Turkish and German Adolescents' Clothing Motivation, Brand Sensitivity and Fashion Orientation: A Comparative Study

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Textile and apparel sector is one of the leading industries of our developing country. While Turkish textile and apparel sector is among the first ten apparel producers in the world, our country ranks second after China in exports to European Union (EU) countries (Eraslan, Bakan and Kuyucu, 2008). Although fast delivery, closeness to target markets, knowledge and experience are the advantages offered by the Turkish textile and apparel sector, it is necessary for the sector to develop innovative designs that determine trends, and guide the future with the brands it creates. In order to achieve this goal, producers should know target markets very well and develop marketing strategies so that expectations of these markets are fulfilled.

Clothing is important in the daily lives of young people, and one of the major expenditure items on their budget is buying clothes. It is important to determine how sensitive these consumers are to fashion, which factors influence their clothing and brand preferences, and whether there are intercultural differences. Therefore, this research is undertaken to understand adolescent clothing market which grows very fast and constitutes significant part of the clothing industry, and to give direction to the Turkish textile and apparel sector to accelerate its development. Within the scope of this research, it is aimed to determine the clothing habits and preferences of Turkish and German adolescents, who are 12 to 18 years old, living in Germany and to identify differences or similarities between the two samples. Adolescents' clothing motivation, brand sensitivity, fashion innovativeness, fashion opinion leadership and fashion involvement are analyzed.

Although the above mentioned research topic has already been covered in the existing literature, a sample of Turkish and German adolescents has not been researched yet. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap both in business and academic world.

Method

This descriptive study examines the attitudes and behaviors of Turkish and German adolescents, who are between the ages of 12-18 and living in Germany, towards clothing and fashion. The measures were selected by literature search and a questionnaire was designed. After the translation of measurement items from English to German, a pilot study of 30 surveys was held. The items that were not easily understood or had confusing expressions were reworded.

153 face-to-face surveys were conducted using the judgmental sampling method to adolescents living in Cologne, Germany. The sample was formed among the young people who were asked to answer the questions in the most central and busiest shopping streets of Cologne and who came out of the stores or made window shopping. The sample is comprised of 33 Turkish and 120 German adolescents. Of these, 60.1% are girls and the majority is made of 15-16 years of age teenagers (56.9%). Monthly household income distribution showed differences, and 43.1% of the participants stated that they do not know their household income. Almost half of the sample (49.7%) has a monthly allowance of 25-50 Euros. 30.9% of participants earn additional earnings by part-time jobs.

In accordance with the aim of the study, six hypotheses were developed. To test the hypotheses, independent samples t-test and one way ANOVA were used. Explanatory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were performed to the measurement items to determine whether the factor structures mentioned in the literature are also realized for this sample. Several modifications were made to measurement items for each construct and some items had to be excluded from the analysis.

Findings

Before testing the hypotheses, mean scores of each construct were calculated. It is seen that although the average of fashion involvement (3.39) is quite high, brand sensitivity has the least average (2.53). On the other hand, the average of fashion innovativeness and fashion opinion leadership is below 3. Among the clothing motivation components, recreation (3,72) and image expression (3,43) have the highest average, while recognition (2,95) is the lowest.

Five hypotheses were developed to see if brand sensitivity, fashion innovativeness, fashion opinion leadership, fashion involvement and clothing motivation differ on the bases of nationality, gender, age and income. Nationality and income were not found to create significant differences. Gender generates statistical difference in all of the five constructs. Age, on the other hand, creates difference only in fashion involvement and one of the clothing motivation, which is recognition.

The sixth hypothesis was developed to understand if monthly spending of adolescents on clothing, eating / drinking and entertainment would differ on the bases of a) nationality, b) gender, c) age groups and d) income groups. To test this hypothesis, the youngsters were assumed to have a monthly allowance of € 100 and were asked to divide this amount between clothing, eating and drinking and entertainment. According to the results, German teenagers spend most of their money on clothing (47,08), while Turkish teenagers spend on eating / drinking (40,71). Although the amount invested in entertainment remains lower in both groups, German teenagers allocate more money

than Turks (29,81). All these differences were significant at p <0.05. When a comparison is made on the basis of gender, statistical difference was found in clothing and eating/drinking but not in entertainment. While girls spend more than half of their allowances (51,86) on clothing, boys mostly spend it on eating/drinking (36,41). For age, statistically significant difference was found only in the allowance spent on clothing. The maximum amount of allowance spent on clothing in the 12-14 age group (52.67), is followed by the 15-16 age group (46.23) and the 17-18 age group (36.82). Finally, income is not found to create any difference in clothing, eating / drinking and entertainment expenses.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research has found that even though adolescents' fashion involvement is high their brand awareness is not. For this reason, if Turkish brands such as Koton or LC Waikiki consider to operate in Germany, to become a brand may not be a priority objective. Clothing motivation based on recreation is the most effective motivation among adolescents' clothing motivations. Therefore, a message with entertainment and joy in communication activities can be developed and brand positioning can be managed accordingly.

As a result of the findings of the study, it is suggested that the apparel producers operating in Germany should make market segmentation on the basis of gender and age instead of the nationality. It was found that boys have a higher average in brand awareness, while girls are more involved in fashion and following new trends in this area. Communication activities may focus on age groups over the age of 15 with the aim of increasing fashion and clothing involvement of adolescents. Since income does not create any difference, focusing on income for marketing decisions may not be necessary.

Turkish adolescents spend their allowance on eating/drinking while Germans spend on clothing and entertainment. On a gender-based comparison, it has been found that girls use their allowance for clothing, while boys use it for eating/drinking. In order to appeal more to those who use their allowance for entertainment and eating/drinking, it is possible to increase sales by issuing coupons for movie tickets or food/beverage. On the other hand, considering the finding that adolescents aged 12-14 are more involved in clothing and that they are willing to allocate more than half of their allowance on clothing, it may be possible to design more affordable clothes or accessories assuming that their allowances would be less than the older age groups.