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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-IMAGE AND PRODUCT-IMAGE AS A BASE FOR CONSUMER SEGMENTATION

The objective of the presented research was, (a) to find out if there exists a connection between the self-image and the apartment furnishing image, and (b) on the basis of canonical correlation, to find out if there exists some canonical variables, which could be treated as basic marketing segments.

Four dependent variables were included: the actual self-image, the ideal self-image the actual apartment furnishing image and the desired apartment furnishing image. The conclusion of the research was, (a) that there exists a relation between the self image and the apartment furnishing image, (b) that there exist nine basic segments, and (c) that canonical correlation could be used as a tool for a-posteriori segmentation.

Keywords: *apartment furnishing image, consumer segmentation, product-image, self-image*

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Prethodno priopćenje

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-image has become a popular approach in recent years to investigating possible relationships between how individuals perceive themselves and what behaviour they exhibit as consumers (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993).

The segmentation is a basic marketing tool to achieve success in contemporary markets and present a highly important area. To build up the appropriate segment marketers use different approaches. Basically they use a-priori segmentation.

The article discusses the relationship between self-image (actual and ideal) and the image of apartment furnishing (actual and desired) as a base for an a-posteriori segmentation.

In the research we used apartment furnishing as a product category because Schiffman and Kanuk (1994), Belk (1988), and Malhotra (1988) list it among the products which are appropriate to express self-image.

The problem of relationship between the self-image and the brand image is relatively old. The first investigations originate into the 60's (Grubb, 1965). The topic is still important enough, because in today's highly competitive environment the meaning of distinctive image is common. But the image of a product and especially brand image is most important. Namely: as products become more complex and the marketplace more crowded, consumers rely more on the product's image than on its actual attributes when making their purchase decisions (Schiffman, Kanuk, 1994).

Products and brands have symbolic value for individuals, who evaluate them on the basis of their consistency (i.e. congruence) with their personal pictures or images of themselves. Some products seem to match one or more of individual's self images; others seem totally alien. It is generally held that consumers attempt to preserve or enhance their self-images by selecting products with "images" or "personalities" they believe are congruent with their self-images, and avoiding products that are not so. Our clothes, apartments and cars are treated as our "second skin", in which others can see us (Belk, 1988)

The self-concept is not a uniform category. Regarding two basic dimensions: (a) actual versus

ideal (Schiffman&Kanuk, 1994) and (b) private versus social (with desired/expected self concept in the middle), self concept is divided in six basic parts (Exhibit 1).

between two sets of variables. In our case they were: (a) the set of variables describing the actual and the ideal self-image, and (b) set of variables describing

Exhibit 1: Dimensions of self concept

	Actual self-concept	Desired/expected self-concept	Ideal self-concept
Private self	How I actually see myself	How I desire/expect to see Myself in future	How I would like to see myself
Social self	How others actually see me	How I think others desire/expected I shall be in future	How I would like others to see me

2. METHOD

Four variables were included in this research: (a) actual self-image, (b) ideal self-image, (c) actual apartment furnishing image (the furnishing which respondents actually have at home), and (d) desired apartment furnishing image.

INSTRUMENT

For measuring self-image and product image we selected and applied the 9 point scale developed by Malhotra (1981). The reliability of the scale was measured through the test-retest method for ideal, actual, and social self-concepts. All correlations were significant.

The average correlations for the ideal, actual, and social self-concepts were .80, .70, and .68 respectively (Bruner, Hensel, 1992). Convergent and discriminant validity was assessed through use of multitrait-multimethod approach. The two traits were cars and actors and the two methods were semantic differential and similarity ratings. Malhotra views the findings as indicating that the scale has reasonable convergent and discriminant validity (Bearden, Netemeyer, Mobley, 1993).

RESPONDENTS

150 female students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University in Maribor, Slovenia, (age 20 and 21 years). The respondents estimate their actual self-image, ideal self-image, actual apartment furnishing image and desired apartment furnishing image on the Malhotra's 15 item scale.

PROCEDURE

We used a canonical correlation calculating procedure. Canonical correlation shows the dependence

the actual and the desired image of apartment furnishing.

3. RESULTS

On the basis of the table 1, we could state that the strongest connection exists between the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image.

Table 1: Percents of explained variance of the four comparisons of images.

	Actual self-image	ideal self-image
desired apartment furnishing image	42.0%	64.2%
actual apartment furnishing image	48.4%	39.2%

In this contribution we present only an example of canonical variables. In table 2 canonical variables between the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image are shown. There exist three canonical roots which present the three basic groups of respondents, or in other words, three basis segments of respondents. Each group has a distinctive combination of self-image and product-image variables.

Table 2: Canonical variables between the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image

Ideal self image	root 1	root 2	root 3		desired apartment furnishing image	root 1	root 2	root 3
Rugged/Delicate	-.417	-.092	.209	1	Rugged/Delicate	-.367	-.163	.271
Excitable/Calm	.101	-.167	-.382	2	Excitable/Calm	.087	-.200	-.355
Uncomfortable/Comfortable	-.448	.021	.235	3	Uncomfortable/Comfortable	-.222	.011	.312
Dominating/Submissive	.029	.470	-.083	4	Dominating/Submissive	.141	.212	-.138
Thrifty/Indulgent	.640	-.209	-.172	5	Thrifty/Indulgent	.504	-.330	.219
Pleasant/Unpleasant	.197	-.105	-.384	6	Pleasant/Unpleasant	.115	-.083	-.498
Contemporary/Non cont.	.426	-.230	-.391	7	Contemporary/Non cont.	.370	-.412	-.098
Organised/Unorganised	.391	.086	-.542	8	Organised/Unorganised	.288	.104	-.389
Rational/Emotional	.448	-.158	.270	9	Rational/Emotional	.354	-.096	.309
Youthful/Mature	.307	-.359	.002	10	Youthful/Mature	.454	-.204	-.350
Formal/Informal	.751	.289	.260	11	Formal/Informal	.694	.109	.325
Orthodox/Liberal	-.289	-.272	-.261	12	Orthodox/Liberal	-.144	-.372	-.109
Complex/Simple	-.175	.326	-.192	13	Complex/Simple	.065	.334	-.409
Colourless/Colourful	-.287	-.061	.382	14	Colourless/Colourful	-.310	.246	.214
Modest/Vain	.199	-.264	.079	15	Modest/Vain	.081	-.537	.061

Table 3: The groups of respondents (segments) formed on a base of canonical correlation between self-image and apartment furnishing image.

	Actual self-image	Ideal self-image
Desired Apartment Furnishing Image	<p>SEGMENT 1 The first canonical root Individuals who see themselves as contemporary, organised and formal, wish to have rational and formal apartment furnishing.</p> <p>SEGMENT 2 The second canonical root Individuals who see themselves as submissive, liberal and simple, wish to have thrifty, youthful and modest apartment furnishing</p>	<p>SEGMENT 1 The first canonical root Individuals who wish to be delicate, comfortable, thrifty, contemporary, rational and formal, wish to have thrifty, youthful and formal apartment furnishing</p> <p>SEGMENT 2 The second canonical root Individuals who wish to be dominating, wish to have non contemporary and vain apartment furnishing.</p> <p>SEGMENT 3 The third canonical root Individuals who wish to be organised, wish to have pleasant and complex apartment furnishing</p>
Actual Apartment Furnishing Image	<p>SEGMENT 1 The first canonical root Individuals who see themselves as contemporary, organised and colourful, describe their apartment furnishing as delicate, excitable, pleasant, contemporary, organised, youthful and liberal</p> <p>SEGMENT 2 The second canonical root Individuals who see themselves as thrifty, informal and modest, describe their apartment furnishing as comfortable and modest</p>	<p>SEGMENT 1 The first canonical root Individuals who wish to be colourful, describe their actual apartment furnishing as calm.</p> <p>SEGMENT 2 The second canonical root Individuals who wish to be delicate, excitable, contemporary and organised, describe their actual apartment furnishing as comfortable and contemporary</p>

4. CONCLUSION

In this research we compared the actual and desired self-image and the actual and desired apartment furnishing image. A general conclusion can be drawn, that there exists a connection between self-image and apartment furnishing image.

When forming the marketing mix, the most reasonable decision is to include the ideal self-image and the desired apartment furnishing image, because in this combination the percent of the explained variance is the highest (64%).

From the results we can see items describing the self-image connected with which items describing the apartment furnishing image. This description have strong application value, because they represent the opportunity for making the very specific appeals by choosing only connected items.

The results have both theoretical and practical value:

- 1) The first data which has practical value is the existence/non existence of the connection between actual and/or ideal self-image and image of desired and actual apartment furnishing. The promotional activities for the products with which the relation between the self-image and the product image exists, must differ from the ones for the products where this relation does not exist.
- 2) The second data which is of value are dimensions, which are dependent, by the single root. If we know these dimensions, in promotional activities we can emphasise only these relevant dimensions and not the irrelevant ones.
- 3) In the case, that there exist more roots in the relation between self-image and brand image, this means that there exist more "types" (or segments) of consumers. We could form for each "segment of consumers" a specific marketing mix including only relevant dimensions for this "segment of consumers". This approach can be very useful in the process of planning the products and promotions of the products.

On this base the conclusion, that canonical variables could present a reliable base for segmentation, can be made.

The research however, has several limitations:

- (1) the selection of the respondents - the results cannot be generalised,
- (2) the selection of the product (apartment furnishing) - with selecting an other

product or product category we would probably get different results, (3) the selection of the items describing the images. Malhotra (1981) himself noticed, that the selection of items is not appropriate for all products.

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