Pre and Post Exposure Ambivalence and Corporate Rebranding: Is Familiarity an Issue?

Phang Ing @ Grace

Abstract

Even though corporate rebranding has become a universal phenomenon and the study on ambivalence has long been the central of attitude research for the past decade, the studies which combine the two are scarce. The present research was conducted to fill the gap by examining pre- and post-exposure ambivalence structure in response to a corporate branding announcement. Two important research questions were examined: (1) Does pre and post exposure attitude differ significantly after the rebranding intervention? (2) To what extend does these differences vary across corporate brand names with different brand familiarity? A total of 138 useable questionnaires was analysed and the data were tested using a paired t - test to compare the ambivalent attitudes before and after the rebranding announcement. The findings of the research supported the postulated research questions and the underlying theories. Pre existing attitudes of the brands were found to affect post exposure attitudes significantly. Products with different familiarity levels generated different responses and influence the degree and direction of change in the ambivalence construct.

Keywords:
Rebranding, brand familiarity, pre and post exposure attitudes, ambivalence
Introduction: Corporate rebranding

Corporate rebranding has become a universal phenomenon which draws profound interest among the business press (Gregory, 1999; Sampson, 2003) and academic researchers. It is mostly caused by mergers and acquisition (M&A) and image repositioning (Lomax & Mador, 2006; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004; Jaju & Reddy, 2006; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006) and in many cases, done with a corporate name change (Muzellec, 2004).

Past researches on corporate rebranding strategy focus on name change mainly touch on the issue of brand naming process (Kohli & Labahn, 1997), brand name semantics and symbolism (Collins, 1977; Robertson, 1989; Klink, 2001) and types of associations evoked by new names (Kohli & Hemmes, 1995; Delattre, 2002; Glynn & Abzug, 2002). These rebranding researchers (Lomax & Mador, 2006; Daly & Moloney, 2004; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004; Muzellec, 2006; Wu, 2009) presented their findings in the form of case study of market or company level analysis (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2007; Salem, Mzoughi & Bouhlel, 2009). In comparison, rebranding studies adopting a quantitative method are comparatively few and those written about the consequences in the consumer cognition and behaviour are scarce (Jaju & Reddy, 2006).

To the knowledge of the author, the present study is the first to propose rebranding exercise as an imposed change. This proposition is built upon the creation of an ambiguity and uncertain condition signalled by a rebranding message. Consumers in a rebranding condition might prefer the new name but dislike new logo, or they might favour the merging partner but not into the colour scheme of the new logo. In other words, they can form positive and negative attitudes simultaneously which will eventually affect their future purchase intention and behaviour. Hence, it is beneficial to closely examine consumers’ attitude changes from ambivalence aspect. The study further examines the changes in the brand attitude structure by looking into the effect of brand familiarity levels. The findings will contribute to fill in the gap in the current rebranding literature and serves as the pioneer attempt in examining rebranding issue in Malaysia.

Brand familiarity – how does it relate?

When two brands joined in a M&A, both brands’ evaluations were likely to be elicited in addition to certain stored brand-specific association (Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994). Varying research studies suggested the increase in product salience (eg. Familiarity) would result in
different effects on information processing and brand evaluation (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Fazio, 1986, 1989; Johnson & Russo, 1984; Ratneshwar, Shocker & Stewart, 1987). For brand with high familiarity, the relative degree of liking for the brand was well established and stable because brand reacted experiences and associations were extensive (Bettman & Sujan, 1987; Dahlen & Lange, 2004). These brand names were more easily detected in the store and in advertising clutter (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Dahlen, 2001), less affected by competing claims from other brands (Pechmann & Stewart, 1990; Kent & Allen, 1994) and had more persuasive power as sources of claims (Snyder, 1989). At the same time, consumers had well-established brand schemas for high familiarity brands allowed them to expect a certain kind of communication from these brands (Alden et al., 2000). 

Contradictory, low familiarity brands generated few thoughts in response to a communication for a brand thus explaining lower consistency of brand image formation (Edell & Mitchell, 1978). The unstable nature of the attitude structure caused the post exposure attitude of the low familiarity brand to be more subjected to external interference and hence allowed for mere exposure effect to take place. In another words, when familiarity increased, the information processes increased and people would be less likely to assume that there was opposite information of which they were unaware of (Priester, Petty & Park, 2007), the feeling toward high familiarity brands would be more dominant compared to their less dominant counterpart brands, hence, allowed for less change in attitudes and spillover effect of more familiar brand to less familiarity brand (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Hence in the present study, the author posited that the pre-existing attitudes of the brand would have significant impacts on post exposure attitude of the brand. The attitude towards a low familiarity brand was postulated to have a larger degree of change compared to the higher familiarity brand due to its unstable nature. Examination of the underlying theories and concepts would clarify this attitude change process.

**Categorization and Information Integration Theory**

When a consumer held an affect about an entity (e.g. a parent brand), the affect was thought to be retrieved from memory and matched with the new object through a categorization process (Fiske & Pavelchack, 1986). At the core of all these comparisons between the new objects and their parent brand were brand associations that had been suggested to represent knowledge of an established brand in memory (Lynch & Srull, 1982) whereby a series of information neurons linked to the main neuron that contained the meaning of the brand in memory (Keller, 1998), or the thought that were linked to the brand
in a consumer's memory (Aaker, 1991). That thought could be linked to attributes related to product performance, or to the brand name or image, to a spokesperson or a particular symbol that was not related to the product performance (Bridges, 1992; Keller, 1998; Krishnan, 1996; Park & Srinivasan, 1994; Park et al., 1991). The most readily accessible exemplar in memory during the categorization process was likely to serve as a basis for comparison with the new object (Medin & Schaffer, 1978).

In the M&A rebranding cases, when two corporate brand names joined, consumers would either look for the similarity between the two joined brands or to examine analytically and draw inferences from the parent brands to the newly formed alliances. Hence, the more salient or accessible (e.g., Familiar) a brand attitude, the more likely the individual would access that attitude upon observing cues associated with the brand (Fazio, 1986, 1989) and bias information processing in a direction implied by the valence of those attitudes (Fazio & Williams, 1986; Houeston & Fazio, 1989). This salient brand was able to sustain a more developed schema, which involved the retention of stronger links between the product class and brand and between the brand and its attributes (c.f. Alba & Hutchinson, 1987) and caused this information to be easier to retrieve and less susceptible to change and interference. Hence, familiar brand names were posited to be more resistible to change than less familiar brand names. Furthermore, the focal object (parent corporate brand names), was embedded in cognitive structure prior to the communication. Examination of the impact of pre-attitude to the post rebranding attitude of different familiarity products was hence sensibly important.

Pre-existing and Post-exposure ambivalent attitudes

Consumer attitude was highlighted as one of the most important concepts in the study of consumer behaviour (Peter & Olsen, 2010) in which it had been widely defined and measured (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). Some of the earliest research defined attitude as the amount of affect a person had for or against an object (Thurstone, 1931); then evolved to ‘the mental and neural state of readiness to respond’ (Allport, 1935); while Triandis (1977) and others combined three response types (thought, feeling and actions) into the tripartite model of attitude which covered cognition, affect and conation. Later, under the same asymmetry, Fishbein (1980), like Thurstone, postulated the usefulness of a single, uni-dimensional concept of attitude. This understanding might not be agreed and shared by other researchers who viewed attitude as multi-dimensional (Breckler & Wiggins, 1989; Crites et al., 1994; Miller & Tesser, 1989; Sanchez-Garcia & Batista-Foguet, 2008). Nevertheless, these researchers shared the common understanding of attitude as the ‘people’s evaluations’ (Fishbein, 1975).
In addition, there had been continuous arguments on the application of the universal attitudinal scale of measurement. Though earlier researchers like Thurstone (1928) had been stressing on bipolarity of attitude scale as most people reacted to everyday life by experiencing blends of emotions (Scherer & Tannenbaum, 1986). The recent studies had seconded the notion of co-existence of simultaneously formed positive and negative attitudes (Phang & Keh, 2011; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2011; van Harreveld et al., 2009) or ambivalence- which was defined as an attitude comparing both positive and negative reactions to an object (Kaplan, 1972). Kaplan (1972) separated the bipolar scales of attitude measurement to individual unipolar scales; whilst most of the other researchers (see Smith, 1993; Priester & Petty, 1996, 2001; Priester et al., 2007) still used the bipolar scales to provide indicators to the attitude construct. Nevertheless, the general understanding shared by these researchers was the coexistence of mixed feelings an individual possessed at a particular time.

The extensive history of consumer research seconded the prominent roles of brand attitudes in information processing and decision making (Lutz, 1991; Petty, Unnava & Strathman, 1991). Since a consumer could have attitudes towards various physical and social objects, including aspects of marketing strategy (Peter & Olson, 2010), he who held favourable attitude toward the brands would act favourably toward the brand by committing in behavioural actions (Simonin and Ruth, 1998) and vice versa. Under the same assumption, people who experience high ambivalent attitude would process information more systematically (Maio, Bell & Esses, 1996) hence more balanced and accurate in a more controlled and reflective, rather than automatic, manner (Cunningham, Johnson, Gatenby, Gore & Banaji, 2003). This was especially true for those under imposed change (e.g. In the case of M&A rebranding exercise) were found to yield greater ambivalence than those under voluntary change (Sverdlick & Oreg, 2009, Oreg & Sverdlick, 2011). For example, in the organizational study, most employees were found to experience some ambivalence under imposed change (Piderit, 2000). Meanwhile in consumer behaviour studies, consumers would form separate and simultaneous negative and positive feelings toward an imposed stimulus.

By understanding the relatively stable nature of attitude construct (Fishbein & Ajzan, 1975) and the underlying theories, the evaluation of brand would be retrieved when the brand and its associations were accessed in memory by the presentation of a sufficiently strong rebranding cue (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). The initial attitude could be activated from memory and used as a basis for interpreting new information, which explained the cognitive component of attitude structure through thought and opinions about the advantages and disadvantages associated with the attitude objective (Anderson, 1981). In other words, the pre-existing
attitude would be related to the post exposure attitude structure (Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Lafferty, Goldsmith & Hult, 2004; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005) and these relationships would be varied in the degree of familiarity towards the parent brands.

Methodology

This study employed multi-stage method. Several considerations, ranged from the selection of product category and brand names based on its suitability and relevancy, the designs and format of the questionnaires, and also the selection of analytical tools was closely monitored to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

A total of 2 pre-tests were conducted. The first pre-test was carried out on a group of 15 undergraduate students from a Malaysian public university as a part of their final course assessment. The objective of the first pre-test was to determine the appropriate testing category and also the selection of corporate brand names for the subsequent pre-tests and main study. Demographic variables such as age, gender and racial compositions were counter checked to enhance internal validity. Respondents first listed five brand names which come to their mind on a number of consumer and business product categories such as car, skin care, television, semiconductors, airlines, credit card and computer brands. This recall test would help to ensure relevancy and suitability of the product category chosen for the next pre-test. The data generated were compared and analysed to shortlist the suitable product categories. The results of the first pre-test showed computer and semiconductor brands were most relevant based on their high and low familiarity differences. Dell is the most frequently mentioned computer brands, followed by Acer, Hewlett Packard (HP) and Apple; while respondents hardly listed any semiconductor brands. Due to unfamiliarity of semiconductor brand, the list of semiconductor brand names was generated from the list of world’s largest semiconductor companies from the following webpage: (http:///www/fabtech.org/images/uploads/Companies/isuppli_2010_top20_ranking_table_550 JPG). Real brand names instead of fictitious brand names were used in measuring of familiarity levels and prior attitudes to ensure the relevancy of the brand names to consumers.

The second pre-test was carried out two weeks after the first pre-test to minimize repeat testing effect. The objective of the second pre-test was to determine the suitability of the constructs tested and the scale measured. All measures of familiarity were assessed through seven point bipolar semantic differential scales. Familiarity construct was measured with 3 items: familiar/unfamiliar, recognizable/unrecognizable, have heard of/have not heard of
(adopted from Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Felt ambivalence construct was measured with 5 items: completely one sided/completely mixed feeling, not at all decisive/completely decisive, not at all tense/completely tense, completely conflicted/not at all conflicted, not at all ambivalent/completely ambivalent (Priester et al., 2007). Aforementioned, this study adopted a slightly different scale from Simonin and Ruth’s study based on the assumption that the multivariable of the ambivalent construct would provide a more realistic assessment of the pre and post ambivalence attitude formation caused by rebranding strategies. In the present study, ambivalence means scores provide indication of high and low ambivalence level the respondents possessed. Additional brands were included with the purpose of masking the nature of the pre-test and to enhance internal validity by minimizing repeat testing effect. Twenty-five respondents were tested and showed mixed attitudes towards the parent brands and rebranded brands. Another interesting finding from the second pre - test is the Apple brand computer, which was less frequently mentioned in the first recall test, has the highest familiarity mean score in the second pre-test. This might be caused by the low recall level but rather high recognition level for the Apple brand.

In the main study, the mean scores for all computer and semiconductor brands presented mix familiarities. Categorization of product category according to familiarity levels is hence not applicable. In computer product category, Apple and Dell have the highest mean scores, while Texas Instrument and Renesas Electronics scored the least in semiconductor category. Mean score comparisons were used in categorizing products into high and low familiarity groups (see Kent & Allen, 1994). Out of 160 questionnaires given out, a total 138 useable questionnaires were gathered.

Respondents in the main study answered a series of questions regarding levels of familiarity with the multiple brands and their prior attitudes toward a variety of brands. For the purpose of masking the nature of the test, a number of other brands were included. Following a lapse of 10-15 minutes of unrelated filler materials, the respondents then turn to the target stimulus. Brand familiarity was manipulated by inserting the 8 pairs of rebranded corporate names in a form of otherwise identical printed advertisement announcement stated “We are proudly present the joining of (Individual brand A) and (Individual brand B)”. The announcement emphasized on the corporate brand names by using a bigger and bold font to make sure respondents were well informed with the rebranding program. The respondents viewed the stimulus and then respond to questions regarding their post exposure. The diagram below showed the interview process.
This study was served to answer two major research questions: (1) Does pre and post exposure attitude differ significantly after the rebranding intervention? (2) To what extent does these differences vary across corporate brand names with different brand familiarity? In order to measure the pre and post exposure felt ambivalence, it would be important to measure the same subject at two different time lines to examine the changes in the attitude structure caused by the stimuli, in this case, the rebranding announcement. The data were first tested for internal reliability which has displayed a satisfactory level of reliability. The overall Cronbach alpha value of .801 was over the satisfactory level of .6 (Hair et al., 2006).

Prior to performing Principal Component Analysis, the suitability of data for factor analysis were assessed with two main considerations: sample size and the strength of the relationship among the variables. Even though the sample size of 138 was rather small, with high loadings above 0.8, the samples were sufficient requirement for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Correlation matrixes were inspected for evidence of coefficient of 0.3 and above. KMO scores were above 0.6 for familiarity and 0.867 for ambivalence constructs, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970) and the Bartlett’s tests reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA was used to confirm the one dimensionality of the scale and the results for familiarity construct were ranging from .75 to .946, and 0.861 to 0.949 for ambivalence constructs and the presence of only one component each for familiarity and felt ambivalence scores with eigen-values exceeding 77.5% for familiarity and 83% for felt ambivalence construct. The results of the analysis were all highly related to their respective constructs in support of convergent validity.

The postulated research questions on the change of felt ambivalence structures among the two groups of product categories: personal computer and semiconductor brands addressed three issues: interpretation of mean scores for felt ambivalence, the degree and significance of ambivalence attitude change and also the direction of change (eg. increase or decrease). The high mean score simply indicated high mix feeling and low mean score reflected a low mix
feeling (which can be uni-directionally positive or negative). A paired t-test which allowed for the measurement of same respondents was used to compare the felt ambivalence scores on two different timelines: before and after the announcement of the M&A rebranding campaign.

Table 1: Familiarity Mean Score for Computer and Semiconductor Brands: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.1401</td>
<td>.98719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acer</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.2850</td>
<td>1.15509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hewlett Packard</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.4831</td>
<td>2.31469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.2754</td>
<td>1.02990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel Corporations</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.8406</td>
<td>2.57766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.4420</td>
<td>1.37476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renesas Electronics</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.1715</td>
<td>1.21510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Instruments</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>2.5000</td>
<td>1.58114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 showed the average mean score result of familiarity construct. In the computer group, Dell, Acer and Apple were selected to represent the high familiarity brands, while for semiconductor, Texas Instrument and Renesas Electronics were the low familiarity brand names. These high and low brands would be examined and compared to their relative pre-existing felt ambivalence on post exposure ambivalence. Table 2 below showed the paired t-test result of the difference between the combinations of all pre-existing ambivalence on all post exposure ambivalence. The significant value was less than the acceptable level of 0.05 with t value of -8.187. In other words, we could conclude that pre-existing ambivalence differed from the post exposure ambivalence after a rebranding intervention.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test for Total Ambivalence Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total pre ambivalence – Total after ambivalence</td>
<td>- .53415</td>
<td>-.76647</td>
<td>.06525</td>
<td>-.66317</td>
<td>-.40513</td>
<td>-4.817</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By examining Table 3 below in terms of ambivalence scores for each brand, high familiarity brand names such as Apple, Dell, Acer, Intel and Samsung had consistently lower ambivalence scores than the low familiarity brands of HP, Texas Instruments and Renesas Electronics. Some posited in an ambivalence model, high familiarity would lead to high ambivalence experienced (Brooks & Highhouse, 2006), nevertheless, contradictory findings were gained in this study which might caused by the positivity offset effects played larger role than negativity bias.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A) Computer Brands</th>
<th>B) Semiconductor Brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Pre ambi Dell</td>
<td>3.3104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>After ambi Dell</td>
<td>3.4478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Pre ambi Acer</td>
<td>3.1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>After ambi Acer</td>
<td>3.2333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Pre ambi HP</td>
<td>4.0913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>After ambi HP</td>
<td>3.6957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Pre ambi Apple</td>
<td>2.8145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>After ambi Apple</td>
<td>2.8754</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second issue of degree of felt ambivalence change and the significant of change would be addressed by comparing the differences between mean scores of pre and post exposure. The impact of pre-existing attitudes on post exposure attitude was found consistently smaller across the higher familiarity brand names (e.g. Dell, Acer and Apple for computer brands and Intel, Samsung for semiconductor brands) compared to less familiar brand names (e.g. HP for computer brands; Texas Instruments and Renesas Electronics for semiconductor) (refer to Table 4A and 4B). For example, the mean differences between pre and post exposure ambivalence scores for Apple were only 0.0609 while low familiarity brands such as Texas Instruments was 0.242. This finding suggested the notion that pre-exposure attitude of high familiarity brand would undergo slight changes compared to low familiarity
brand and vice versa as the pre-existing brand attitudes were expected to be more stable. Aforementioned, the relative degree of liking for the brand was well established and stable because brand reacted experiences and associations were extensive (Bettman & Sujan, 1987). In this study, familiar brand names such as Apple and Acer were proven to have stable attitude structure, hence causing less change in the ambivalence structure.

In addition, the mean differences between the pre exposure and post exposure attitudes were found to be not significant in the case of highly familiar brands, for both cases of personal computer and semiconductors (Dell: mean -.13744, t=-1.006, sig. .316; Acer: mean -.04783, t=-.312, sig. .755; Apple: mean -.06087, t=-.433, sig. .666; Intel: mean -.16329, t=-1.185, sig. .238; Samsung: mean -.00725, t=-.050, sig. .960; Renesas: mean .44058, t=2.808, sig. .006; Texas: mean .24203, t=1.929, sig. .05).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4A: Personal Computer Brands: Paired Samples Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paired Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.13744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.04783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.39565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.06087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4B: Semiconductor Brands: Paired Samples Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paired Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.16329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.00725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.44058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.24203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean differences in pre and post exposure felt ambivalence for low familiarity brand names (Renesas Electronics: mean .44058, t=2. 808, sig. .006; Texas Instruments: mean .24203, t=-1.929, sig. .05) were found significant at 0.05 level. To cross check the results, the magnitude of the intervention’s effect was calculated and presented in Appendix 4. There were only small differences in term of magnitude of intervention’s effect except in the case of the lowest familiarity brand name, Renesas Electronics. The eta squared values (refer to Table 5) had further confirmed the instability of attitude structure for unfamiliar brand names. In other words, when a rebranding campaign was announced, the felt ambivalence of low familiar brand names changed significantly compared to the higher familiarity brand names. Consistent with Bettman and Sujan (1987), the stable and constant nature of attitude construct, especially for high familiar brand, would minimize the impact of change compared to the less known brand because the brand reacted experiences and associations were extensive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand names</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Eta squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>-1.006</td>
<td>-0.0074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acer</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>-0.312</td>
<td>-0.0007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.784</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>-0.433</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel Corporations</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>-1.185</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung Electronics</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renesas Electronics</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2.808</td>
<td>0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Instruments</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.929</td>
<td>0.0264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a mild increment in the ambivalence scores for all high familiarity brands after the exposure to the rebranding announcement; for example, felt ambivalence score for post ambivalence for Apple was 2.8754, a slight increment of 0.0609 from the initial score of 2.8145. Some studies (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005) proposed that some degree of decay was expected and it was plausible that, the post exposure attitude for familiar brand could be lower than pre exposure attitudes. Contradict results found in low familiarity brands in which the ambivalence scores had significantly decreased after the exposure. Respondents claimed to have lower down their felt ambivalence toward low familiarity brands due to the spill-over effect from high familiarity brands after the evaluation of M&A announcement. Low familiarity seemed to benefit more from the alliance due to the spill-over effect (Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Lafferty et al., 2004; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005).
Conclusion and limitations

The present research was conducted to examine the changes in pre and post attitude structure caused by a rebranding announcement. The results had been conclusive enough to support the previous studies as well as the underlying theories and concepts. By applying multi dimensional felt ambivalence scale, the present study enabled a more realistic examination of the pre and post ambivalence structure. The fundamental concept of the study was supported that when a change was imposed (e.g. a rebranding announcement), individuals experienced ambivalence. Oreg and Sverdlik (2011) studied on employees’ attitude change found ambivalence evidence in an imposed organizational change condition. Multidimensionality of the ambivalence attitude model has permitted a richer view of how people respond to change (Piderit, 2000). Secondly, the present study also proved significant differences between pre and post ambivalence structure across a number of corporate brand name changes. The initial attitudes held affect his/her post rebranding attitude. The new information stimulus (in this case, rebranding) changes the post attitude an individual holds toward the corporate brand, supporting Kaplan (1972).

The present study concluded that individuals experienced ambivalence toward a rebranding announcement. This felt ambivalence was significantly reduced after the exposure to the rebranding announcement, especially in the case of low familiarity brands. Though ambivalent attitudes were experienced, positivity offset effect was found to be larger than negativity bias effect in which more familiar brand were viewed more favorably. Nevertheless, this result suggested for further testing of the data for potential mediating effect, such as the attitude towards rebranding. A M&A rebranding strategy which normally joined two brands represented potential new evaluation and assessment for both brands, attitude towards the rebranding strategy itself could influence how both brands were evaluated. By empirically examined the structure of pre and post exposure ambivalence, this research contributed to a better understanding of how ambivalence structure was changed in conjunction with a rebranding announcement under manipulation of high and low familiarity levels.

From the managerial perspective, this study emphasized the importance of examination of consumers’ attitude structures, especially in designing and implementing a rebranding campaign. In comparison with other stakeholders, consumers’ viewpoints have received less attention in academic research. In line with a recent article written by Melewar, Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2012), this paper calls for future research to examine how individuals affect
corporate branding and also corporate rebranding. In addition, this paper also contributed to the ambivalence literature by positing rebranding as an imposed change which would cause ambivalent attitude among the consumers. Due to the ambiguity and unsure future promised by the M&A situation, even with less choice, consumers could simultaneously possess positive and negative feelings. Hence, in order to fully comprehend the ambivalent attitudes experience, application of both subjective and objective approaches will be more beneficial (Oreg & Sverdlik, 2011). In addition, familiar corporate brand names should be careful in their name change strategies. Even though high familiarity brand names were found to have comparatively lower ambivalence scores than their counterparts of low familiarity (which can be either more positive or more negative), these brands were less subject to interference (e.g. a rebranding stimulus) and change. Hence, changing a more familiar brand name might cause higher consumer resistance. High familiarity brands were also found to have an insignificant increment in ambivalence scores after the announcement, while the low familiarity brands experience significant decrements in post exposure ambivalence scores. These findings suggested highly familiar brand names to take into consideration of the possible deterioration effect. Contradictory, less familiar brand names benefit from the spillover effect from the highly familiar partners.

Several potential limitations of the methodology used in this research should be acknowledged. The first concern is pertaining to the use of student respondents. Many researchers question the generalizability of student samples to represent the real population (see Peterson, 2001). Nevertheless, according to the theory falsification procedures, the main selection criteria for research participants would only provide a rigorous test of the theory at issue due to the nature of universality of scientific theories (Kruglanski 1973; Webster & Kervin 1971). Homogeneity permits more exact theoretical prediction (Lynch, 1982) and allows for less noise or extraneous variations (e.g. Brown & Stayman, 1992) by decreasing the chance of making a false conclusion about whether there is a covariation between the variables under study. Nevertheless, differences in certain demographic variables such as nationality and financial ability might cause variations in attitude responses and this call for future examination. These background factors X treatment interactions will affect estimates of the population main effect of the treatments (Lynch, 1982). In addition, even though only items with factor loadings above 0.80 were retained (as per suggested by Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), the small sample size limited the generalizability of the data. The next limitation is the longitudinal nature of the study. Even though the present research has employed a filtering lapse of 15-20 minutes before filling up the post exposure felt ambivalence scores, memory
and timing biases might take effect. Repeated measurement of time 1 and time 2 might increase respondent’s attention to a particular brand, and causing mere exposure effect which improves familiarity and lesser stress or contradictory feeling and hence lower down their felt ambivalence.

In conclusion, this research contributed to a better understanding of how ambivalence structure is changed in conjunction with a rebranding announcement under manipulation of high and low familiarity levels.

[References]
Cook, T. and Campbell, D. (1975). The Design and Conduct of Experiments and Quasi-experiments in Field


(1996). LISREL. VIII, Chicago, SPSS.


