



Gender differences in brand attitude towards real unhealthy and fictitious healthy brands: The role of slogan familiarity

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of brand slogans (also referred to as slogans in this study) in communicating product information has been widely discussed, but there is limited research on whether consumers' familiarity with slogans differs for healthy and unhealthy products, and whether gender plays a role in this context. This study investigates consumer familiarity with real unhealthy and fictitious healthy slogans and examines how consumers evaluate these slogans, which ultimately influences their brand attitude. A mixed-method approach was employed to address the research questions and hypotheses. First, a content analysis was conducted using relevant literature on slogan familiarity and brand attitude from 2007 to 2022. Subsequently, advertisement stimuli were developed based on the content analysis findings. Next, a questionnaire survey was conducted involving 122 local university students in Malaysia. The results indicate that respondents who were familiar with real slogans tended to have a positive attitude towards real brands, while participants more familiar with fictitious healthy brands exhibited a positive attitude towards fictitious healthy brands. Interestingly, gender was found to interact with slogan familiarity, specifically for fictitious healthy brands, and this effect was predominantly true for female participants only. Female consumers were found to be more affected by the slogan or messaging strategy for healthy products compared to male consumers, even for unfamiliar brands. Based on the research findings, marketers may consider tailoring their branding strategies to align with their target consumers' brand exposure, slogan familiarity, and demographic characteristics, such as gender.

Keywords: *Slogan familiarity, slogan attitude, brand attitude, healthy food, gender*

INTRODUCTION

A 2020 survey in Malaysia revealed that food and groceries accounted for 55% of all e-commerce purchases, highlighting their popularity among consumers (Statista, 2022). The global market for food inclusions, estimated at USD13.85 billion in 2022, is projected to grow to USD19.42 billion by 2030, up from USD14.26 billion in 2023, with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4.51% (Fortune Business Insights, 2023). The growing demand for nutrient-enriched products to enhance overall health is expected to open substantial opportunities for nutritious food manufacturers (Fortune Business Insights, 2020). As for healthy beverages, the global market was valued at USD478.10 billion in 2019, and it is projected to grow at a CAGR of 6.06% over the forecasted period (Infinium Global Research, 2020). The healthy drink market is also anticipated to expand rapidly between 2022 and 2027, with a CAGR of 7.88% (Mordor Intelligence, 2023).

The advertising of food and beverages are pervasive in daily life (Huang et al., 2018), and the food product advertising industry is substantial (Elder & Krishna, 2010). According to Liu (2022), one of the most effective ways for a brand to convey its identity in the market is through its slogan. A slogan serves as a concise summary of a brand's identity, promoting its benefits, positioning the brand, encouraging purchases, and facilitating word-of-mouth marketing (Papp-Vary, 2022). Given the critical role of slogans in shaping brand identity (Johan et al., 2022), further research in this area is essential.

With respect to slogan and familiarity, most studies focus on brand familiarity rather than slogan familiarity per se. In the study conducted by Carrillat et al. (2015), the slogan was the only portion of the website snippet used to gauge brand familiarity. Many studies have employed slogan familiarity in terms of accurate/inaccurate slogan recall as the most commonly utilised dependent variable (Silveira & Galvao, 2016). However, the role of slogan familiarity as an independent variable influencing attitude towards the slogan should not be undermined. There are studies on slogan familiarity (Dass et al., 2023; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006; Vance & Virtue, 2011) but these studies did not investigate the effect of slogan familiarity on slogan attitude/liking or examine healthy versus unhealthy food slogans. A study that involved slogan familiarity and slogan liking was conducted by Hodges et al. (2023) but this research only utilised slogan familiarity as a control variable rather than an independent variable and used only real slogans of various product categories, while the study by Carrillat et al. (2015) only presented slogans as part of a website excerpt for brand familiarity rather than studying slogan familiarity exclusively.

As for slogan attitudes, Dass et al. (2014) and Hodges et al. (2023) argue that there is a lack of comprehensive information regarding the factors that make a slogan likeable. Previous research on slogans has primarily focused on their impact or the alignment between a brand and a slogan (e.g., Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006). Therefore, scholars should be more proactive in conducting research on slogans, especially regarding the elements that contribute to the likeability of slogans. While there have been studies conducted on slogan likeability (e.g., Dass et al., 2014; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006), these studies did not explore whether slogan likeability is influenced by slogan familiarity or other factors.

Numerous slogan studies have investigated the direct impact of rhyming and jingles on slogan recall (Dass et al., 2023). This raises questions about existing research on other aspects of slogans, especially factors like slogan likeability, particularly in the context of unknown or fictitious slogans used for specific product categories, such as healthy drinks. A levy on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) scheduled to take effect in April 2019 in Malaysia (Mohd Hanim et al., 2021), has created a need to study Malaysian consumers'

reactions to slogans promoting healthy and non-healthy beverages. However, in this study, we specifically focus on the impact of slogans in the context of healthy drinks. To the best of our knowledge, there have been relatively few studies conducted on healthy drinks, particularly regarding the slogans associated with them. Therefore, an investigation into the slogans of healthy drinks is essential.

Furthermore, we argue that gender may elicit different responses to healthy and unhealthy products since men often lead less healthy lifestyles than women, particularly in terms of their eating habits (Alkazemi, 2019; Courtenay, 2000) and women have higher nutritional knowledge than men (Kalkan, 2019; Yildizer et al., 2018). Despite this, previous studies have yielded inconclusive findings regarding such gender effect. Kusá et al. (2021) found no discernible association between gender and preferences for specific forms of food slogans. Also, disparities in food consumption patterns between genders have been the subject of numerous empirical studies, but the moderating influence of gender has not yet produced definitive results (Shin et al., 2020).

Considering the claims provided by the above-mentioned scholars, the present study attempts to obtain the answers to the following questions:

- RQ1: Does consumers' familiarity with the slogans of real unhealthy brands impact their attitude towards those brands?
- RQ2: Does consumers' familiarity with the slogans of fictitious healthy brands impact their attitude towards those brands?
- RQ3: Do females have stronger brand attitude towards the slogans of fictitious healthy brands compared to males, and to what extent?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mere exposure theory

The theoretical foundation for this study is the “mere exposure theory,” developed by Robert Zajonc in 1968. Zajonc's (1968) theory suggests that repeated exposure to a stimulus is necessary for individuals to develop a more positive attitude towards it. Concerning slogans, Dass et al. (2014) proposed that the likeability of a slogan would increase with greater exposure to it. However, despite this claim, Dass et al.'s (2014) study, which also drew on the mere exposure theory, did not reveal any significant effect of exposure on slogan likability. On the other hand, Dahmén and Rosengren (2005) argue that repeated exposure to a slogan may lead consumers to recall how much they like the brand. Building on these claims and Zajonc's (1968) mere exposure theory, the present study aims to investigate whether there is any significant relationship between slogan familiarity and attitude towards brand (through brand slogan).

Unhealthy and healthy food classification and food advertising

Potvin Kent et al. (2019) classified sugary drinks and confectionery as unhealthy products while Schultz et al. (2021) specifically provided examples of unhealthy foods such as chocolate, sugary biscuits, and soft drinks. Han (2018) reported that among established food companies with low health ratings are PepsiCo, Mondelez and Nestle, known for their respective products: Pepsi, Cadbury and Milo. Meanwhile, healthy food is defined as food containing specific nutrients by Chang et al. (2020) and also as a diet that promotes health after consumption (Nonthapot & Jirukkakul, 2023). For healthy drinks, semi-skimmed milk, yoghurt beverages, pure fruit and vegetable juices are examples of nutritious beverages (Lim & Goh, 2019).

A brief examination of contemporary advertisements (ads) reveals that food marketing is often about highlighting the food's taste (Elder & Krishna, 2010; Krishna et al., 2016). Food can be advertised using linguistic allusions to the senses, employing language that evokes the food's taste, smell, appearance, sound and texture (Roose & Mulier, 2020). Roose and Mulier (2020) argue that multi-sensory ads for healthy food should influence sensory perceptions related to all five senses for a more favourable response compared to a single-sensory ad that solely emphasises taste. Roose et al. (2018) proposed two approaches for advertising food: transformational ads, which aim to enhance the experience of consuming the product and informational ads, which provide a more objective description of the product.

Brand familiarity, slogan familiarity, brand liking/attitude and slogan liking/attitude

Exposure to a product is a complicated concept tied to an individual's experience with the product and exposure is the important reason for familiarity (Nacef et al., 2019). Brand familiarity serves as a cognitive structure in the consumer's memory that enables them to distinguish between familiar and unrecognised brands and pay greater attention to the familiar brand (Boronczyk et al., 2018). A familiar brand will possibly be favoured more compared to an unfamiliar one as consumers trust familiar brands more (Foroudi, 2019). Despite this, Van Berlo et al. (2020) contended that neither the unfamiliar nor familiar brand had any influence on brand attitude. In terms of slogan, Dass et al. (2014) claimed that slogan liking could be influenced by its familiarity, and they also hypothesised that the more slogan exposure, the more slogan likeability, but this was later not supported by their findings. In a study by Blair (2020), the original (real) slogans were more recognisable than their altered (fictitious) equivalents.

Previous processing fluency studies suggest that consumers favour familiar slogans over novel slogans (Blair, 2020). However, the results of Blair's (2020) study show that while respondents favoured the familiar version of each brand's slogan over the new one, the magnitude of such familiarity impact differed across the brands studied. Innes (2023) reported that a study conducted by the University of Missouri and University of Arizona shows that slogans that are highly favoured tend to be less remembered, whereas the most remembered ones are typically less favoured. This suggests that being familiar and remembered does not necessarily result in slogan liking. Based on the claims above, the present study proposes these hypotheses:

H1: Familiarity with the slogans of real unhealthy brands will positively influence brand attitude towards real brands.

H2: Familiarity with the slogans of fictitious healthy brands will positively influence brand attitude towards fictitious brands.

Gender and its relation to brand attitude and slogan liking

Noble et al. (2014) claimed that the research on how gender affects advertising demonstrates that men and women might react to ads differently, and males and females respond differently to the emotional and rational appeals in advertising. In terms of food, gender has been highlighted as the main factor for perception, attitude and food preference (Bellows et al., 2010). Food advertising has a higher impact on boys' food decisions than on girls' and this shows that male and female children/adolescents do not react similarly to food advertisements (Amson et al., 2023). Previous investigations on the moderating effect of gender on food consumption habits have come to no clear conclusions (Shin et al., 2020).

Dass et al.'s (2014) study discovered that women had a higher positive attitude towards the slogans studied which were mostly food slogans. Wang's (2021) study on food brands such as KFC, Burger King and Pespi, among others, revealed that men like brands with extreme arousal ratings in their slogans, whilst women favour more impulsive and sensitive slogans. Adams and Guens (2007) predicted that girls would respond more favourably to the healthy slogan than unhealthy one, whereas boys would not really differentiate between the two slogans. Based on the above-mentioned claims, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Females will exhibit a stronger brand attitude towards the slogans of fictitious healthy brands compared to males.

Research framework

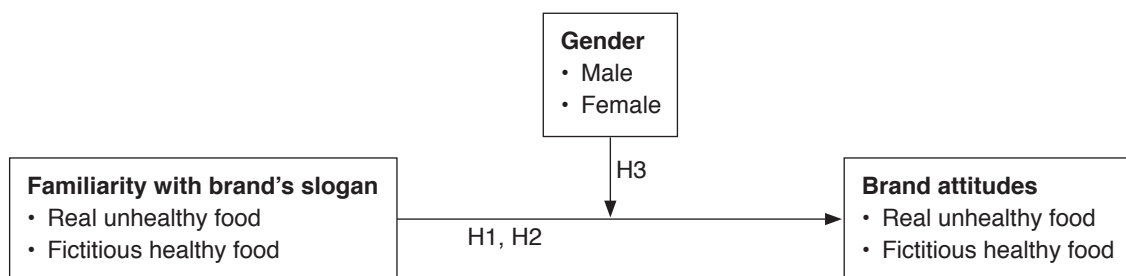


Figure 1. Research framework on gender moderating the effects of familiarity with a brand's slogan on brand attitudes

METHODS

Research design

We employed a mixed-method approach. Firstly, we utilised a qualitative method to conduct content analysis of the literature published from 2007 to 2022, focusing on slogans in promoting healthy versus non-healthy products. The content analysis method was based on Tong and Su's (2022) thematic analysis, which aimed to explore slogan familiarity and slogans commonly used to attract consumers. The objective was to obtain a deeper understanding of the slogans associated with these products and how consumers react to them (referred to as brand attitude in this study). The findings from the content analysis were also instrumental in developing the advertising stimuli that respondents would evaluate using a questionnaire. For the quantitative method, we collected data through a questionnaire survey. To address H1 and H2, we used multiple regression, while for testing whether gender acted as a moderator between slogan familiarity and brand attitude, addressing H3, we employed dummy regression. The quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 29.

Stimulus ads: Real (unhealthy food) slogan selection and fictitious (healthy food) slogan development

To select the unhealthy food choices that represent real slogans, we based our decision on leading brands as indicated by the top ten worldwide food corporations shared by Leiva (2022). We carefully chose existing brand names with a global presence, especially in Malaysia. We opted for three well-recognised companies: Nestlé, Mondelez and PepsiCo

(Dobosz, 2021; Murphy et al., 2021). Then, we selected the following brands, considered as unhealthy food: Milo from Nestlé, Cadbury Dairy Milk from Mondelez, and Pepsi from PepsiCo (Han, 2018; Schultz et al., 2021). Regarding the selection of healthy food, we focused on healthy drinks. This choice was driven by the fact that consumers today are prioritising drinks that offer health benefits and millennials are leading this trend by placing a premium on nutrition that promotes well-being (Infinium Global Research, 2020).

The slogans for real brands were determined based on the current advertisements of the products. In the case of fictitious slogans, their creation followed the standard procedures, including developing slogans according to guidelines provided by scholars (e.g., Musté et al., 2015; Papp-Vary, 2022), checking existing slogan databases, and reviewing the slogans with experts to ensure content validity. For word choice and sentence structure of healthy drink slogans, we referred to www.sloganlist.com, a database of real products, advertising, and company slogans. To ensure that the fictitious slogans were not available in the market and could not cause any confounding effects, we consulted databases such as:

1. <http://www.asean-tmview.org/tmview/welcome>
2. <https://branddb.wipo.int/branddb/en/>
3. <http://www.textart.ru/advertising/slogans/search.html>

The fictitious slogans selected were those that best met the criteria for common advertising slogans, ensuring they would not cognitively burden respondents (e.g., easy to understand etc). We decided on the following fictitious slogans from the list of six created: “My new favourite juice,” “Healthy or tasty? Why not both?” and “Has healthy ever tasted so good?”.

Participants

According to Malaysia’s Household Expenditure Survey Report 2019 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020), the age group of 34 and under accounts for the majority of household spending. Tan (2019) revealed that most Malaysian internet shoppers are young people, particularly individuals between the ages of 25 to 34 (51%) and 18 to 24 (24%). University students are typically between the ages of 20 and 24 (Tan et al., 2020). This age group is particularly affected by unhealthy eating habits and food choices influenced by social media (Rounsefell et al., 2020; Saha et al., 2022). Due to these, the present study recruited university students as its sample, which is also for maintaining sample homogeneity and managing noise.

Sample size and sampling method

Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2022) claimed that the amount of representativeness required for the samples to accurately reflect the population rises as more samples are used. For most study scenarios, a sample of 100 should be adequate (Hair et al., 2018). We aimed for a sample target of 100 as this number was sufficient to answer our research questions as we utilised regression analyses (Hair et al., 2019; Memon et al., 2020). However, there was a total of 122 respondents for this study after conducting data cleaning. Crano et al. (2023) contended that convenience sample is easily reachable. Thus, the present study employed convenience sampling which was later proceeded with snowball sampling.

Data collection method

A web-based questionnaire was sent to the WhatsApp groups of marketing students of a local university. The questionnaire comprised the research introductory section, stimulus presentation and four question sections on demographic details, slogan familiarity and

brand attitude. The respondents reported their slogan familiarity using three items (7-point scale: “familiar/unfamiliar”, “have seen/have never seen”, and “have heard of/have never heard of”) (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006). For their attitude towards the slogans, a three-item, 7-point semantic differential scale (“good/bad”, “pleasant/unpleasant”, and “favourable/unfavourable”) (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006) was applied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Content analysis data

The content analysis shows that slogan familiarity is not necessarily the determinant for attitude towards healthy/unhealthy food slogans/ads and that gender influence on the attitude varies as discussed below.

Slogan messages rather than familiarity influence ad attitude/slogan liking for healthy versus unhealthy food

We analysed 30 research-based articles on healthy and unhealthy food slogans to examine if familiarity with slogans could lead to positive/negative attitudes towards them. “Familiarity” is defined by Schnurr et al. (2017) as having experience with a product. In the studies we reviewed, familiarity is generally determined by the product already being on the market (real product), while unfamiliarity refers to products that are new, unknown or fictitious. However, Campbell (2021) argues that it is not solely about the novelty of a product, as some customers might still perceive a product that has existed for decades unfamiliar. As for slogan attitude, it is measured in terms of favourable or unfavourable feelings/thoughts towards the slogan or the entire ad containing the slogan.

To understand if slogan familiarity influences slogan attitude for both healthy and unhealthy food, we examined the conclusions drawn in the articles studied. In most of the articles, product familiarity did not significantly affect consumers’ attitude towards the slogans. Instead, the slogans’ messages and meanings played a more crucial role. Also, familiar and popular brands and slogans did not necessarily result in more favourable attitudes towards the slogans or ads. The articles show that slogans’ messages can be analysed in terms of individual word usage or overall meanings they convey about food products. For instance, words indicating taste compared to health benefits were found to be more suitable for unhealthy food.

According to Adams and Geuens (2007), a healthy slogan emphasising nutritional benefits only yields a positive attitude if the product itself is considered healthy. Additionally, Schnurr’s study (2019) revealed that when advertisements emphasised the taste of a product over its healthiness, participants perceived it as unhealthy rather than healthy. Besides, a healthy food’s single-sense ad generated fewer negative attitudes than its multiple-sense ad, but such attitude was not observed in sensory ads for unhealthy products like potato chips (Roose & Mulier, 2020). The impact of a multiple-sense ad containing an unfamiliar slogan on consumers’ positive attitude is reduced when they experienced cognitive burden (Elder & Krishna, 2010).

A focus group study by Lee-Kwan (2013) found that participants reacted most favourably to catchy and informative food slogans that were simple when describing healthy food. However, the term, “healthy” was not favoured by the participants (Lee-Kwan, 2013). Rybaczewska et al.’s (2020) study on real, familiar soft drink brands showed that the brands’ slogans were equally favoured by participants, as they were considered memorable, catchy and containing product attributes. Harris et al.’s (2022) research revealed that TV exposure to unhealthy food advertisements influenced ad liking and brand attitude. The findings of

the study by Kusá et al. (2021) indicate that there is no universally applicable determinant for customer preferences regarding marketing messages or slogans. Thus, based on the studies' results, the issue of slogan familiarity influence on brand/slogan attitude for healthy versus unhealthy food still remains inconclusive but slogan message seems to produce a significant influence.

Gender influence on ad attitude/slogan liking for healthy versus unhealthy food

Studies have proven that gender can influence slogan liking. Sethi and Sharma (2021) demonstrated that males and females liked Mountain Dew and Coca-Cola slogans almost equally but differently for Thumbs Up and Pepsi. In Lancellotti and Thomas's (2018) study, the results showed that men had a less favourable attitude towards the ads labelling food as "guilty pleasures" compared to women. Nevertheless, Adams and Geuens (2007) revealed that the reactions of boys and girls to healthy and non-healthy food slogans did not substantially vary. Similarly, Kusá et al.'s (2021) investigation observed no apparent correlation between gender and preferences for styles of food ad slogans. Amson et al.'s (2023) examination also revealed that there were no significant gender differences in exposure to food marketing sources that could influence the results. Clearly, these findings suggest that gender may not consistently impact ad attitude/slogan liking for healthy and unhealthy food.

Survey data

Respondents' demographic data

Table 1. Demography of respondents

Variable		Frequency	%(n=122)
Gender	Female	74	60.7
	Male	48	39.3
Age	18 to 20	47	38.5
	21 to 23	60	49.2
	24 to 25	15	12.3
Ethnicity	Malay	115	94.3
	Chinese	3	2.4
	Indian	1	0.9
	Other	3	2.4
Educational level	Diploma	59	48.4
	Bachelor's degree	63	51.6

Based on Table 1, most participants were females (60.7%) compared to males (39.3%). The majority of respondents were 18 to 20 (38.5%) and Malays constituted the largest group (94.3%). Regarding education, 48.4% were in diploma programs, while 51.6% were pursuing bachelor's degrees.

Slogan familiarity, brand attitude and moderating effect of gender

The reliability of the brand familiarity construct met the stringent Cronbach's alpha criteria (0.8/0.9) (Medina-Molina et al., 2021). For real brands, the reliability was $\alpha = .860$, and $\alpha = .962$ for fictitious brands. The reliability for brand attitude was $\alpha = .874$ for real brands and $\alpha = .938$ for fictitious brands.

The regression results revealed that slogan familiarity for both types of brands (real $M = 6.07$, fictitious $M = 5.94$) explained 48.6% of the variance in brand attitude towards real brands ($R^2 = .48$, $F(2,121)=56.16$, $p < .001$), as illustrated in Table 2. Slogan familiarity for real brands significantly predicted a positive brand attitude ($\beta = .68$, $p < .001$), while slogan familiarity for fictitious brands did not predict brand attitude towards real brands ($\beta = .03$, ns). Therefore, the results support H1 as familiarity with the real brands' slogans positively influenced brand attitude towards these brands.

Table 2. Regression analysis summary for real brand attitude (N=122)

Variable	B	95% CI	β	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	2.52	[1.84, 3.19]		7.41	.000
Slogan familiarity (real brands)	.58	[-.47, .70]	.68	10.22	.000
Slogan familiarity (fictitious brands)	.01	[-.05, .08]	.03	.47	.637

Note: R^2 adjusted = .477, CI = confidence interval for B

The regression results showed that familiarity with both types of slogans, real ($M = 5.94$) and fictitious brands ($M = 3.55$), collectively explained 25.8% of the variance in brand attitude towards real brands ($R^2 = .25$, $F(2,121) = 20.63$, $p < .001$), as depicted in Table 3. Slogan familiarity for fictitious brands significantly predicted a positive brand attitude ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$), while slogan familiarity for real brands did not predict brand attitude towards fictitious brands ($\beta = .01$, ns). Therefore, the results support H2, indicating that familiarity with the fictitious brand slogans positively influences brand attitude towards real brands.

Table 3. Regression analysis summary for fictitious brand attitude (N=122)

Variable	B	95% CI	β	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	3.44	[2.19, 4.70]		5.44	.000
Slogan familiarity (real brands)	.02	[-.19, .23]	.01	.20	.841
Slogan familiarity (fictitious brands)	.38	[-.26, .50]	.50	6.22	.000

Note: R^2 adjusted = .245, CI = confidence interval for B

The regression model, shown in Table 4, demonstrates that the predictors collectively explain 27.3% of the variance in the dependent variable (fictitious brands) ($R^2 = .27$, $F(3,121)=16.143$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, the gender variable significantly interacted with slogan familiarity for fictitious brands ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$), but not for real brands ($\beta = .51$, $p = .879$). The regression equation provided below pertains only to fictitious brands, as it yielded significant effects:

$$Y_i = 3.36 + .38 (\text{slogan familiarity for fictitious brand}) + .46 (\text{gender})$$

The results suggest that females have a more significant impact on fictitious brand attitude ($\beta = .46$, $p = .02$) with a notable interaction with slogan familiarity for fictitious brands. The positive β coefficient for females indicates that they hold a more positive attitude than males when evaluating the slogans of fictitious brands and these findings support H3.

Table 4. Regression analysis summary for fictitious brand attitude with gender effect (N=122)

Variable	B	95% CI	β	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	3.36	[2.13, 4.59]		5.40	.000
Slogan familiarity (real brands)	-.01	[-.22, .19]	-.01	-.15	.879
Slogan familiarity (fictitious brands)	.38	[.26, .50]	.50	6.22	.000
Gender	.46	[.07, .85]	.18	2.36	.020

Note: R^2 adjusted = .273, CI = confidence interval for B

DISCUSSION

Our study shows that familiarity with the real brand slogans positively influences the attitude towards those brands. The results suggest that the impact of slogan familiarity varies based on whether it is related to real (familiar) or fictitious (unfamiliar) brands. Referring to Zajonc's (1968) mere exposure theory, the participants perhaps had a positive attitude towards real slogans because of prior exposure and experience. Exposure improves liking since it effectively diminishes individuals' apprehension about unfamiliar stimuli and enhances processing fluency (Mrkva & Van Boven, 2020). The participants probably had no scepticism towards the slogans, thus resulting in a positive brand attitude. Gavilan and Avello (2020) claimed that brand familiarity's role in determining the success of marketing messages has been proven in prior research (e.g., Rhee & Jung, 2019) as familiarity improves message comprehension. Our study also found a significant correlation between slogan familiarity and brand attitude for fictitious slogans, suggesting that the mere exposure theory likely applies to explain the brand attitude results of this study.

In our study, we discovered that female participants were more influenced by slogans from fictitious brands, causing more favourable brand attitude. This aligns with the understanding that marketing messages can affect men and women differently (Lancellotti & Thomas, 2018). The reactions to marketing techniques for healthy food are influenced by gender, leading to the reinforcement of stereotypical behaviour (Castronuovo et al., 2021). In their study, Vila-Lopez and Kuster-Boluda (2016) demonstrated that food advertising messages had a greater influence on girls as they were more concerned about their weight and health. Thus, when crafting marketing campaigns targeting a gender-diverse audience, marketers should consider the differential impact of slogans, especially for healthy food.

CONCLUSION

Theoretical and managerial implications

Theoretically, our study has extended Zajonc's (1968) mere exposure theory to slogan attitude. The study has demonstrated that slogan liking is more dependent on familiarity (through exposure to a product/brand) compared to product category (e.g., healthy versus unhealthy) or slogan content. Therefore, the results of our study provide additional insights regarding the significance of brand and slogan familiarity compared to linguistic properties in shaping slogan attitude. Our study can serve as another resource for copywriters and marketers to assist them in creating effective slogans that resonate with their target audience to achieve the desired effects. Also, our research is probably useful for new healthy products

and healthy product marketers seeking to establish their product presence in the market, especially among young consumers.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

Today's competitive market poses challenges for many brands (Salehuddin Sharipudin et al., 2023). As for healthy food brands, appealing advertising can enhance the perception of healthy food (Roose & Mulier, 2020). Thus, future studies should explore how visuals impact attitudes alongside slogans. Visual elements might have a stronger influence on product perception than slogans alone. Further research should also investigate the role of cues beyond slogans, such as colours and packaging in shaping consumer preferences for healthy products. Also, product placement studies are scarce in Malaysia, making it a valuable area for exploration (Puspanathan et al., 2022). The present study focuses on young consumers in Malaysia. Therefore, future research should consider including Baby Boomers and Gen X for a broader perspective (Salehuddin Sharipudin et al., 2020).

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