Abstract

This dissertation identifies sizable and meaningfully distinct segments in the potential market for breast enlargement among young female university students in Bangkok, Thailand using psychological characteristics related to self-concept. Research efforts are focused on: forming valid segments of urban young female university students on the basis of context dependent motivations directly related to self-concept; differentiating meaningful segments within this population in terms of a proposed set of self-concept variables; and describing segment characteristics most likely and least likely to pursue breast enlargement.

Segments are derived on the basis of differing degrees of ideal-actual discrepancy and self-oriented motivation using cluster analysis and are validated by actual behaviors and behavioral intentions. The self-concept is conceptualized as a hypothetical construct consisting of three dimensions: values, personality traits, and motives. On the basis of the literature reviewed, self-concept variables, defined as multi-item measures of nine latent constructs, are identified as relevant to the study context. The self-concept variables (along with their associated dimensions) are: fun and enjoyment, excitement, being well-respected, and self-fulfillment (values); extraversion and openness to experience (personality traits); self-esteem, physical vanity, and achievement vanity (motives). Derived segments are differentiated in terms of these nine self-concept variables using multivariate analysis of variance. Segment characteristics that are substantive in discriminating among the derived segments are identified using multiple discriminant analysis. Eighteen hypotheses are developed to test self-concept characteristics that are substantive in discriminating the most likely segment to pursue breast enlargement from other segments combined and from the least likely segment. Hypothesis tests are based on survey data collected from 512 female undergraduate and graduate students from three universities in Bangkok.

The derived five-segment solution is valid, reflecting differences in actual behaviors and behavioral intentions. The five segments are identified as: status quos, passives, keen pursuers, active searchers, and prospects. Results also reveal that segments differ in terms of the proposed set of self-concept variables in all three cases examined—five-segment, keen pursuers versus other segments combined, and keen pursuers versus passives. Eighteen hypothesized directional relationships between the nine self-concept variables and respective discriminant function Z scores are tested to assess the ability of each self-concept variable to discriminate keen pursuers from other segments combined and from the passives segment alone. With the exception of self-esteem in two hypotheses, results show that 16 out of the 18 hypothesized relationships are supported. Of the 16 significant relationships, physical vanity, being well-respected, openness to experience, achievement vanity, and self-fulfillment are identified as substantive in discriminating keen pursuers from other segments combined. In addition to these five self-concept variables, extraversion is additionally identified as substantive discriminator in the case of keen pursuers versus passives.

These findings underscore the highly motivated nature of keen pursuers and highlight the self-concept characteristics examined in this study that characterize keen pursuers in relation to other derived segments in the market for breast enlargement in Bangkok. The study concludes that self-concept is a viable basis to segment the market for breast enlargement. Self-concept serves as an adequate theoretical basis to study a marketing-related phenomenon based on physical attractiveness and can be applied to academic research and managerial practice.