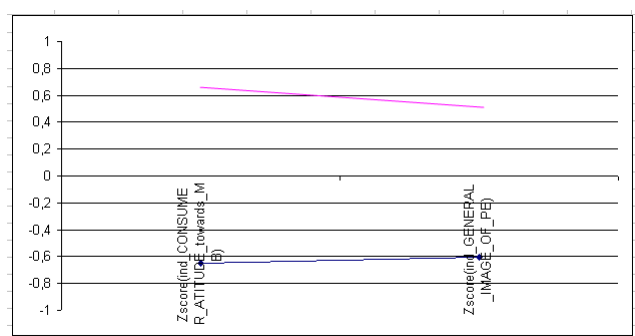


Figure 1. Differences in respondent attitude towards the manufacturer brand and the private brand image

Multiple linear regression method was chosen to test the raised hypotheses and causalities. Value means were used to test hypotheses; regression model encompassing several variables were composed. The *regression* model was composed, using the subject (i.e. private brand identity element – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality)) as a dependent variable, and six factors that determine a store's image (services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price, a store's atmosphere) and three factors that assess consumer attitude towards the presence / selling of clothes with manufacturer brands in a store (i.e. manufacturer brand (MB-favour), identification of a manufacturer brand and a private brand (MBPBI), and identification of a manufacturer brand and a store's image (MBSII)) were chosen as independent variables. β weights show that factors that form a store's image (SI), such as product price (SI-product price), convenience (SI-convenience) have a significant direct influence on the subject, i.e. the identity element that forms a private brand (PB) image – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality). Factors that form a store's image (SI) such as services (SI-services) and quality (SI-quality) have a significant negative impact on the subject, i.e. the identity element that forms a private brand (PB) image – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality).

Summation of the empirical research results (confirmed and not confirmed hypotheses) is presented in Figure 2.

When the subject (i.e. the identity element that forms a private brand (PB) image – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality)) is chosen as a dependent variable, hypotheses H2a, H4a, H5a, H6a, H7a, H8a, and H9a are confirmed (solid line), hypotheses H1a and H3a are not confirmed (dotted line).

When the subject (i.e. the identity element that forms a private brand (PB) image – emotional associations (PB-emotional associations)) is chosen as a dependent variable, hypotheses H1b, H2b, H6b, and H7b are confirmed (solid line), hypotheses H3b, H4b, H5b, H8b, and H9b are not confirmed (dotted line).

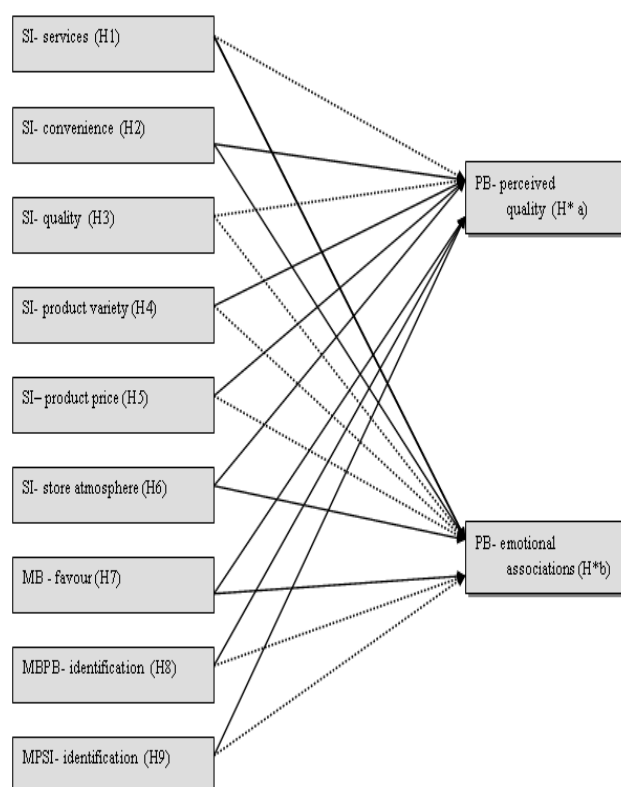


Figure 2. Links between identity elements that form a private brand image (perceived quality and emotional associations) and factors that form a store's image and a manufacturer brand

Conclusions

1. Summarizing the results of the performed theoretical and empirical research it is stated that the creation of a positive and strong private brand image in consumer consciousness is one of the sources of gaining a competitive advantage for stores. Therefore firstly it is necessary to define private brand identity elements and links between private brand identity and image.

2. Having performed theoretical studies of brand image formation, a conclusion may be made that brand identity elements and associations, related to the product itself and its perceived quality and emotions, form a positive brand image. It should be noted that a private brand image is formed by the same identity elements and associations. Based on the results of theoretical and empirical research of different scientists, it is stated that brand identity elements and associations, related with the product itself and its perceived quality and emotions, form a positive private brand image.

3. The performed analysis of scientific literature has shown that a store's image also influences positive formation of a private brand image. Having revealed the conceptual essence of image, having analysed the structure of company image, having identified factors that determine a store's image, it is stated that a store's image depends on the following factors: services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price, and store atmosphere.

4. Based on the results of theoretical and empirical research it is stated that brand identity elements and associations, related to the product itself and its perceived

quality and emotions, form a positive private brand image. It should be noted that according to most scientists a store's image is directly linked to a private brand image. Therefore it is thought to be purposeful to ground theoretically and to test empirically the possibilities of strengthening a private brand image in the aspect of a store's image.

5. The performed analysis of scientific literature has shown that associations related to the product, perceived product quality, and emotional associations (intangible features that reflect consumer's influence on social acceptance, self-expression and self-esteem) are important when creating a private brand image. Based on these provisions, it is stated that two private brand identity elements – perceived quality and emotional associations – are chosen for the research of a private brand image. It should be noted that a private brand image is closely related to a store's image. Six factors are chosen for the research of a store's image: services, convenience, quality, product variety, product prices, and store atmosphere.

6. Having summarized theoretical decisions of private brand image strengthening in the aspect of a store's image, hypotheses are raised, and empirical research is performed in order to confirm or negate them. Empirical research is performed with the help of the example of the store "Aprangos galerija". Private brands (PB) *Miss Sixty*, *Broadway*, *Tom Tailor*, *Morgan*, and manufacturer brands (MB) *Diesel*, *Naf Naf* are chosen for the empirical research. Multiple linear regression method is used to test the raised hypotheses and causalities. Value means were used to test hypotheses; regression model with several variables were drawn up. The *regression model was drawn up using the subject*, (i.e. the private brand identity element – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality)) as a dependent variable, and six factors that determine a store's image (services, convenience, quality, product selection variety, product price, a store's atmosphere) and three factors that

assess consumer attitudes towards the presence / selling of clothes with manufacturer brands in a store (i.e. manufacturer brand (MB-favourability), identification of a manufacturer brand and a private brand (MBPB), and identification of a manufacturer brand and a store's image (MBSII)) were chosen as independent variables. β weights have shown that factors that form a store's image (SI), such as product price (SI-product price), convenience (SI-convenience) have a significant direct influence on the subject, i.e. the identity element that forms a private brand (PB) image – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality). Factors that form a store's image (SI) such as services (SI-services) and quality (SI-quality) have a significant negative impact on the subject, i.e. the identity element that forms a private brand (PB) image – perceived quality (PB-perceived quality).

7. Having summarized the results of the performed empirical research, it is stated that a positive private brand image is mostly affected by the following factors that form a store's image: convenience and a store's atmosphere. It should be noted that such factors that determine a store's image as product variety and price also form a positive private brand image. Based on theoretical provisions and the results of the empirical research, a conclusion is made that in order to strengthen a private brand image it is necessary to make decisions related to a store's place, atmosphere, stock formation, and pricing. The results of the empirical research have shown that the presence / selling of clothes with manufacturer brands in a store forms a positive private brand image. But identification of a manufacturer brand with a private brand has only a partial role in forming a positive private brand image. Based on these provisions, it is stated that it is important to sell clothes with private brands as well as with manufacturer brands in a store in order to strengthen a private brand image.

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Prekybininko prekės ženklo stiprinimas: parduotuvės įvaizdžio aspektas

Santrauka

Marketingo teoretikų teigimu, stiprus prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdis yra vienas iš veiksnių, sąlygojančių vartotojų pasitenkinimą ir jų lojalumą tam tikrai parduotuvei. Atlikti moksliniai tyrimai patvirtina, kad egzistuoja sąsajos tarp prekybininko prekės ženklo ir parduotuvės įvaizdžio. Siekiami sėkmingai veikti vidaus ir globalioje rinkoje, prekybos tinklai turi įvertinti parduotuvės įvaizdžio įtaką prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžiui ir priimti sprendimus kaip jį stiprinti.

Problema. Reda (2002), Collins-Dodd ir Lindley (2003), Dhar ir Hoch (1997) teigia, kad prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžiui daro įtaką parduotuvės įvaizdis. Pradedant Martineau (1958) darbais, parduotuvės įvaizdį nagrinėjo daugelis mokslininkų. Linquist (1974), Bearden (1977), Ghosh (1990), Chang ir Tu (2005), Pajuodžio (2005) moksliniuose darbuose išskiriami veiksniai, darantys įtaką parduotuvės įvaizdžiui. Tačiau pažymėtina tai, kad minėti mokslininkai išskiria skirtingus parduotuvės įvaizdį sąlygojančius veiksnius. Bearden (1977) teigia, kad parduotuvės įvaizdį apibūdina septyni veiksniai: kaina, prekių kokybė, asortimentas, atmosfera, vieta, mašinų pastatymo galimybė ir draugiškas personalas. Chang ir Tu (2005) savo darbe įvertino tik keturis parduotuvės įvaizdį sąlygojančius veiksnius: infrastruktūrą, parduotuvės teikiamas paslaugas, parduotuvės veiklą ir patogumą. Vahie ir Paswan (2006), apibendrinami Martineau (1958), Lindquist (1974), Doyle ir Fenwick (1974), Bearden (1977), Chowdhury ir kt. (1998), Burt ir Carralero-Encinas (2000), Kim ir Jin (2001), Chang ir Tu (2005) teorinių ir empirinių tyrimų rezultatus, teigia, jog parduotuvės įvaizdžiui daro įtaką šeši veiksniai: paslaugos, patogumas, kokybė, prekių įvairovė, prekės kaina ir parduotuvės atmosfera.

Tačiau pažymėtina tai, kad nėra vieningo požiūrio, apibrėžiančio parduotuvės įvaizdžio įtaką prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžiui. Todėl manoma, kad tikslinga teoriškai pagrįsti ir empiriškai patikrinti prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžio stiprinimo galimybes parduotuvės įvaizdžio aspektu. *Dėl nustatytos problemos situacijos galima suformuluoti mokslinę problemą klausimu: Kokia parduotuvės įvaizdžio ir jį sąlygojančių veiksnių įtaka prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžiui?*

Straipsnio tikslas – teoriniu lygmeniu išanalizavus ir apibendrinus prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį formuojančius veiksnius, juos empiriškai patikrinti parduotuvės „Aprangos galerija“ pavyzdžiu.

Straipsnio objektas – prekybininko prekės ženklo ir parduotuvės įvaizdį sąlygojantys veiksniai.

Tyrimo metodai – tyrimas atliktas taikant mokslinės literatūros palyginamosios analizės bei sisteminimo metodus. Empiriniams prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžio stiprinimui parduotuvės „Aprangos galerija“ pavyzdžiu taikytas kiekybinis tyrimo metodas (apklausa).

Atlikta mokslinės literatūros analizė parodė, kad kuriant prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį svarbios asociacijos, susijusios su preke, suvokiama prekės kokybe, ir emocinės asociacijos (neapčiuopiami požymiai, atspindintys vartotojo poveikį socialiniam pritarimui, saviraiškai ir savigarbai). Pažymėtina tai, kad prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdis yra glaudžiai susijęs su parduotuvės įvaizdžiu.

Atlikta mokslinės literatūros analizė parodė, kad teigiamam prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžio formavimui daro įtaką ir parduotuvės įvaizdis. Atskleidus įvaizdžio konceptualiąją esmę, išanalizavus įmonės įvaizdžio struktūrą, nustatius parduotuvės įvaizdį sąlygojančius veiksnius, konstatuojama, kad parduotuvės įvaizdis priklauso nuo šių veiksnių: paslaugos, patogumo, kokybės, prekių įvairovės, prekių kainos ir parduotuvės atmosferos.

Apibendrinus prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžio stiprinimo parduotuvės įvaizdžio aspektu teorinius sprendimus, iškeliamos hipotezės, kurioms patvirtinti ar paneigti ir atliekamas empirinis tyrimas. Empirinis tyrimas atliekamas parduotuvės „Aprangos galerija“ pavyzdžiu. Empiriniams tyrimams pasirinkti prekybininko prekių ženklai (PPŽ): Miss Sixty, Broadway, Tom Tailor, Morgan ir gamintojo prekių ženklai (GŽ): Diesel, Naf Naf. Iškeltoms hipotezėms ir priežastiniams ryšiams buvo taikytas daugialypės tiesinės regresijos metodas. Hipotezėms patikrinti buvo naudojami reikšmių vidurkiai, sudarytas keletą kintamųjų apimantis regresijos modelis. Regresijos modelis sudarytas naudojant veiksnį, t. y. prekybininko prekės ženklo identiteto elementą - suvokiama kokybė (PPŽ - suvokiama kokybė) kaip priklausomą kintamąjį, o nepriklausomaisiais kintamaisiais pasirinkti šeši parduotuvės įvaizdį sąlygojantys veiksniai (paslaugos, patogumas, kokybė, prekių įvairovė, prekės kaina, parduotuvės atmosfera) ir trys vartotojų požiūrių į gamintojo prekės ženklo drabužių buvimą ir pardavimą parduotuvėje įvertinantys veiksniai, t. y. gamintojo prekės ženklas (GŽ - palankumas), gamintojo prekės ženklo ir prekybininko prekės ženklo sutapatinimas (GŽPPŽ) ir gamintojo prekės ženklo ir parduotuvės įvaizdžio sutapatinimas (GŽPI). β svoriai parodo, kad parduotuvės įvaizdį (PI) formuojantys veiksniai: prekės kaina (PI - prekės kaina), patogumas (PI -patogumas), daro didelę tiesioginę įtaką veiksniumi, t. y. prekybininko prekės ženklo (PPŽ) įvaizdį formuojančiam identiteto elementui - suvokiama kokybė (PPŽ - suvokiama kokybė). Parduotuvės įvaizdį (PI) formuojantys veiksniai: paslaugos (PI - paslaugos) ir kokybė (PI - kokybė) daro didelę neigiamą įtaką veiksniumi, t. y. prekybininko prekės ženklo (PPŽ) įvaizdį formuojančiam identiteto elementui - suvokiama kokybė (PPŽ - suvokiama kokybė).

Apibendrinus empirinio tyrimo rezultatus, konstatuojama, kad teigiamam prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdžiui daro įtaką parduotuvės įvaizdį formuojantys veiksniai: patogumas ir parduotuvės atmosfera. Pažymėtina tai, kad tokie parduotuvės įvaizdį sąlygojantys veiksniai: prekių įvairovė ir kaina, taip pat formuoja teigiamą prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį. Remiantis teorinėmis nuostatomis ir empirinio tyrimo rezultatais, daroma išvada, kad, siekiant stiprinti prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį, būtina priimti sprendimus, susijusius su parduotuvės vieta, atmosfera, asortimento formavimu ir kainodara. Empirinio tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad drabužių, pažymėtų gamintojo prekės ženklu, buvimas ir pardavimas parduotuvėje formuoja teigiamą prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį. Tačiau gamintojo prekės ženklo sutapatinimas su prekybininko prekės ženklu tik iš dalies formuoja teigiamą prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį. Remiantis šiomis nuostatomis, teigiama, kad, siekiant stiprinti prekybininko prekės ženklo įvaizdį, svarbu parduotuvėje prekiauti ne tik prekybininko prekės ženklu, bet ir gamintojo prekės ženklu pažymėtais drabužiais.

Raktažodžiai: *prekės ženklas, prekybininko prekės ženklas, parduotuvės įvaizdis, parduotuvės įvaizdį formuojantys veiksniai.*

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