

**BRAND EQUITY IN NGO:
A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS
TOWARDS GOPIO MALAYSIA**

SASHIDHARAN SANTHESEGARAN

**OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
2021**

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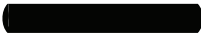
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the degree of Master of Corporate Communication

Cluster of Education and Social Sciences
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2021

DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that this Master's Project is the result of my own work, except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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15th April 2021

**NGO BRAND EQUITY:
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SASHIDHARAN SANTHESEGARAN

April 2021

ABSTRACT

Branding helps to broaden reach, gain recognition, connect people and supports to advance the mission of an organisation. Although branding is important, many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are unable to focus on branding and to evaluate their brand, often due to limited expertise, facilities and financial capacity. This research paper studies the Brand Equity of NGOs by evaluating Public Perceptions towards NGOs in Malaysia. The research has engaged three variables from Aaker's Brand Equity Theory namely Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Brand Association. The research case study sample was GOPIO (Global Organisations of People of Indian Origin), a diaspora-networking organisation in Malaysia. The research conducted a quantitative survey on the Malaysian Indian Community, namely members, associates and friends of GOPIO in Malaysia. The research found that Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust are all positively related, and confirmed that Brand Loyalty and Brand Association have a strong relationship. The research also found the level of trust in GOPIO to be very high. The research concluded that Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Brand Associations together, do not qualify as the best predictors for Brand Trust, while Brand Association emerged as the best predictor for Brand Trust. The research rejected Brand Awareness as a predictor for Brand Trust as most of the respondents were well aware of GOPIO. The findings of this research shall benefit organisations and researchers, particularly involving Brand Equity, NGO branding and Malaysian Indian NGOs.

Keywords:

Brand equity theory, Branding, Non-Governmental Organisation, Malaysian Indian community, Diaspora networking.

**EKUITI JENAMA NGO:
KAJIAN PERSEPSI MASYARAKAT TERHADAP GOPIO MALAYSIA**

SASHIDHARAN SANTHESEGARAN

April 2021

ABSTRAK

Jenama berupaya membantu memperluaskan jangkauan, pengiktirafan, perhubungan dan membantu dalam mendekati misi sesebuah organisasi. Walaupun penjenamaan itu penting, sebahagian besar Badan Bukan Kerajaan (NGO) tidak berupaya memberi tumpuan yang sewajarnya kepada penjenamaan dan juga menilai jenama mereka, disebabkan kekurangan kepakaran, kemudahan dan kemampuan kewangan. Justeru itu, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji ekuiti jenama NGO dan menilai persepsi masyarakat terhadap NGO di Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini telah menggunakan tiga pemboleh ubah dari Teori Ekuiti Jenama Aaker iaitu Kesedaran Jenama, Kesetiaan Jenama dan Hubungan Jenama. Sampel kajian kes penyelidikan ini adalah GOPIO (Pertubuhan Masyarakat Berasal Dari India Sedunia), sebuah organisasi yang berlandaskan rangkaian diaspora di Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini melakukan kajian kuantitatif keatas masyarakat India di Malaysia, yang terdiri daripada ahli, rakan sekutu dan kenalan GOPIO di Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini mendapati keempat-empat, Kesedaran Jenama, Kesetiaan Jenama, Hubungan Jenama dan Kepercayaan Jenama semuanya mempunyai hubungan positif. Kesetiaan Jenama dan Hubungan Jenama pula mempunyai tahap perhubungan yang tinggi. Penyelidikan ini juga mendapati tahap kepercayaan terhadap GOPIO sebagai sangat tinggi. Penyelidikan ini membuat kesimpulan bahawa ketiga-tiga pemboleh ubah, iaitu Kesedaran Jenama, Kesetiaan Jenama dan Hubungan Jenama secara bersama, tidak memenuhi syarat sebagai peramal terbaik untuk Kesetiaan Jenama. Manakala Hubungan Jenama pula muncul sebagai peramal terbaik untuk Kesetiaan Jenama. Penyelidikan ini menolak Kesedaran Jenama sebagai peramal untuk Kesetiaan Jenama kerana hampir semua responden mengenali GOPIO. Keputusan penyelidikan ini akan memberi manfaat kepada organisasi dan penyelidik, terutama dalam perkara yang melibatkan ekuiti jenama, penjenamaan NGO dan NGO masyarakat India di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci:

Teori ekuiti jenama, Penjenamaan, Badan bukan kerajaan, Masyarakat India Malaysia, Rangkaian diaspora.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAs	Brand Association
BAw	Brand Awareness
BET	Brand Equity Theory
BINGO	Business-Friendly International Non-Governmental Organisation
BL	Brand Loyalty
BT	Brand Trust
CBBE	Customer-Based Brand Equity
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
FBBE	Financial Based-Brand Equity
GONGO	Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation
GOPIO	Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin
H	Hypothesis
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MITRA	Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PIO	People of Indian Origin
QUANGO	Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question
SEDIC	Socio-economic Development of the Indian Community
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research comprises five major chapters, namely introduction, review of literature, methodology, data analysis and discussion. This introductory chapter presents an overview of the research and elaborates on the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, the scope of the study, the definition of terms, potential contribution to knowledge, ethical considerations and limitations. The second chapter discusses recent advances in the study of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) branding and the impact of Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Brand Association on Brand Trust, and subsequently their influence on Brand Equity. The second chapter also deliberates theoretical elaborations on Public Perceptions of NGOs and a comprehensive discussion on the variables and research hypotheses. The third chapter explains the procedures, research design and instrument engaged in this research. The fourth chapter presents the data analysis and results. The fifth and last chapter provides discussion, implication, conclusion, addresses the research limitations and provides future recommendations. This research has engaged a quantitative research method through an online survey. The research subject is GOPIO (Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin) of Malaysia, a Malaysian Indian NGO, and the theory employed is Aaker's Brand Equity Theory.

1.2 Background of the Study

NGOs are non-profit, people-based groups with a focus on a social or political cause that operates independently of the government. NGOs are also known as civil societies. The United Nations (UN) coined and promoted the term NGO in 1945 and initiated the term “International NGO” (INGO) in 1950 (Kellow and Gregory, 2018). NGOs are cooperative rather than competitive and are active on community, national and international levels. NGOs depend on various types of sources for funds which include donations from individuals and private institutions, fee from members and grants from the government. Most NGOs rely primarily on volunteers for manpower, while some NGOs are managed and assisted by paid staff/s. Besides INGO, other categories of NGOs include, business-friendly international NGOs called BINGO, environmental NGOs called ENGO, government-organised non-governmental organisation called GONGO and quasi-autonomous NGOs called QUANGO.

The existence and growth of NGOs as important stakeholders and facilitators has gained international acknowledgement and acceptance through the years. “NGO activism will likely become an even greater fixture on the world stage” (Brown, 2009). At the same time, the capacity and effectiveness of an NGO depend much on its funds, collaborations and volunteers. “The creation of a brand has been identified as a differentiating factor for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) when it comes to competing for private and public funding, as well as when trying to recruit volunteers” (Paco et al, 2014). Here, the term “brand” does not apply to the products or services provided, but to the organisation itself.

Although most NGOs are non-profit organisations operating towards particular causes with minimum facilities and resources, disasters and pandemics are exceptional

circumstances demanding extraordinary operations. During a disaster or pandemic, the NGOs challenge themselves to communicate and organise response and relief efforts. NGOs arise to help communities cope with the crisis, and demonstrate that they will contribute and command trust through tough situations under challenging circumstances. How do this situation favour an NGO and its brand equity?

Being a multiracial, multicultural and multi-religious nation, Malaysia has numerous race-based institutions and NGOs to look into the many interests of the various races, ethnic groups and religious groups. “The primary historical antecedents to contemporary Malaysian NGOs are Chinese associations, especially secret societies; reformist Indian associations; and Malay nationalist and/or Islamic organisations before independence” (Weiss and Saliha, 2003, pg.19). This feature is an integral part of the construct of this country and has contributed significantly to nation-building. Therefore, except for the secret societies, the branding of such NGOs is imperative for their continued sustainability and role play to serve the various communities within the larger Malaysian society.

GOPIO was chosen for this research for its global appeal and available online references and records. GOPIO Malaysia is well connected with other established Indian Malaysian NGOs and NGO leaderships. GOPIO is also an international NGO (INGO) and its international chapter is known as “GOPIO International”. GOPIO International chapter comprises GOPIO leaders from various active country chapters from across the world. GOPIO, with more than a hundred (100) chapters in over thirty (30) countries, is a leading international NGO and model for several Indian diaspora organisations around the world.

Brand Equity is observed by Aaker as an assortment of Brand Awareness, Brand Associations, Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality and Other Proprietary Brand Assets. Aaker's Brand Equity Theory model was chosen for this research because it supports the creation of a brand approach made up of several components that help distinguish a brand from its competitors and advances it further. This makes Brand Equity a core concept of marketing as it adds up to the value given by the goods and/or services of a brand. (Buil et al, 2013).

The focal intention of this research is to perform a scientific study on NGO initiatives and operations in Malaysia and the implications caused by stakeholders' responses and Public Perceptions on the NGO's Brand Equity. The list of NGO stakeholders include associations, aid beneficiaries, social activists and workers, minority and ethnic groups, governments, corporations and international communities. According to Bekkers et al (2016), NGOs have to connect and cooperate successfully with the public, the government, and business enterprises, to achieve their missions. These entities bring forth volunteers, partners, donors and sponsors to the NGOs, providing increased capacity, stability and sustenance.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The problem of this research is NGO branding in Malaysia. This research addresses the significance of NGO branding and its effect on Public Perceptions and eventually its impact on Brand Equity. Michel and Rieunier (2012), quote brand as a crucial factor as a strong brand image is a key determinant in influencing and delivering potential donations. According to Temporal (2014), NGOs compete to secure donors, partners and volunteers.

Branding is no longer limited to corporations and some leading NGOs like Oxfam, Amnesty and Greenpeace have a huge global presence (Davis, 2009), branding is as important to NGOs as it is for politicians and corporations. However, the problems faced by NGOs in the context of branding are many. Most NGOs do not emphasize branding nor do they possess adequate branding skills. Expertise, funds and manpower are among the key issues faced by NGOs in establishing branding. Most NGOs in Malaysia do not evaluate the effects of their activities on their brand.

Thus, there is a gap in knowledge on how an NGO fares when it operates towards its cause and conducts public programmes actively. This quantitative research analyses the relations between Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust in an Indian Malaysian NGO. The online survey is conducted on members, donors, partners, volunteers, programme beneficiaries, friends and other stakeholders of the NGO. The findings of this research can motivate and contribute to future exploration in the area of Public Perceptions towards NGOs and their impact on NGO Brand Equity.

Brand Awareness is making members of society acquainted with a particular brand, product or service or reviving an older brand. Brand Awareness is important to NGOs as it has the aptitude to provide them with funds and manpower through the attraction of Brand Trust. “Brand awareness and brand commitment have a significant and positive relationship with brand loyalty” (Abdelbaset et al, 2017). Thus, Brand Awareness has a positive impact on people’s decision making in NGOs.

Brand Loyalty is the tendency of people to continue with a particular brand, which fosters a trusting relationship. Brand Loyalty is important to NGOs as it provides them with members and followers through Brand Trust. Brand Loyalty is the confidence in a particular brand and commitment to apply or engage the same product and/or service

constantly. According to Paco et al (2014), people will repeat their act to donate and volunteer with the same organisation, much influenced by past donation and volunteering behaviour. Thus, Brand Loyalty is an important aspect of the market structure of NGOs.

Brand Association helps members of society to recall a brand for its unique properties, based on attributes, benefits, associations, interest and/or celebrity. Brand Association is important to NGOs as it provides them with image and identity through Brand Trust. Aaker (1991) had interpreted Brand Association as “anything linked in memory to a brand”. Thus, Brand Association has an affirmative influence on people's selection, inclinations and intention of purchase. Brand Association also determines their readiness to spend a premium price and/or time for the NGO and recommend the brand to others.

Brand Trust reflects the people's expectancy that a brand's product, service, or corporate behaviour, reflect on the objectives and assurances made by the organisation. To the NGOs, Brand Trust is important as when people trust a brand they also exhibit behaviours that demonstrate loyalty. According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Brand Trust refers to the inclination of the average consumer to depend on the capacity of the brand to deliver its specified function. Thus, by developing a brand name and services that people trust, NGOs increase the chances of people remaining with their organisation.

1.4 Research Objectives

The broad objective of this research is to evaluate the Malaysian Indian community's brand perception towards GOPIO. The precise objectives of the research are stated as follows:

- i. To measure the level of public Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust in GOPIO activities.
- ii. To measure the relationship between Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust.
- iii. To examine the best predictor for Brand Trust.

1.5 Research Questions

Following the objectives identified earlier, the research questions are:

- i. What is the level of public Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust in GOPIO activities?
- ii. What is the relationship between Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust?
- iii. What is the best predictor for Brand Trust?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is conducted to ascertain the importance of branding for NGOs and the significance of branding in contributing funds, members and volunteers for NGOs. This research shall further prove that Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty And Brand Association and Brand Trust are positively related. The result of this research is largely beneficial to NGOs and future researchers. Other possible beneficiaries include experts, decision-makers and interested individuals and parties.

This research and result will benefit future studies in the areas of social work, NGOs, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association, Brand Trust, Public Perceptions and Brand Equity. The study stresses the significance of NGO branding and

shall assist NGO office bearers, members, staff to understand its importance. The research will also benefit donors, funders, partners and volunteers to better comprehend the function of NGOs and the significance of their roles and contributions for the NGOs and the society at large.

Today, political and business organisations are developing their own NGO arms to perform Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. This further reduces the possibility of the corporations channelling funds to other independent NGOs. However, NGOs must secure funding and amass members and volunteers for their activities and cause, as the survival of NGOs depends much on human and financial resources (Paco et al, 2014). Without Brand Awareness, people will not know about the NGO and without knowledge about the NGO, they may not support the NGO.

Public Perceptions and Brand Equity are as important to NGOs as it is to political parties and corporations. Although each NGO has its own unique identity, cause and role and the understanding of this feature can help the people to support the NGO, most NGOs do not recognise the problems and weakness that poor branding may cause. This research motivates NGOs to attend to strategic branding.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research explores the Public Perceptions of an Indian NGO in Malaysia and evaluates the Brand Equity of the NGO.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The key or important terms in this research are defined here.

Brand Association

Brand Association refers to people's affiliation and involvement in GOPIO's Community programmes activities.

Brand Equity

Brand Equity is the assessment of quality that GOPIO creates out of its products and/or services with an identifiable title when compared to a similar brand.

Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness refers to people's knowledge and understanding of GOPIO and its Community programmes and activities.

Brand Loyalty

Brand Loyalty refers to people's faithfulness and devotion towards GOPIO and in continuously supporting GOPIO's Community programmes and activities.

Brand Trust

Brand Trust refers to people's trust towards GOPIO in serving the Community.

Civil Society

Civil society is a group or community of people connected through mutual concern and common cause.

Diaspora

Diaspora refers to the people from a particular country, who are dispersed and spread to other parts of the world, away from their original ancestral homeland.

For-profit

For-profit is an organisation established, maintained, or conducted to make a profit for the businesses. Commercial business entities are called for-profits.

Non-profit

A nonprofit organisation is an organisation that is not profit-oriented. NGOs are called non-profits.

Public Perceptions

Public Perceptions is the opinion and perspective of the people toward a particular subject or situation.

Social Enterprise

Social enterprise is a commercial or business activity with specific social obligations that assists the main objectives of an NGO/non-profit organisation.

1.9 Potential Contribution to Knowledge

“Renewed and growing interest in the topic of civil society has generated a wealth of new information and knowledge on the subject, but until now, there was no comprehensive reference work to organize and consolidate this knowledge” (Stefan & Helmut, 2010). As there is a vacuum in the subject of NGO branding, stakeholders and end-users can benefit

from this research. The knowledge will be useful both in terms of the general topic (branding) and in terms of the specific subject (NGO, Malaysian Indian NGO or INGO) and future researchers can replicate or repeat this knowledge.

1.10 Ethical Considerations

There were a few ethical considerations that the Researcher managed during the course of this research. Foremost was the consent of the concerned NGO, GOPIO. First, a verbal discussion was held with the organisation. This was then followed by a written request and the application to conduct the research and it was approved by the organisation. Once the NGO agreed to participate in the study, access to its members, affiliates and friends was allowed and available. Next, was the consent of the survey participants whereby the survey respondents were informed of the condition that by answering the questions, they agree to voluntarily participate in the survey. Their identity and other personal details were strictly reserved in confidentiality. In the research, their answers appeared anonymous and wholesome. All the information collected in the course of this research were used only for this research and shall be kept private. The letter of request and the letter of approval are attached in the Appendices.

1.11 Limitations

There were some problems and challenges which the Researcher encountered while conducting this research. The first challenge was recruiting a sufficient number of participants or respondents. The creation of the initial database of the prospective target population took some time. The NGO has never allowed external research before this. Therefore, some reasoning and convincing had to be engaged with the NGO, to gain consent and access to its members, affiliates and friends. Secondly, the Researcher

experienced some time restriction, due to the online questionnaire. The Covid-19 pandemic restricted the movement for face to face meets. Thirdly, the method of identifying and selecting the target population of potential donors, partners, volunteers and influencers who were sought for participation might have lured some close contact respondents with biased input. The research is limited to one community (Malaysians Indians), one subject (GOPIO) and one theory (Brand Equity Theory). The research on NGO branding also required many adaptations as most aspects of literature are centred and aimed at the profit-oriented features of corporations and business entities. The Researcher had to adapt most of the references from previous works on for-profit organisations.

1.12 Summary

The research predicts that the combination of any two variables among Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Association and Brand Trust, are positively related. The research also deliberates that Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty and Brand Association are predictors for Brand Trust and have a positive effect on the Public Perceptions and Brand Equity of the NGO. As NGOs become an integral part of globalisation and the twenty-first (21st) century society, Public Perception becomes increasingly important to all the stakeholders. This research addressed the gap in knowledge on the connection between Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Associations and Brand Trust and their impact on Brand Equity of NGOs in Malaysia, particularly the Malaysian Indian NGOs. The result of this research shall also provide an understanding of the factors, actors and insights on the subject of NGO branding.

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