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**Research of the Brand's
Attributes in Fashion
Industry**

FASHION

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ARTIGES DE VOYAGE
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ISTRAŽIVANJE ATRIBUTA BRENDA U MODNOJ INDUSTRIJI

Apstrakt: Neosporno je da većina ljudi ima svoje omiljene brendove. Takođe, neosporno je da ti brendovi u njima bude različite emocije. Ukoliko su emocije pozitivne, brend ima veće šanse da postane omiljen. Brend ima određene atribute (karakteristike), ima ličnost, ima svoje "ja". On nudi obećanja, garantuje vrednost i kvalitet. Brendovima se mogu pripisivati ljudske osobine (en: brand personality), pa se mogu i opisivati atributima koji se koriste za opisivanje osoba. Ukoliko pretpostavimo da dragim osobama možemo da pripišemo atribute kojima bismo mogli da ih opišemo, onda to možemo da primenimo i na brendove. U radu su predstavljena istraživanja vezana za doživljaj atributa brenda modne industrije koje izaziva kod potrošača, a od ponuđenih dvadeset atributa brenda neki atributi su visoko rangirani kao što su atributi su: koristan, urban, praktičan, kreativan i globalan.

Ključne reči: brendiranje, modna industrija, atributi brenda, marketing

RESEARCH OF THE BRAND'S ATTRIBUTES IN FASHION INDUSTRY

Abstract: Most people unquestionably have their favourite brands. Those brands unquestionably evoke different emotions within people as well. If the emotions are positive, brand has greater chances to become popular. Brand has certain attributes (characteristics), it has personality, and it has its own self. It offers promises, guarantees value and quality. Human characteristics can be assigned to brands (brand personality), so they can be described with attributes used for describing people. If it is assumed that attributes can be assigned to the dear persons, then it is possible to apply on brands. Researches regarding brands' attributes experience in modern industry evoked within the consumers are presented in this paper; and some brand's attributes among twenty of them are highly ranked such as: useful, urban, practical, creative and global.

Key words: branding, fashion industry, brand's attributes, marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

The word brand became synonym for something good at the end of 20th century. The simplest definition of a brand is an expression that products and services of high quality are called, and according to wider definition, concept of a brand becomes synonym of the highest universal value due to globalisation and fast society development. The word brand was used daily, and some brands have become more powerful than some world's countries, because a good brand brought big income. To create a good brand and manage it during its lifetime is not a process conducted over night but it takes years, decades and sometimes, even centuries.

One of many brand's definitions is it is beloved trademark. When will you fall in love a person, or something, or anything? Answer to the question is only when his/hers personal characteristics suit you entirely.

If the brand's essence is more about the consumers than the product or service itself, it is clear that the brand formation should be based on the brand's function perceived by the consumers rather than on what does the brand represent for the company ([1], [2]).

There are many suggested brand models, but one thing that they have in common is that the brand is based on three components – functional component, comparative component and emotional component ([5]). When analysing the components, it is necessary to answer the questions:

1. What does the brand do for the consumers? (functional component)

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2. What makes the brand different from the competition's brand? (comparative component)
3. What feelings does the brand evoke in the consumers? (emotional component).

Brand can be defined as a promise given to the consumers, composed out of group of relevant products' features, that their needs would be satisfied when buying the products ([12]). Very illustrative explanation says that most top managers does not see symbols, brands and names simply as *icing*, but as *yeast that contributes to the cake's growth* ([6]). Table 1 resumes some of the key brands' advantages.

- **Helps consumers to identify supporting brand**
- **Speeds up the purchase process**
- **Provides status and psycho-social identification**
- **Helps in quality and product price evaluation**
- **Shrinks the purchase risk**
- **Alleviates anew purchase**
- **Enables wider acceptance of new products within the same brand**
- **Causes consumers' loyalty**

Table 1 Brand advantages [11]

It can be said that the brand's development is in range from recognition to complete loyalty. It can be presented graphically as in figure 1.

Value of a brand is usually called brand's equality. The other way to view brand's equality is to consider marketing and financial values connected with brand's position on market. Brand's equality is usually connected with awareness of brand's name, loyalty

and quality. Even though it is difficult to measure brand's equality, it can be said it represents brand's value for an organisation [11].

Most people unquestionably have their favourite brands. Those brands unquestionably evoke different emotions within people as well. If the emotions are positive, brand has greater chances to become the favourite one. Emotions represent a category difficult to quantify. A way to get the answers about consumers' feeling when thinking or using favourite brand, as well as the emotion's intensity, is to offer them the attributes assigned to the brand.

In this way it could be determined which attributes are experienced intensively, they could be ranked and used on the beginning of the branding process and during the process in order to direct brand towards desired direction.

Among other things, brand creation assumes decision making on which types of messages will brand send to its consumers. Brand's strength mostly depends upon the way consumers experience the brand. If there is a list of attributes that evoke the most intense emotions when regarding the favourite brand, creation and management of a brand and implementation of the attributes into a brand is easier.

Brand's identity is a basis, which, in later brand's creation and maintenance, enables clear, concrete and focused business operations, without permitting far too big deviation from determined path towards the planned goal.

Human characteristics can be assigned to brands (brand personality), so they can be described with attributes used for describing people. If it is assumed that attributes can be assigned to dear persons, then it is possible to apply on brands. It means a list of attributes that are the most intensively experienced can be made when favourite consumer's brands are regarded, and

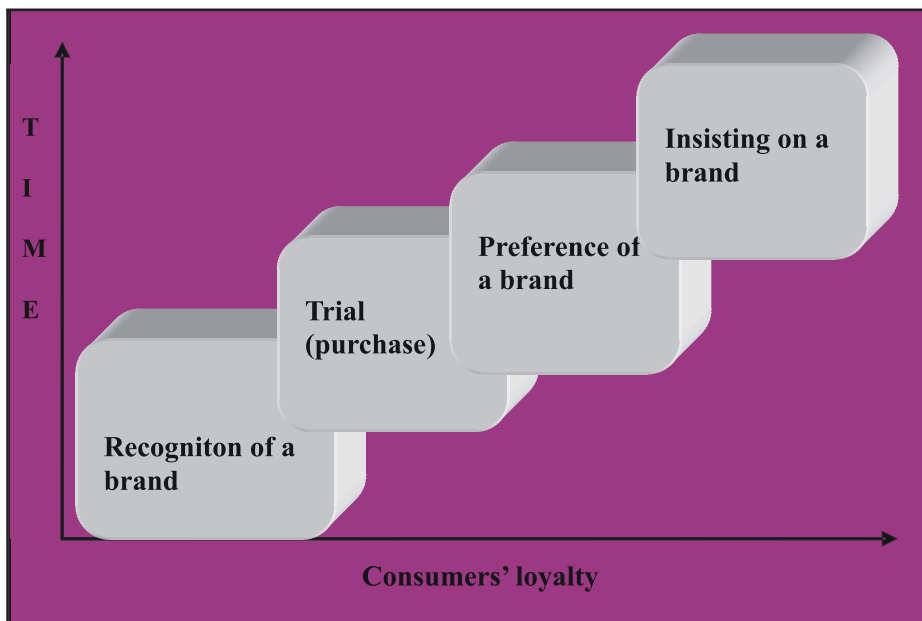


Figure 1 Brand's development – from recognition to insisting [11]

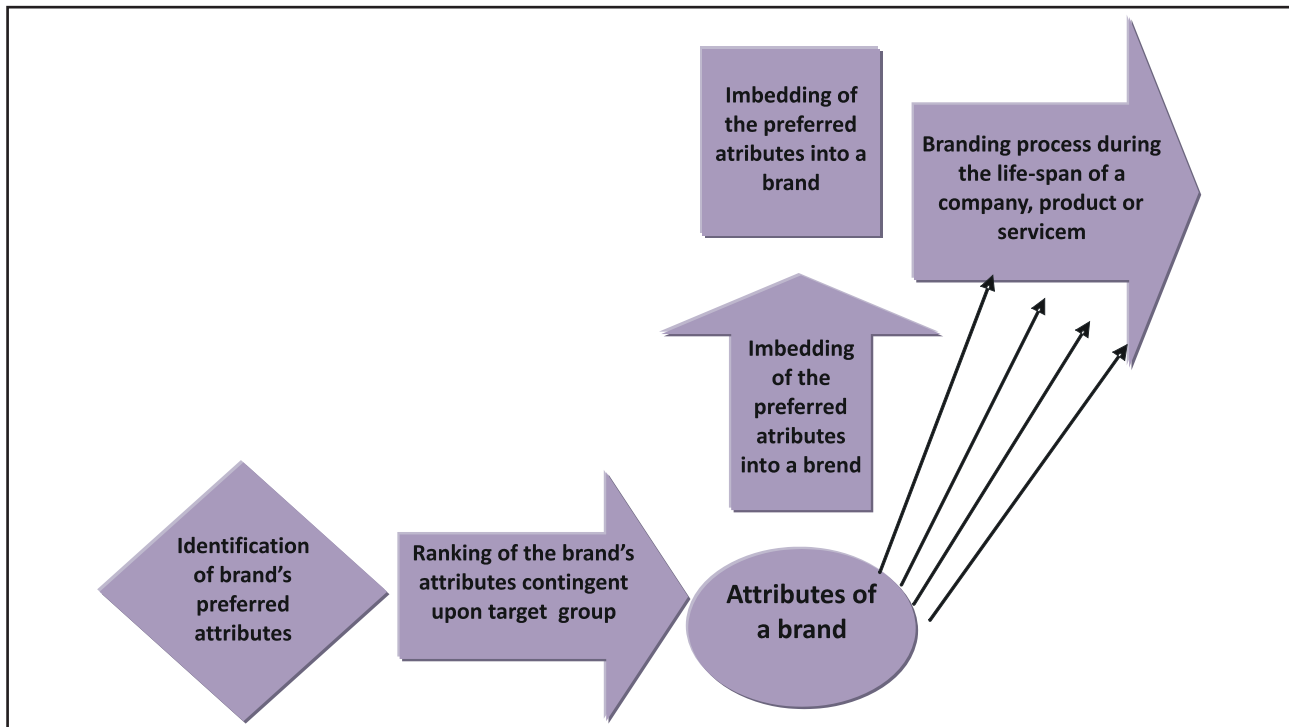


Figure 2 Graphical illustration of brand attributes usage in branding process

the list can be applied in the branding process by implementing the most intensively experienced attributes into the brand that one desires to create or improve.

The consumers often wonder whether the branded goods are more worth from the other, similar goods without any famous trademarks. There are many questions and theories but only one is undeniable: one should never doubt the companies that invest great amount of assets, ideas, talents, love and risk, intend to risk previously stated items with bad design, services or products' quality.

Fashion companies are facing with bigger challenges when fighting to attract and keep new consumers who are offered new products and markets. In order to create strong brand, it is necessary to possess expert planning and long-term capital investment. Successful brand is actually an excellent product or service, with creatively designed and conducted marketing. Branding has become marketing's priority, because successful brands achieve higher prices and gain over loyalty, and attract both consumers and financiers. Marketing agents of the successful 21st century brands must be extremely efficient in strategic brand management, which assumes implementation of marketing activities and programmes in order to build brands, as well as brand management to increase its value. Brands and its value must be regarded and recognised as strategic capital.

It is important to adjust brand and business strategy, and this can be performed successfully if brand is carefully monitored and improved by company's top leadership and if employees are in good connection with the organisation and its brands. In order to make a consumer loyal to a fashion industry product – brand, the consumer must purchase the product sufficiently and there must be cognitional obligation to do that. A brand must have sufficient meaning for the consumer, which means, he buys not only complacency or propitiatory but also what brand represents, that is, important benefits for the consumer (in contrast to mass-consumption products). Being loyal to a brand represents consumers' inner commitment to repeat purchase of certain brands. Even though people from marketing sector attempt to make consumers loyal to a brand, they must be interested for usage rate of some products on different markets and in different consumers [9].

2. BRANDING CHARACTERISTICS IN FASHION INDUSTRY

The main difference between fashion industry market and other mass-consumption products markets is in the products and services' nature and complexity, in demand's nature and variety, in considerably smaller number of consumers, in greater products quantity per consumer and, the last but not the least, in closer and long-lasting relations between the producer and

consumer. Holistic approach to branding is necessary in order to see that everything, from development, design to realisation of marketing programmes, processes and activities, is connected and intervened between one another ([7], page 21). Branding represents more than putting the brand's name and logo on product or service. Brand is intangible concept. In order to simplify and easier understanding, brand is often equalised with material elements of marketing communications used as its support – advertising, logos, slogans, jingles and so on – but brand is far more than that: 'brand is a promise – total perception' ([7], page 29).

Brand has special place in consumer's conscience due to previous experiences, associations and future expectation. Brand is abbreviation for the attributes, advantages, beliefs and values which differentiate, shrink complexity and simplify the decision making process in marketing and management. Brand with clear purpose is like a compass with two sides, one directs the consumer towards the right products, and the other side directs product designers, people in charge of marketing and promotion when the new versions of their products are developed and improved on the market. Brand creation enables the company to create benefit, differing one brand from the other. Successful brands are those, which create a set of brand values superior in relation to competition brands. Brand creation involves good understanding and functional (easy use) and emotional (trust) values that a consumer uses when choosing between the brands. Company's ability to combine them in a unique way is necessary to create extended product preferred by the consumers – the real marketing value strategy.

If a company accepts the brand concept as a promise given to its consumers, it is obvious it can exist only if it constantly fulfils the given promise. Of course, the promise given by a brand must be clearly defined, relevant and meaningful, and it should not be mixed with excessive marketing promises. Consumers are engulfed with imposing offers on many markets. Brands represent abbreviation for the attributes, advantages, beliefs and values. They contain almost everything the company and its product or service represent. Branding triangle shows visually marketing connections between the company as an organisation, its co-workers and its consumers.

'The following branding delusion is it is perceived as a small segment within marketing management' (7, page 21). Brand manager's monitoring of the efforts invested in branding as a usual short-term business

within a company is not enough to make those efforts successful. A duty of everyone employed in a company, starting from the top management to workers is to build, support and protect strong brands within a company. Brands and its value must be understood and recognised as the strategic capital (especially in fashion industry), which they actually are, and basis of concurrence advantage and long-term profitability. The key point is to adjust brand and business strategies, and this can be performed successfully if brand is carefully monitored and improved by a company's top leadership.

Fashion clothing product market is a real brand market. The most famous fashion companies own their success to the building of brand image. 'Benetton', 'Armani', 'Versace', 'Levi's', 'Piere Cardin', 'Valentino', 'Coco Chanel' and 'Givenshy' are the most famous trade marks in the fashion world and they are created in the countries that are leading clothes producers in the world (Italy, France, USA, Germany). Several trademarks of fashion clothes products have profiled on Serbian and ex-Yugoslavian market 'Kluz', 'Beko', 'Yumko', but some new clothing items brands are created on the Serbian market during the past few years: 'Mona', 'AMC', 'Todor', 'Nicola's', 'St. George', 'Uno Martin', 'Zekstra', 'Trikotaža Ivković', 'Balašević'. Their good position and image are the result of a clearly formulated and applied strategy of fashion-clothing item, its identity and quality. 'Sirogojno' is a brand for manually braided sweaters, which made a breakthrough on world's market. They have created an image of recognisable fashion clothing item on the world's market using the material, fabrication method and good design of high quality [9].

World's fashion scene is full of small and big brands, and of those, which keep their positions by nourishing quality and tradition, and which plan to spread, extend their business and charm new consumers. Introduction of various approaches in fashion, exposing the new ideas and fashion vision are always interesting and inspiring. Many fashion brands will never occur here, but therefore it is interesting to get to know them.

Both consumers and producers are able to monitor the world's situation by global sources, and seek for the suppliers or consumers that suit the best their specific needs and demands. Relationship development process is expensive and quite complex and therefore only the best partners are searched for, because the quality demands high quality partners. Regular identification of any inefficiency in relation

to sales and purchase must be in focus in order to eliminate them. The most efficient channels of sales representatives and consumers will survive. Any inefficiency of both soft and hard costs is identified and removed from the relation. Companies ready to make strategic but not cosmetic changes, in a way that they cooperate with the consumers/suppliers, have the possibility to succeed, and efficient application of marketing strategies becomes significant.

Brand's lifetime planning in marketing is based upon the needs, because many companies are to blame for brand's aging. The connection with the experts who know 'the worst practices' and know how to avoid it is necessary. Brands should not be changed frivolously, but companies should keep the ones desired by the consumers – and not by the subjective owners or extremely aggressively brand managers. Quitting from the inefficient brands is easier if the managers in charge of the consumers segment controlled company's marketing resources. This type of wide reinvestments is possible only if it fundamentally changes the executive team sector. Changes barely perceived at the beginning but essential in time, will be seen if those regulations are applied serially. People in a company will understand the brands are their ultimate goal, and the company's ultimate goal is creation and nourishment of profitable and long-lasting relations with the consumers.

3. CONSUMERS' EMOTIONS AND BRAND STRATEGY

While the creation of the business strategy implies the setting and accomplishment of the business goals, the creation of the company's brand emphasizes, by using the language and symbols, the reason for business existence, and the company's contribution to the consumers. It is clear that there is a connection between the business strategy and branding strategy because the business strategy defines the business rationally, while the branding strategy defines it emotionally [7].

The most famous café chain 'Starbucks' was the result of frustration that its initiator Howard Shultz experienced due to lousy service quality in the cafés in Seattle. He identified the place which was neither working place nor home, but the place where the consumers can escape the everyday routine. The wide range of drinks, comfortable interior design and service routine help them in this.

Along 'Starbucks', other brands emphasize its essence, by setting in motion and by supporting the

consumers in their aspirations and efforts [7] such as in the following examples:

- 'Nike' – 'to do your best' (to achieve the best you can),
- 'Coca Cola' – 'to refresh' (to freshen),
- 'Microsoft' – 'to help realize your potential' (to help you see your potentials).

Even in the industrial branches such as cement or artificial manure production, desirable and good brands can be designed. 'Cemex' or 'BASF' differ from the competitive producers in producing the cement that dries more quickly, or in producing the manure that makes you grass more green.

The brand is defined in a way it is experienced, by image and reputation created in the consumer's conscience. The company's brand is the company's reputation. The product's brand is the product's reputation [3]. Does one achieve better sport results by wearing 'Nike' or 'Adidas', and does 'Coca Cola' refresh better than 'Pepsi'.

The great brands are rarely according to the consumers' taste, some people like them, some do not, but anyway they affect the emotions. The director of a famous consultant company 'Saatchi and Saatchi', Kevin Roberts, points out that 'really strong brands are the one you love deeply and unconditionally...'

4. RESEARCH RESULTS OF FASHION INDUSTRY PRODUCT BRAND'S ATTRIBUTES

Specificity of the research lies in the possibility of the examinees to choose their favourite brand by themselves and to analyse it in the questionnaire through the offered attributes. It was estimated that there was a significant emotional connection between the examinees and the brand, which gave more relevant results since their favourite brand is concerned. It was pointed out that the chosen brand must be the brand they used or still use in order to avoid the examinees to choose the brands they have no personal experience with.

The survey was conducted over the internet. Regarding the prolixity, it was difficult to keep the examinees concentrated in the test versions of the questionnaire. In order to decrease the number of the examinees who abandon the filling in the questionnaire, the version that entirely occupied the examinees' attention and enabled the obtaining of the relevant information was created, [4].

The preview of the offered brand's attributes and the formulated questions presented to the examinees follows:

- **Innovative** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand inclined to improve, plan and introduce new products and services? (to which extent is it innovative)*
- **Modern** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand modern? (it always follows trends in the comparison with the competition).*
- **Charismatic** – the question was: *To what extent is your brand charismatic? (if it was a person, could your brand motivate and set in motion other people, would people carefully listen to it)*
- **Different** – the question was: *To what extent is your brand different? (in comparison with the competition).*
- **Aggressive** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand aggressive? (if it was a person, would your favourite brand be inclined to attack).*
- **Attractive** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand attractive? (whether in an aesthetic or any other way).*
- **Stable** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand stable? (it is not easy to disturb it, it keeps the feet on the ground).*
- **Cool** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand cool? (in comparison with a actor or actress that are in your opinion the coolest).*
- **Flexible** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand flexible? (is it capable to adjust the new situation quickly).*
- **Optimistic** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand optimistic? (do you think your favourite brand is expecting the bright future for every one and does it pass its optimism on you).*
- **Reliable** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand reliable? (can you rely on him entirely without any fear it would fail you).*
- **Artistic** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand artistic? (if it was a person, would your favourite brand be talented for art and would the brand practice the art).*
- **Unusual** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand unusual? (unconventional and unexpected).*
- **Wise** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand*

wise? (if it was a person, could it be a state president or ancient Greek philosopher).

- **Practical** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand practical? (when used).*
- **Useful** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand useful? (for what is he intended for).*
- **Global** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand global? (equally experienced worldwide).*
- **Urban** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand urban? (if it was a person, would it live and work in a big city).*
- **Wealthy** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand wealthy? (if it was a person, would it have a house and an expensive car).*
- **Detailed** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand detailed? (does it think of every detail).* **Creative** – the question was: *To what extent is your favourite brand creative?*

4.1. Research description and specimen

By using the literature, ([8], [14]) and a series of minor research ([13], [10]) 20 attributes which connect people with their favourite brands have been defined. The attributes represent the associations that the consumers have while shopping, using and sheer imagining of a brand. The Likert's ten point rating scale was used to examine in which quantity the consumers experience the offered brand's attributes. The questions in the questionnaire were.

398 examinees have filled in the questionnaire, 258 were female and 113 male. The examinees were from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia.

4.2. Ranking of the products' brand attributes in fashion industry

After the questionnaire was processed and the attributes of the examinees' favourite brands were ranked, several dominating attributes among both women and men were distinguished. Since the examinees were asked to choose favourite brand in fashion industry they use, it was to be expected they

Table 2 Review of the examinees specimen

Examinees review	Number of the examinees	%
Female	285	71,6
Male	113	28,4
Total	398	100

Table 3 Brand's attributes ranking when fashion industry brands are concerned

All examinees		Female		Male	
1	URBAN	1	URBAN	1	URBAN
2	CREATIVE	2	USEFUL	2	CREATIVE
3	USEFUL	3	CREATIVE	3	MODERN
4	PRACTICAL	4	ATTRACTIVE	4	RELIABLE
5	GLOBAL	5	PRACTICAL	5	USEFUL

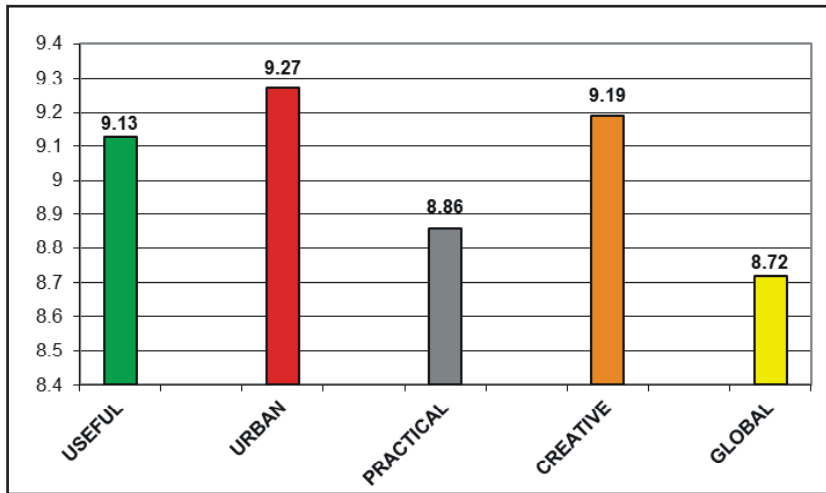


Figure 3 Illustration of highly ranked attributes of fashion industry brands

would perceive mainly positive brand's attributes and they would evaluate it on the Likert's ten point rating scale. Still, the research has showed there are differences in experience intensity of the offered attributes, and therefore, they are ranked according to the examinees' average perception intensity. Differences between male and female perception are very different when fashion industry is concerned. Attribute *urban* is on the first place for both male and female, and attribute *creative* is highly ranked. Women greatly experience their favourite brand as *useful* then men, and men greatly experience their favourite brand as *modern* then women. Attribute *attractive* concerning women is positioned around the middle in the *table 3*, while the attribute *reliable* is positioned just below the middle of the table of highly ranked brand's attributes.

Attribute *urban* is ranked on the first place among 20 offered attributes of favourite fashion industry brand according to the examinees, and the value gained is 9.27, while the attribute *creative* is ranked on the second place with value of 9.13. Attributes *useful* and *practical* are also highly ranked, which was unexpected when fashion industry products are concerned. Scheme illustration shows the highly ranked, that is, the best five ranked attributes of fashion indus-

try brands (*urban, creative, useful, practical, global*).

CONCLUSION

Branding is culmination of entire marketing process. All elements of marketing mix are summed up in

it. Brand's success is the highlight of all actions ever taken in order to succeed on the market. Successful branding process in the 21st century economy is at the same time the final business success, and satisfied consumers are the result.

Value of the product's brand belonging to the fashion industry should be defined according to the marketing effects exclusively assigned to the brand itself. None of the companies can win if its products and offers are similar to some other product or offer. Brand has a special place within the consumers' conscience due to

previous experiences, associations and future expectations. Brand represents abbreviation for attributes, advantages, beliefs and values which differentiate, decrease complexity and simplify decision making process within marketing and management sector.

The conducted research has showed the certain attributes experienced by the consumers, when thinking about or using the favourite fashion industry brand, are greatly experienced than some other attributes. This confirms the starting assumption that there are differences in experience intensity of the offered attributes and that those differences occur when the examinees sex is concerned. Out of 20 offered brand's attributes, highly ranked attributes are: useful, urban, practical, creative and global. Even though 400 examinees have been questioned, research results would be more relevant with larger specimen and with more specified age groups. Still, the results can help brand managers to improve their brands.

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