



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**BRAND EQUITY AND PACKAGING DESIGN IMPACT ON CUSTOMER
LOYALTY TO KEDAI RAKYAT 1 MALAYSIA PRODUCTS**

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LOYALTY TO KEDAI RAKYAT 1 MALAYSIA PRODUCTS**

By

SAZRINEE ZAINAL ABIDIN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studied, Universiti
Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2019

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DEDICATIONS

This is dedicated to the designers and brand enthusiast who always believe in continuous improvement in making the design output produced at a very high standard.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

BRAND EQUITY AND PACKAGING DESIGN IMPACT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY TO KEDAI RAKYAT 1 MALAYSIA PRODUCTS

By

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April 2019

Chairman : YM Associate Professor Dr.Raja Ahmad Azmeer bin Raja Ahmad Effendi, PhD
Faculty : Design and Architecture

Quality deficiency of brand equity through packaging design that could impacts the customer loyalty towards Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KR1M) products in Malaysia. The purpose of this study is to investigate on how the brand equity would give an impact to the customer loyalty of KR1M products in Malaysia . The first stage of the study uses literature in investigating the key characteristics of branding towards packaging applications' by adapting the branding theory. Then, it uses customer loyalty elements in strategising on how the product should attract consumer. Finally, it uses the packaging design applications in the current market to document and identified the packaging design applications' trends that make the product successful in attracting the customer loyalty. This study was using the quantitative methods and later validated with several interviews with professional and expert in the branding and design fields. Sampling of 320 respondents were collected from 14 states all over Malaysia with a mixture of KR1M stores in urban and semi urban area. The raw data was processed using SPSS 24 and tested with method of correlations to further investigate the credibility of the data. Result of the study would increase the depth understanding towards the integration of branding and packaging design; and understanding the elements of products that could magnetise consumer. The result expected to lead towards identifying and adapting theory on integrated research within marketing, branding and design towards KR1M product; and interrelated theories will create significant theories to drive research output. After the introduction of the background problem, this study will present the literature review on brand equity, customer loyalty, packaging design and describe the research methodology before presenting the expected results. This study contributes in providing a clear guidelines and criteria to assist KR1M designer, manufacturer and retailers in increasing the customer loyalty. It is very significant to generate new knowledge that is beneficial towards quality which will lead towards better product integrity. The

final stage of this study contributes the propose 'Standard Operating Procedure' in providing a packaging design criteria and branding processes that could contributed customer loyalty through branding and packaging design not only for KR1M product only. The SOP was validated by the professional that it could also be universally use for all types of packaging design.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**IMPAK EKUITI PENJENAMAAN DAN REKABENTUK PEMBUNGKUSAN
KEPADA KESETIAAN PELANGGAN TERHADAP PRODUK KEDAI RAKYAT
1 MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Ekuiti penjenamaan produk Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KR1M) yang kurang berkualiti melalui rekabentuk pembungkusan memberikan impak terhadap kesetiaan pengguna KR1M di Malaysia. Peringkat pertama kajian ini memberi fokus kepada literasi dalam mengenalpasti bagaimana Ekuiti penjenamaan produk KR1M dapat memberikan impak terhadap kesetiaan pelanggan di Malaysia. Kajian menggunakan kunci utama penjenamaan terhadap aplikasi pembungkusan dengan mengadaptasi teori penjenamaan. Kesetiaan pengguna digunakan untuk mendapatkan pemahaman terhadap elemen yang berkenaan. Di peringkat akhir literasi, penggunaan aplikasi rekabentuk pembungkusan terkini dalam pasaran mendokumentasikan perkembangan terkini aplikasi rekabentuk pembungkusan yang membantu dalam menarik perhatian kesetiaan pelanggan untuk membeli produk KR1M. Sejumlah 320 responden dari 14 negeri seluruh Malaysia yang daripada kawasan bandar dan kawasan pinggir bandar telah memberikan maklumbalas bagi kaji selidik yang dijalankan. Data telah diproses menggunakan SPSS 24 dan diuji menggunakan kaedah '*correlations*' bagi memastikan kreadibiliti data. Hasil kajian meningkatkan kefahaman yang mendalam terhadap produk penjenamaan dan pemahaman mengenai kelebihan elemen yang ada terhadap produk KR1M. Hasil kajian dijangka akan terarah kepada mengenalpasti dan mengadaptasi teori penjenamaan terhadap produk KR1M; dan akan menghasilkan teori berkaitan meningkatkan kesetiaan pelanggan terhadap produk KR1M. Dengan pengenalan permasalahan latarbelakang, kajian ini akan membincangkan pandangan literasi berkenaan kualiti penjenamaan, kesetiaan pengguna, rekaan pereka terhadap rekabentuk pembungkusan dan penghuraian kaedah kajian sebelum hasil kajian dikongsikan. Sumbangan kajian ini menyediakan

cadangan 'Prosedur Operasi Standard' sebagai panduan bagi membantu pereka KR1M, pengilang dan peruncit meningkatkan kesetiaan pelanggan dalam menghasilkan produk KR1M yang berkualiti dan menepati kehendak pengguna. Adalah bertepatan untuk penghasilan ilmu pengetahuan yang baru dan memberikan manfaat terhadap kualiti yang seterusnya menyumbang terhadap integriti produk yang lebih baik. Peringkat akhir kajian ini menyumbang terhadap penghasilan cadangan Prosedur Operasi Standard bagi menghasilkan kriteria pembungkusan dan proses branding yang menyumbang terhadap peningkatan kesetiaan pelanggan melalui penjenamaan dan pembungkusan produk yang bersesuaian digunakan bukan hanya oleh jenama KR1M malahan universal kepada mana-mana jenama lain.



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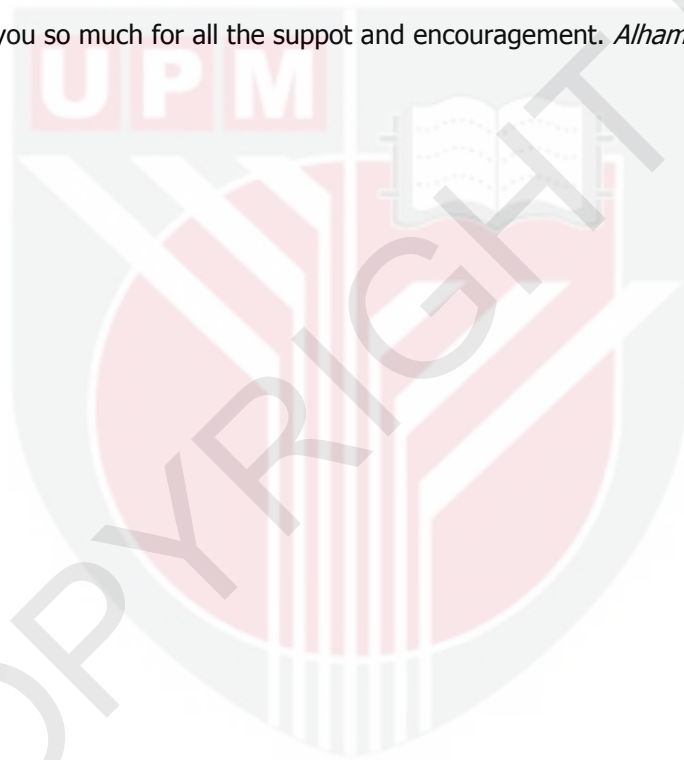
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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		i
ABSTRAK		iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		v
APPROVAL		vii
DECLARATION		ix
LIST OF TABLES		xv
LIST OF FIGURES		xvii
CHAPTER		
1	INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Context and background of the study	1
	1.3 Statement of Problem	4
	1.4 Issues of Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia	4
	1.5 Research Objectives	10
	1.6 Research Questions	10
	1.7 Scope and Limitation	12
	1.8 Organisation of thesis	13
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	15
	2.1 Introduction	15
	2.2 Fundamental overview of branding and packaging	17
	2.3 Issues of Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia	21
	2.4 Issues of Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KR1M) in Branding and Packaging	21
	2.5 Literature review on Brand	24
	2.5.1 Brand Equity	26
	2.5.2 Research Objectives	35
	Relation With Brand Equity Pyramid	
	By Keller and Justification	
	2.5.3 Research question relation	37
	With Brand Equity Pyramid	
	By Keller and Justification	
	2.5.4 Brand Identity	38
	2.5.5 Brand Positioning	41
	2.5.6 Brand Personality	45

2.5.7	Product Setting	45
2.5.8	Equality Strategy	46
2.5.9	Honesty Policy	46
2.5.10	Bequivalence Tactic	47
2.5.11	Brand Policy	47
2.6	Literature review on Customer Loyalty	48
2.6.1	Customer Satisfaction	50
2.6.2	Customer Experience	51
2.6.3	Customer Attachment	54
2.6.4	Customer Approval	56
2.6.5	Product Bonding	56
2.6.6	Product Fulfilment	57
2.6.7	Customer Engagement	58
2.6.8	Customer Preferences	59
2.6.9	Customer Attachments	60
	Literature review on Packaging Design	61
2.7	2.7.1 Process of Design	63
	2.7.2 Market Appeal	65
	2.7.3 Product Integrity	66
	2.7.4 Visual Example of KR1M Product packaging design	67
	2.7.5 Design Promotion	74
	2.7.6 Reliability Influences	75
	2.7.7 Dependability Practice	77
	2.7.8 Design Responsibilities	79
	2.7.9 Customer Attachments	80
	2.7.10 Packaging Commitment	81
2.8	Summary Development Theoretical Point of Departure	82
2.9	Definition of terms	86

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3		88
3.1	Introduction	88
3.2	Overall Research Flow	91
3.3	Research Design	93
3.4	Demographic Profiles of the Respondents	96
3.5	Ideal Sample Size	106
3.6	Selecting the Sampling Techniques	108
3.7	Determining the sample size	108
3.8	Implementing the Sampling Process	109
3.9	Data Collection Procedures and Method	109
3.10	Research Instrument	109
3.11	Questionnaire of KR1M	111
3.12	Construction of Section 2 Customer	117

	Loyalty in Questionnaire	
3.13	Construction of Section 3 Product Integrity	118
3.14	Construction of Section 4 Packaging Design and Branding	119
3.15	Observation Method to Evaluate the existing KR1M Packaging and Branding	120
3.16	Validation of KR1M Designer's Guideline	120
3.16.1	Summary of Result on Interview With Branding and Designer Expert	130
3.17	Instrument Development	
3.18	Pilot Test and Actual Test	131
4	RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	133
4.1	Introduction	133
4.2	Significant of Research to KR1M	133
4.3	Overview of Consumers Background Data	133
4.4	To identify customer confidence and loyalty towards KR1M product (RQ2)	136
4.5	To propose KR1M Standard Operating Procedure that integrates Brand strategies in packaging design process(RQ3)	137
4.6	To investigate KR1M brand design criteria for packaging design success criteria	140
4.7	Result Correlation	142
5	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	145
5.1	Introduction	145
5.2	Impacts and Recommendations to KR1M Customer confidence and Loyalty	145
5.3	Impacts and Recommendations to KR1M Brand Equity	146
5.4	Impacts and Recommendations to KR1M Packaging Design	147
5.5	Proposed branding and Packaging Standard Operating Procedure for KR1M	148

6	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	156
6.1	Introduction	156
6.2	Answer to Research Question	156
	6.2.1 Answer to Sub Research Question 1	158
	6.2.2 Answer to Sub Research Question 2	158
	6.2.3 Answer to Sub Research Question 3	159
6.3	Knowledge Contribution	159
	6.3.1 Integrated Research (Customer Confidence and Loyalty, Brand Equity, Packaging Design)	160
	6.3.2 Standard Operating Procedure	160
6.4	Significance and Benefits of Study	161
6.5	Recommendations for Future Studies	161
	REFERENCES	163
	APPENDICES	183
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	189
	LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	190

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2.1	Main Research Objective and Sub Research Objectives Relation with Brand Equity Pyramid by Keller and Justification	36
2.2	Research Question and Sub Research Question Relation with Brand Equity Pyramid by Keller and Justification	37
3.1	Preliminary engagement for fact finding with KPDNKK and Mydin MRT Retail through interview	91
3.2	Data Collection Location and Schedule	96
3.3	Confidence Level and Z-Value	107
3.4	Intended Assessment of Section 2 Customer Loyalty	117
3.5	Intended Assessment of Section 3 Product Integrity	118
3.6	Intended Assessment of Section 4 Packaging Design and Branding	119
3.7	Interview with Branding and Designer Expert: Manager, Brand Management	120
3.8	Interview with Branding and Designer Expert: Shafiq Kamal; Brand Executive (Designer)	122
3.9	Interview with Branding and Designer Expert: Khaider Muhammad Yusof; Brand Executive (Designer)	124
3.10	Interview with Branding and Designer Expert: Hafizul Fahmi Rahim; Communication Executive (Designer)	126

3.11	Interview With Branding and Designer Expert: Haziq Shah; Freelancer Designer	128
3.12	Result Alpha	131
3.13	Cronbach Alpha for Brand Equity, Packaging Design and Customer Loyalty	132
4.1	Demographic profiles of KR1M consumer	134
4.2	Mean and Standard Deviation for Consumer Loyalty, Consumer Confidence and Consumer Satisfaction Towards KR1M	136
4.3	Elements that gain consumer confidence and loyalty towards KR1M product	136
4.4	Brand strategies that integrates in packaging design process	138
4.5	Investigation KR1M initiative and its product toward acceptance of Brand and packaging design	140
4.6	Correlation	143
4.7	Relationship between Brand Equity, Packaging Design and Customer Loyalty	143

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.1	KR1M Stakeholders Relationship	9
1.2	KR1M Research problem and proposed solutions leading to the recommendation of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Designer Guidelines	11
2.1	Fundamental body of knowledge arrangements and divisions as derived from literature	16
2.2	Theoretical Development Proposition for Brand Equity from the research integration between Marketing, Branding Design	25
2.3	Customer Based Brand Equity Model (CBBE Model) or Brand Equity Pyramid by Keller (2018)	35
2.4	PCDL Model (Keller,2000)	40
2.5	Theoretical proposition development of customer confidence and loyalty for KR1M product	49
2.6	Figure 2.6 The Theory Of Buyer Behavior Source: (Howard And Sheth 1969, Loudon And Della Bitta 1993)	51
2.7	Theoretical proposition development of packaging design for KR1M product.	62
2.8	Varieties of bottles and cans packaging of KR!M products	69
2.9	Varieties of bottles and cans packaging of KR!M products	70
2.10	Varieties of bottles and cans packaging of KR!M products	71

2.11	Varieties of bottles and cans packaging of KR1M products	72
2.12	Promotional items of KR1M	73
2.13	Summary theoretical proposition development of brand equity, customer loyalty, packaging Design that contribute the successful Branding and packaging design for KR1M product	83
2.14	Diagram conceptual framework of brand equity, customer loyalty, packaging Design	85
3.1	KR1M Research Flow	90
3.2	Simplified model of research (Punch 2003)	93
3.3	Summary the research process framework	95
3.4	Data collection in Arau, Perlis	101
3.5	Data collection in Ayer Hitam, Johor	101
3.6	Data collection in Batu Caves	102
3.7	Data collection in Dungun, Terengganu	102
3.8	Data collection in Kangar, Perlis	103
3.9	Data collection in Kodiang, Kedah	103
3.10	Data collection in Kota Bahru, Kelantan	104
3.11	Data collection in Padawan, Sarawak	104
3.12	Data collection in Mentakab, Pahang	105
3.13	Data collection in Tapah, Perak	105

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the context and background of the study. An explanation is provided on impacting brand equity towards customer Loyalty of Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KR1M) product through packaging design in Malaysia. The problems statement explained detail and established the objective of the study to be achieved by the research goal. The structures of the entire thesis were laid out clearly with details in justification of the study, defining the scopes and limitation. The terminologies and acronyms used within the research are presented for better understanding.

1.2 Context and background of the study

Around the globe in retail surroundings, the consumers are overwhelmed with choices of product in the display rack. The consumer also battling with hike of daily goods and in particular foods. This may have happened because of the inflation experiencing by most of the countries due to economy slow movement, instability of currencies and unexpected commodity progress.

The lower- and middle-income consumers experiencing difficulties and pressure in managing monthly usage because of the prices increase. The Economist (2005) mentioned "Commodity prices have risen sharply recently, pushing up the cost of the foodstuffs, chemicals, packaging and energy that go into making the industry's products." It's a global issue which involving all stakeholders like the manufacturers, consumers, retailers and governments. Consumers facing buying power issues which becoming a world-wide complication which contributed to global inflation in the economy.

Through the field work, this study found that the consumers has expressed their decision making in buying any product are influence by their perception though the appearance of the branding and packaging; this decision making takes place below consciousness. In order to make buying decisions, consumers need to use their perception to guide their choices which happens in a split second.

Often the consumers are not conscious of the perception they have prior to arrive at a decision-making point. Perhaps the most powerful perception available to the consumer is the branding elements on the packaging which authorised the decision making of purchasing. The role of branding and design in decision making is reflect to the customer loyalty toward the product.

Designer must be capable to demonstrate authentication of conception and perception within branding domain. Packaging could be playing a role to advertise or an eyesore that would be a contributing factor to defy purchasing decision. Inappropriately, some designers would be using the tools, typography and elements of design embracing the brand itself and including customer loyalty by gaining customer satisfaction of the products.

This research heads in the similar direction as Taylor, 1998; Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2001; Schultz, 2005 it is generally said and believed that a satisfied customer is more likely to display loyalty behaviour, as example; the consumer will repeat purchase and willingness to give positive word of mouth. Furthermore, customer satisfaction can be a strong effect on brand image that become the powerful tools in the marketing. In KR1M products perspective, the brand image quality is one of the contributing factors that will be impacting the customer loyalty because of designer's effective utilisation on the packaging design.

In Malaysia context, MATRADE being one of the authority organisation highlighted the importance of brand strategy to the SMEs by stating; Product quality and price are no longer product differentiators. A strong brand image is the only asset a company can develop that cannot be copied. Companies must thus make serious commitment to investing in developing a brand strategy for their products and services. Branding should be taken as a holistic approach by all companies to ensure strategic planning a products and services.

Many scholars acknowledged that brand would bring values to a product and it is also a distinction to differentiation. That bold prediction from consulting firm Walker (2014), who in their report "Customers 2020" said that by 2020, customer satisfaction, more than price and product, will be the key brand differentiator. Walter (2014) supported that he does believe customer satisfaction, customer service and the entire customer experience will be on equal par in terms of importance and will do so a lot sooner than the year 2020. It is imperative for all manufacturers to make sure branding characterised quality. Products or services must ensure quality are perceive physically or through perception of the consumers.

As a manufacturers and designers, it would be critical to escalate awareness and mindfulness towards the familiar brands by the consumers. Moreover, as stated by Steve Olenski (2014) in recent times consumers choose their favourable and familiar brands due to the rise in their consciousness. Consequently, the businesses in order to compete with others must create love for their brands in the minds of consumers. As a consumer, a person may still be encouraging by a product because of the brand solely.

According to Macdonald and Sharp (2000) despite consumers are the familiar and willing to buy the product, another factor that still influences the purchase decision is brand awareness. Brand awareness is a powerful contributing factor that has strong influence in purchasing decision for products or services. According to Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991) higher level of brand awareness can influence the purchase decision of the consumers.

The same notion was proved true by Grewal, Monroe and Krishnan (1998). Products with greater level of brand consciousness will resulted in bigger market share, good representation of quality and form brand loyalty. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) suggested that it takes 5 times more cost to attract the new customer than maintaining the old one.

Barsky (1994) also indicated that cost of attracting new customer is higher than that of maintaining the customer loyalty. Manufacturer will be spending less to sustain existing consumers and need better strategy to create interest and gauge new customers. Brand awareness is important and must be revisit from time to time by conducting survey that will provide insight to state of consumer consciousness of a particular brand.

Store franchiser has been growing steadily in Malaysia recently and contributed substantially towards the economy. Many store franchiser such as Tesco, Giant, The Store, Mydin, AEON Big and many others were the major player in Malaysia. This trend may have been influenced by global direction on chain store. Store brands, also known as private labels, have been major players in the retail market. With a market share of 24 % of U.S. supermarkets (Marketing Daily, April 6th, 2010), store brands continue to win consumer choice.

Retailers offer their own brands either to increase their profits or gain greater customer loyalty by Sultan Alenazi, Mohamed Almotairi & Soad Al-Meshal (2015). KR1M sees the opportunity to create and build branding to a common product from the common players in the market. Operating cost on branding will be reduces tremendously by creating a store brand.

For that reason, this study foresees that the above element of brand strategy, brand awareness through consumer experience will drive their perception to form the customer loyalty in buying decision toward the branding and packaging in the market; same goes to the KR1M product. Through the integrated research, the elements from the field of marketing, branding and design expected to have creation of new knowledge.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The main contributing factor towards KR1M problem is lack of brand quality that impacts the customer loyalty of KR1M products through packaging design.

From the main research problem the sub-problem for KR1M are as follow:

- KR1M has been selling at a lower price, however the consumer still made their purchased in other shops.
- KR1M is misrepresent in portraying low-quality products because of selling at a lower price compare to other competitor.
- Poor labelling of KR1M packaging design and branding also contributed towards the negative perception.
- Media also added to the continous negative perception of a cheap products through deceptive reporting.
- Perception of overseas product are better quality compared to local products made in Malaysia.

1.4 Issues of Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia

Sagran, Zainol, Al-Mamun and Permarupan (2014) specified that Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KR1M) was established in 2011, as one of the key outcomes of government transformation program is to provide a well-balanced, economical living condition in both the urban and rural areas.

Was being cheap does help KR1M in stablishing itself as a competitive brand. KR1M has been selling the products at a competitive lower price, however the consumer still made purchasing from other convenience stores eventhough there's a KR1M store nearby. Tasnim, Rashid, Zain, and Yahya (2013) indicated

that there's no study conducted before to assess KR1M impact to the socio-economic states of the poor and low income households. There is quality deficiency of brand equity through packaging design that could impact the customer loyalty towards KR1M products in Malaysia.

Cheap products would be misleading in portraying low-quality products. Being a new initiative set by the government, KR1M also received criticism towards its products on quality, health and safety. The maturity of the branding not established firmly and all-inclusive at this stage yet. KR1M as an initiative by the government will also be under the watch by the opposition leader and other stakeholders to highlight complications of the initiative and products.

KR1M was also on the news in local media very frequent for positive and negative sentiments. KR1M has always been drawing attention to local media for any decent nor unscrupulous news on the initiatives. New Straits Times (2012) reported that "Thirteen products sold at Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) have been taken off the shelves due to non-compliance with the law. Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said yesterday the products were withdrawn for failing to follow product composition and labelling requirements, and not because of their safety for consumption". Credibility of KR1M products are being questionable of its safety and health.

It is very important for a packaging to portray itself as an established brand. Wells, L.E. & Farley, Heather & Armstrong, G.A. (2007) stated that Those shoppers, who were restricted with their shopping time, relied heavily on extrinsic attributes, especially visual information. Lowering the price of packaging should not necessarily be resulted in poor labelling which failed to comply with the ministry requirements. KR1M spending expenses for the packaging and labelling printing. The design could be a better plan and coordinated with the branding inventiveness to deliver messages and gauges with the consumer.

Many perceived this initiative as "you get the quality you pay for" which means that by paying less, the customers will get lower quality products". KR1M must be able to portray quality and high standard reputation for its brand. Malaysian consumers somehow have the negative perception cheap products due to the deceptive reporting by the media. Team Nambikei (2012) also reported that "The KR1M initiative did not escape from criticism and scrutiny as many parties raised doubts and challenged the quality of products sold at KR1M shops given their lower prices.

The performance of KR1M as retail chains was also questioned by the media openly. KR1M has been constantly be under the scrutiny of the consumer, in a letter sent to the Free Malaysia Today (2011) predicted that the location and its rental would be the factors that could lead to the closing down of store in the future. Added with the low turnover and low margin of the products which contributed to the losses of KR1M. All the prediction has come through and resulted of many KR1M 1.0 and new introduction of KR1M 2.0.

The ministry issued several statement nn defending the performance of the KR1M and how it is benefiting the consumer. Another opinion stated by Hassan and Rahman (2012) specified that "This branding concept is an alternative for local entrepreneurs to market their products without bothering about the brand name. The main attraction of this branding concept is the product price, which is between 30 to 50 percent lower than other comparable manufacturing brands on the market".

Cheap is good, however, the consumer has the right to consume products offering international standard quality requirements. The manufacturer only supplies the content of the products to KR1M with no stamping any related information associated info on their company and branding. KR1M will be solely responsible for all the products for using its brand for the consumer.

The issue of a low-quality product would be perceived through the mediocre packaging which will relate to brand. Along with a similar line, Hassan and Rahman (2012) agreed that "The low costs of advertising and packaging incurred by local entrepreneurs have made their products sellable at low prices. Prices that are between 30 to 50 percent lower than other well-known manufacturing brands have enlightened societies especially those price-conscious shoppers and low-income earners in the urban areas". The manufacturers could supply its product with better prices excluding the additional cost of packaging and advertising.

KR1M was not expecting the impact that perception made by the media and will somehow influence the consumers. Therefore, KR1M should strategise comprehensive plans to make sure the brand entity and positioning were made advantageously to promote the products. Yehambaram (2012) in his research supported that KR1M products were represented wrongly by certain media in his thesis "these stores offered Malaysian made products that were cheaper but a month into the launching of these stores, there have been a wide array of reports from local newspapers that the quality of products in these stores was low'.

Leading brand which already been on the market for years will have consumer loyalty due to the trust gain throughout the years. This will be very difficult for KR1M to infiltrate the brand loyalty between these two parties. Perception towards quality has always been an issue as 'The quality of hypermarket brand extension products that perceived as inferior (Uusitalo, 2004) have made the consumer to purchase well-known manufacturing product brand". KR1M being a new brand offering products which also competes with leading brands such as TESCO, Giant, AEON and many others would be a challenge.

Largely, overseas products provide the perception of better quality compared to local products made in Malaysia. Another perception that needed to be addressed is the country origin of the products. Bedi (2009) also mentioned in his research that Malaysian generally has the perception that products made locally are low quality matched to the brands imported from overseas. Overseas manufacturers take branding and packaging completely serious as an opportunity to promote the brand and to educate their national identities. The attractive packaging and positive the country of origin by well-known branded product has influenced positive quality perception (Tifferet and Herstein, 2010).

Although KR1M is a Malaysian made brand, strategically it must be planned to look and feel international standard without compromising our national identity. Yee (2011) reported that 13 types of products sold at KR1M does not meet with the specification and regulation by the Control of the Food Act 1985 and the products were removed as confirmed by The Ministry of Health. KR1M must be able to have a very strong brand identity to represent its image to the consumer to gain confidence and start establishing a personal relationship to grow brand loyalty.

It is important as a strategy to gained trust and confidence of the consumer when engaged with KR1M products through grasp consumer perception towards existing branding and packaging of KR1M. Fauzi (2016) mentioned in his research that perceived quality is imperceptible and it is largely influences consumer's mind and overall feeling. Characteristics of the products and brand attachments will signify the products with performance and reliability.

As a result, through literacy and research methods that enable the researcher to investigate further of the problems related to KR1M branding which will suggest solutions towards the design processes.

KR1M has four important stakeholders during its operation which are the Cabinet of Malaysia, Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperative and

Consumerism, Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad and MRT Retail Trading Sdn. Bhd. The cabinet made the decision of creating KR1M as an initiative to assist the lower and middle income with quality products which are cheaper by 30 to 40 percent compare to the market. The Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperative and Consumerism was put in charge of the entire implementation and creation of policy. Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad was appointed by the government to operationalise the entire initiative by setting up the premises, system, manpower and products selection. Another entity was set up by Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad which is MRT Retail Trading as the company to run the operation physically and accountable for the logistics and branding of KR1M. Figure 1.1 below refer to the KR1M stakeholders relationship:



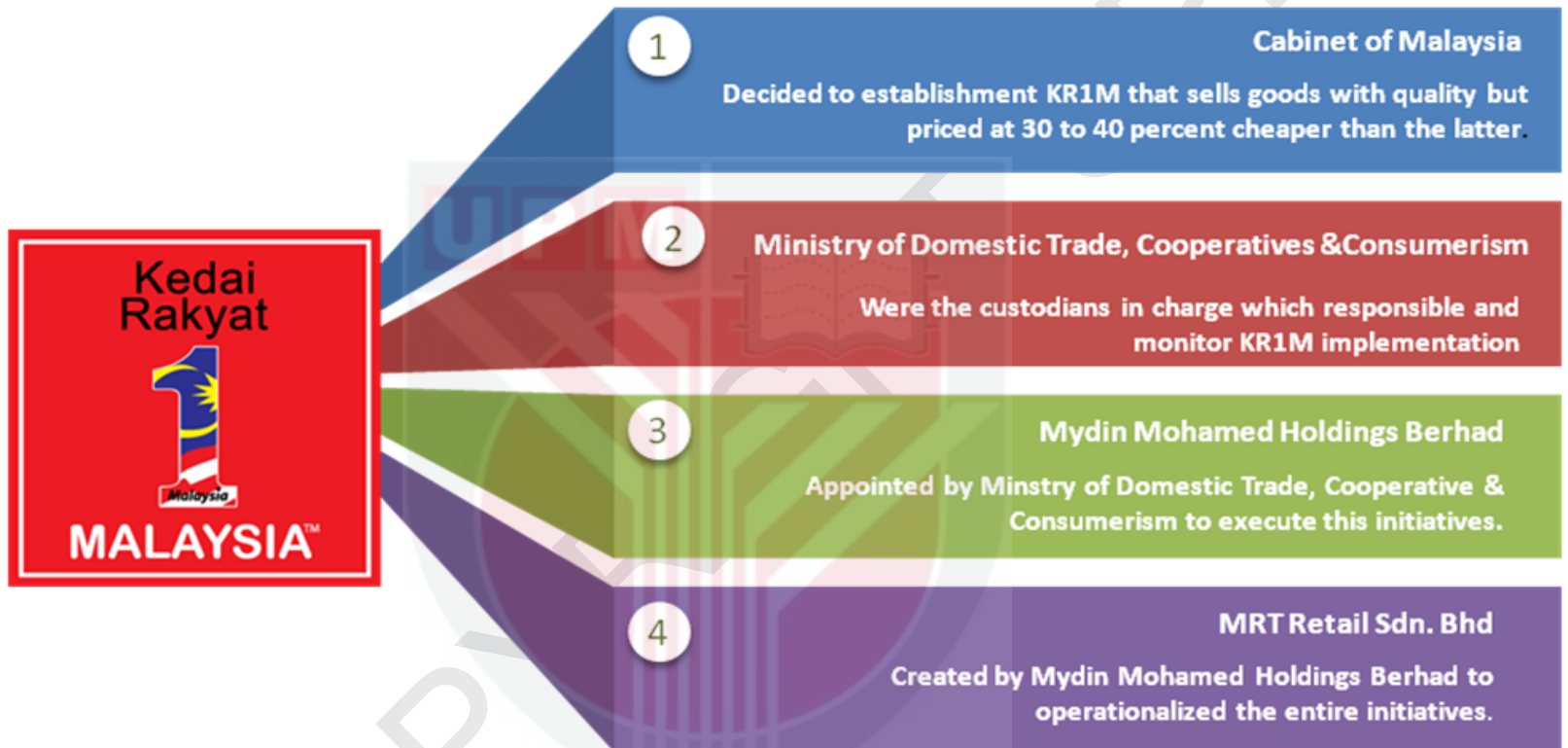


Figure 1.1: KR1M Stakeholders Relationship

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to understand KR1M policies, initiatives and its product. To achieve this, this study formulated three sub research objectives to support the main research objective. The main research question in this study is:

How can Theory of Packaging Design enhance the brand quality in increasing, the customer loyalty of KR1M products through packaging design?

The main research question is followed by three sub-objectives as illustrated below:

Sub- RO1:

To investigate KR1M policies, initiative and its product.

Sub-RO2:

To identify consumer confidence and loyalty towards KR1M product.

Sub- RO3:

To propose the KR1M Standard Operating Procedure that integrates brand equity strategies in packaging design process.

1.6 Research Questions

The main research question in this study is:

RQ: How can the design criteria and branding processes the brand equity in increase the customer confident and loyalty of KR1M products through packaging design?

The main research question is followed by three sub research questions:

SRQ1: What are the policies, the elements that boost the consumer confidence and loyalty towards KR1M as a product brand?

SRQ2: What are the elements that gain customer confidence and loyalty towards a product?

SRQ3: How is the perception of design criteria and branding perception that could contributed customer confidence and loyalty through branding and packaging design of KR1M product?

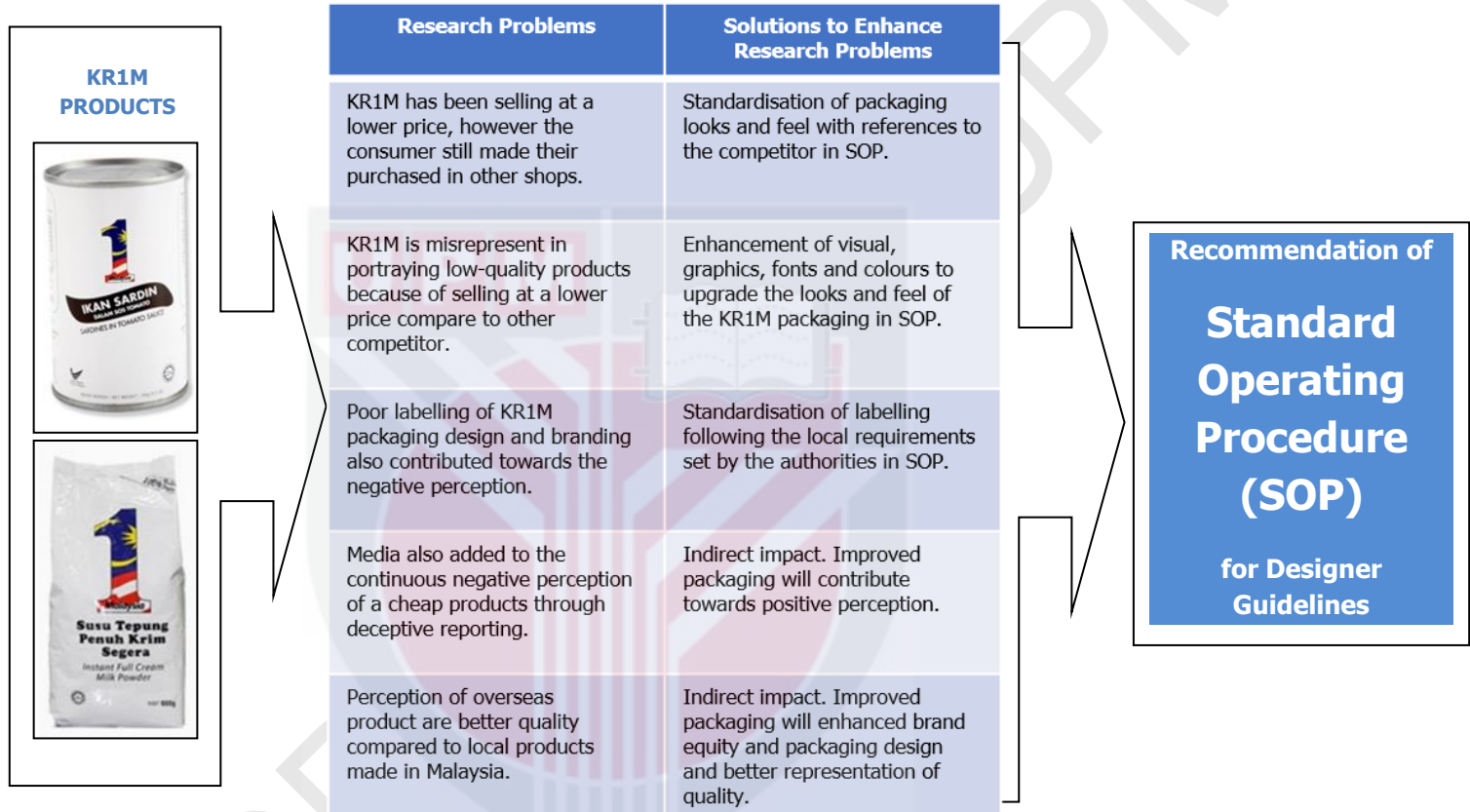


Figure 1.2: KR1M Research problem and proposed solutions leading to the recommendation of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Designer Guidelines

1.7 Scope and limitation

This research faced several limitations in conducting the activities led to the findings and conclusion of the study. Firstly, within the scope of literature was quite narrow for this study. Researcher found out that there are limited academic materials related particularly to KR1M available online and offline (books, magazine, journals etc.).

Secondly, the areas of the research being conducted are very wide which is in all 14 states in Malaysia. The logistics to complete the research was very challenging because of travelling needed to be taken by the researcher by air and road. This is also including the challenges to locate the stores especially in the semi urban areas. Adequate time needed to be spent in each store to ensure good quality engagement with the respondents (KR1M customer).

Another limitation faced by the researcher is inadequate funding to conduct the activities related to data collection. This self-funded research was finance through loan from the bank to ensure all activities plan are being materialised accordingly.

1.8 Organisation of thesis

The study is structured into six chapters. The chapters can be concisely explained as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter presents the introduction of the research, the background of study, research objective, and research question, significance of study, knowledge contribution, anticipated results and definitions of term.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter presents the literature survey on the main body of knowledge in this study. The main body of knowledge is discussed and critically reviewed in this chapter and is divided into three parts. Part one discusses elements that gain consumer confidence towards a product. The sub topics to the part one covers Brand Equity, Brand Identity and Brand Positioning. Meanwhile, part two identify the elements that gain customer loyalty towards a product. The sub topics for part two covers customer satisfaction, customer experience and customer attachments. The part three of this chapter is focusing on packaging design with the sub topics of process of design, market appeal and product integrity. From the process of identifying the main body of knowledge, this chapter also combined and created the theoretical framework for the whole study.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter explains the selected research methodology and procedure used in this study. This study adopted a survey as a general approach based on Punch (2003) research. Punch (2003) quantitative-surveys-relating-variables described this method is central to a very wide range of social science research. The preliminary interview was conducted with KPDNKK and MRT Retail to get insight of the existing processes in managing KR1M as a brand and the production of the packaging. The approach of the survey in investigating the elements and insight of customer loyalty, product integrity and packaging design. In addition, this chapter. also discuss the research design, area of study, population, sample of the population, sampling technique, instrument for data collection, validation of the questionnaire, administration of the instrument and method of data analysis.

Chapter Four: Result and analysis

This chapter presents the quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interview technique data analysis. The results on the finding are explained in this chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter explains the impact and recommendation of the finding for Customer Loyalty, Product Integrity and Packaging Design. This chapter also propose the Standard Operating Procedure that integrates brand equity, customer loyalty strategies in packaging design process that contributed customer loyalty toward KR1M product.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter summarises and discusses the findings and results related. This chapter presents the conclusions, knowledge contributions, impact of the study and recommendations for further research.

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