

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF FRENCH IN PRODUCT
BRANDING AMONG MALAYSIAN FEMALE
CONSUMERS**

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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITI MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

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**PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF FRENCH IN PRODUCT BRANDING
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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
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Field of Study: Sociolinguistics

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF FRENCH IN COSMETIC PRODUCT BRANDING AMONG MALAYSIAN FEMALE CONSUMERS

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the level of awareness, perceptions and understanding among female consumers regarding the use of the French language in beauty product branding. The data was gathered from 102 respondents ranging in age from 18 to 65 years old, who are members of the Facebook group “*Kosmetik dan Makeup Malaysia*” as well as friends and family. The data was collected through an online survey. The findings showed that 85% of the respondents were aware of the language used in product branding, while only 15% of respondents were unaware of the language used. Additionally, a total of 77.5% of respondents stated that the use of a foreign language such as French in a brand name contributes to the perception of the product as being more expensive and luxurious. The study also revealed that 54.9% of respondents understood the language used in product branding, while 45.1% of respondents did not understand the language used. The study solely focused on female consumers and was limited to beauty products.

Keywords: product branding; French; Malaysia; perception; awareness.

PERSEPSI PENGGUNAAN BAHASA PERANCIS DALAM PENJENAMAAN PRODUK KOSMETIK DALAM KALANGAN PENGGUNA WANITA MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat tahap persepsi dan pemahaman kesedaran di kalangan pengguna wanita terhadap penggunaan bahasa Perancis dalam penjenamaan produk kecantikan. Data itu dikumpul daripada 102 responden berumur antara 18 hingga 65 tahun, yang merupakan ahli kumpulan Facebook “Kosmetik dan Makeup Malaysia” serta rakan dan keluarga. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan dalam talian. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan 85% responden mengetahui bahasa yang digunakan dalam penjenamaan produk, manakala hanya 15% responden tidak mengetahui bahasa yang digunakan. Selain itu, sejumlah 77.5% responden menyatakan bahawa penggunaan bahasa asing seperti Perancis dalam nama jenama menyumbang kepada persepsi produk sebagai lebih mahal dan mewah. Kajian juga mendedahkan bahawa 54.9% responden memahami bahasa yang digunakan dalam penjenamaan produk, manakala 45.1% responden tidak memahami bahasa yang digunakan. Kajian itu hanya tertumpu kepada pengguna wanita dan terhadap kepada produk kecantikan.

Kata kunci: penjenamaan produk; Perancis; Malaysia; persepsi; kesedaran.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USA - The United States of America

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

EU - The European Union

CCIFM - Chamber of Commerce and Industry France Malaysia

TechnipFMC - Technip and FMC Technologies

I.e - Id est

B2B - Business-to-Business

CAGR - Compound Annual Growth Rate

CLA - Critical Language Awareness

ALA- Association for Language Awareness

USD - United States dollar

Inc - Incorporated

E.g - for example

Ads - Advertisements

SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Science

COO - Country of Origin

GLNs - Global Language Networks

AMA - American Marketing Association

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

According to Rabiah (2018), language is a powerful tool for expression and can be used to convey specific meanings as well as providing the most accurate descriptions of objects. Alongside precision and comprehension, entrepreneurs need to effectively communicate the nature of their product, particularly if they hope to persuade others, as in the case of chosen brand names. In the business sector, brand names are crucial for entrepreneurs due to increasingly fierce product competition being the reason behind this. Hence, business owners must present their products in an appealing manner, including the brand name, packaging and methods of advertising.

The language utilized in brand names and product labels plays a role in shaping consumer perceptions. English, as a widely adopted international language, is frequently employed in product branding. Another viewpoint regarding the use of foreign languages is that they attract greater attention compared to the native language, enhancing product memorability and requiring consumers to invest more cognitive effort. The wording used in brand names and product labels may not be perceived in the same way by all consumers. It is reasonable to assume that people will perceive the language used differently because various factors will influence why consumers choose to purchase these products.

Ethnologue (2022) reported that there are about 7151 languages spoken in the world and new languages emerge every day, continually increasing the overall count. These languages thrive and flourish across the world. According to Argos Multilingual (2016), the importance of languages and cross-lingual communication has experienced significant growth in the twenty-first century due to globalisation and the expansion of businesses into diverse

global markets. Additionally, the internet has transformed the world into a limitless realm, facilitating seamless connections between people from different parts of the world and providing effortless access to diverse languages for communication and interaction. Increasingly, businesses are incorporating foreign languages in their product branding as part of their marketing strategies. Among the myriad languages employed by business professionals worldwide, French stands out as one of the most commonly used languages for branding products and establishing them as trademarks.

Furthermore, the influence of a brand on marketing strategies and its impact on shaping customer perceptions are pivotal brand-related factors. Foreign brands may pose challenges in terms of memorability and pronunciation, but they have gained prominence in Malaysia over recent years. Despite products being genuinely Malaysian while branded in foreign languages, many consumers are led to believe they originate from abroad. This trend aligns with the increasing use of foreign languages in product branding. Nowadays, an increasing number of companies are incorporating French into their brand names. Examples include Malaysian brands like *Noir* and *Beausiti*, South Korean cosmetic brands like *Laneige* and *Etude House*, and American brand *Enchanted*. The inclusion of French in these brand names not only imparts an essence of sophistication and elegance but also capitalises on the worldwide allure linked with the French language. This illustrates the ongoing influence and adoption of foreign languages in the branding strategies of global businesses.

In Malaysia, a multi-racial country where Malay, Chinese and Indian populations coexist, the influence of different languages is conspicuous. According to Omar (1982), these ethnic groups are represented by three major languages: Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. Bahasa Malaysia serves as the national and official language of Malaysia, while English holds significant importance as the second most widely spoken language (Hashim, 2003).

Additionally, Mandarin and Tamil are widely used languages in sub-ethnic and vernacular schools. The Malaysian education system introduces the teaching of other foreign languages in both government and private sector institutions, leading to the majority of Malaysians being bilingual or even multilingual (Omar, 1982). This linguistic diversity has also played a role in company naming. Nonetheless, some local businesses such as *Syurah* and *Jati* employ Malay names for their products, while others opt for English names such as *Munchy's* and *Old Town*. Similarly, Chinese names such as *Aik Cheong* and *Hwa Tai* are incorporated into brand names. Obviously, cultural differences, particularly language variations, influence how local consumers select products.

Given the influence of language on product branding, comprehending how consumers interpret the terminology becomes crucial. However, local researchers have not yet conducted thorough studies on the use of French in product branding within the Malaysian market. This study aimed to fill this research gap by examining how Malaysian female customers perceive the use of French terms in specific product branding. Exploring this topic will provide insights into how the Malaysian market views the extensive use of French, which is a foreign language in Malaysia. French terms are employed not only in beauty products but also in clothing, food and beverages, home and living as well as various other categories, even though these products are not created in France and the meaning of the language employed may not be understood by many people in Malaysia. Conducting this research will illuminate the impact of language on product branding and its influence on consumer perceptions in Malaysia.

1.2 Language Knowledge in Malaysia

Language serves as a link connecting brands and consumers, facilitating efficient communication and nurturing a feeling of cultural affinity. When brands utilize the native language of their intended audiences, it showcases regard for local practices, legacies, and principles. This linguistic adjustment augments consumer confidence by indicating that the brand comprehends and welcomes the local way of life. Due to Malaysia's broad cultural and ethnic composition, a multitude of languages are spoken within its borders. The following points outline some crucial aspects of linguistic proficiency in Malaysia:

- i. **Malay Language (Bahasa Malaysia):** Commonly referred to as Bahasa Malaysia, Malay is the official national language of Malaysia. The majority of people speak this language and it is utilised in daily communication as well as in government, education and the media.
- ii. **Ethnic Languages:** Malaysia is home to several ethnic groups, each with its own language and dialect. Mandarin, Tamil and a number of indigenous languages like Iban, Kadazan and Dusun are among the well-known ethnic tongues. These dialects often exhibit regional differences and are spoken in certain communities.
- iii. **English Language:** English is a second language that is frequently spoken in Malaysia. It not only is used in various industries such as tourism, business and higher education, but is also taught in schools. Fluency in English among Malaysians shows variations, with metropolitan areas and younger generations typically exhibiting higher levels of proficiency.
- iv. **Language Policies:** The prevailing language policy in Malaysia designates Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language. This policy not only respects the rights of ethnic communities to uphold their languages and cultural identities but also promotes the use

of Malay as a unifying language.

- v. **Bilingual Education:** Many schools across Malaysia implement a bilingual education system, offering instruction in both Malay and English. Moreover, certain schools provide education in ethnic languages, particularly catering to specific groups.
- vi. **Multilingualism and code-switching:** In conversations, Malaysians often engage in "code-switching," wherein they seamlessly transition between two or more languages. This practice of code-switching, encompassing Malay, English and ethnic languages, serves to exemplify the multilingual nature of the nation.
- vii. **Language preservation:** To conserve and promote indigenous languages, Malaysia employs cultural activities, educational initiatives, and documentation projects. Both communities and organizations collaborate to ensure the continued survival and vitality of these languages.

It is crucial to remember that language usage and proficiency can vary among the diverse communities and regions in Malaysia. The linguistic landscape of the country reflects its lively cultural variety and its multilingual society.

1.3 French for Business and Careers

According to the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, more than 300 million people speak French across five continents. French holds the distinction of being the second most studied foreign language in the world after English and ranks as the fifth most spoken language. It serves a myriad of purposes, including in the global job market, tourism, culture and international relations. Various prestigious organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, UNESCO, NATO and the International Olympic Committee. Those international organizations adopt distinct language policies based on factors such as their membership, mission, and geographical context. For instance, the United Nations, boasting a

membership of 192 countries, designates six official languages, namely Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. In contrast, the International Olympic Committee employs English and French as its official languages, supplemented by the local language of the host location for the Games. Within the European Union, French stands as the second most common mother tongue and the second most taught language after English (Misachi, 2021). French also operates as one of the working languages across all EU institutions. Furthermore, French holds the status of an official language in 29 nations scattered over various continents. Notably, Africa possesses the second-largest francophone diaspora after Europe. The website “Why French?” (2017) asserts that French stands as a global business language, offering opportunities to explore new horizons. As per the World Economic Forum's report by Chan in 2016, the most influential languages globally are English, Mandarin, and French. This aligns with a 2011 study by Bloomberg, which identified English, Mandarin Chinese, and French as the most advantageous languages for global business. It's worth highlighting that the leading six languages in both categories correspond to the six official languages of the United Nations. Ronen et al. (2014) explore the worldwide impact of language using global language networks (GLNs), emphasizing that influence is shaped by connectivity and shared languages. They identify English, German, and French as the top three languages concerning translations of Wikipedia articles and books, indicating their prominence in global visibility and the popularity of cultural content. Moreover, according to France Diplomatie (2017), French stands as the second most commonly spoken native language in Europe with more than 77 million speakers, trailing behind German (approximately 100 million) but surpassing English (around 61 million). Demographic projections suggest that France's birth rate will elevate French to become the most widely spoken mother tongue in Europe, surpassing German, by the year 2025. Besides, the British Council's 2013 “Languages for the Future” study also underscores French as the third most beneficial language for British business. Proficiency in French can

also open doors in the language-services business, which is a sector valued at over \$25 billion annually, employing more than 500,000 people in education and industry alone. This sector is expected to grow by 29% between 2014 and 2024.

According to a report from the New Straits Times in 2021, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry France Malaysia (CCIFM) has expanded from its initial 19 founders to encompass more than 300 members in its three decades of existence. CCIFM has assisted the expansion of numerous French and Malaysian enterprises in both nations. Currently, over 500 legal organisations in Malaysia are directly or indirectly linked to France, providing employment to over 30,000 Malaysians. The annual trade volume between France and Malaysia exceeds €5 billion, and approximately 4,000 French residents reside in Malaysia, with a majority in the Klang Valley.

It is crucial to emphasise that a significant portion of French enterprises that ventured into Malaysia have not only persisted but also thrived over the past three decades. They have introduced sustainable practices, leading to the localisation of expertise and a decrease in reliance on foreign workers. A notable example as reported by New Straits Times (2021) is TechnipFMC, which has built a substantial presence in Malaysia, employing more than 4,000 highly skilled individuals. The 'French touch' appears to resonate well with employees. In addition, it is noteworthy that the number of Malaysian students graduating from French universities is increasing. The widespread exposure to foreign languages among Malaysians has introduced a new trend in product branding within the Malaysian market. An increasing number of brands are adopting names in various foreign languages. According to Olavarrieta et al. (2009), brand names play a vital role in establishing brand expertise, encompassing factors like brand awareness and brand image. Language holds significant sway in influencing consumer purchasing decisions, particularly when targeting specific demographics (Dyer,

1982). People who speak different languages and come from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to perceive things differently (Whorf, 1950). As a result, the research aimed to examine at the use of French in product branding, specifically among Malaysian female consumers.

1.4 Concept of Foreign Language Branding

According to Prastono et al. (2022), the main objective of employing a foreign brand lies in influencing various dimensions of brand image and shaping consumer perceptions of quality and attitudes towards the product. This branding strategy entails assigning a brand name with spelling or pronunciation aligned with the language of specific foreign consumers. Foreign language brands are appealing to consumers due to their association with languages from more developed countries, which inherently enhances perceptions of product quality. In comparison to brands with limited informational content, products featuring foreign branding are often perceived as having superior quality.

To differentiate a product from its competitors, a company's brand has emerged as a pivotal aspect. The brand name facilitates easier recognition of the product by consumers. According to Prastono et al. (2022), brands assist customers in identifying a product's country of origin. As a result, a local brand incorporating a certain foreign language can signify the origin of the product from a particular nation. This technique is widely used by local manufacturers by utilising foreign-language text or spelling to brand their products. This phenomenon offers marketers with novel insights into selecting brand elements that can establish connections with renowned domestic products, thereby positively influencing consumer perceptions.

Prastono et al. (2022) further elaborated on the relationship between constructivism and foreign language branding. They highlighted that many business professionals believe that

adopting a foreign language for product identification holds a more captivating appeal than using a local language. This idea aligns with the constructivist perspective, asserting that incorporating a foreign language enhances product recognition. An example can be observed in a nearby neighbourhood where businesses have brand names in foreign languages. Consequently, it becomes almost inevitable for subsequent companies to follow the same pattern as their predecessors. This results in a cumulative effect, leading to increased utilisation of foreign languages and heightened linguistic awareness.

1.5 Branding and Brand Names in General

A brand encompasses a name, word, sign, symbol, design or any combination of these notions that are used to identify a seller's goods and services (Bennett, 1988). Although it is not employed in every product, branding is a widely adopted strategy. Among the various elements of a brand, the brand name stands out as a tool that assists buyers in identifying and distinguishing one brand from another (Juneja, n.d.). Its selection demands care as it succinctly conveys the central concept of a product in a cost-effective manner. Being immediately visible, its significance can be swiftly registered and recalled.

Brand names are not always connected to the nature of a product. They can draw inspiration from animals or birds (Dove soap or Puma), regions (Air India or British Airways) or personalities (Chanel or Louis Vuitton). According to Turley and Moore (1995), brand management has evolved into a more complicated process. For example, the globalisation of trade has facilitated the emergence of multilateral brands, which are items produced in one country but branded by a company in another (Ettenson & Gaeth, 1991). Managing these brands can prove highly challenging due to diverse cultural and linguistic factors. Every language possesses distinct structural elements, idiomatic phrases, and linguistic subtleties. When brands consider these aspects while translating and adjusting content, they guarantee that

the message aligns with the culture and context appropriately. This meticulousness aids in sidestepping misinterpretations, averting inadvertent cultural insensitivity, and amplifying consumers' perception of the brand's genuineness.

In the 1988 edition of their marketing terms dictionary, the American Marketing Association (AMA) provided a definition for the concept of a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these elements, intended to distinguish the goods and services of a single seller or group of sellers from those of competitors" (Bennett, 1988). A brand name is typically defined as the spoken or verbal component of a brand. It can include words, numbers or letters. Effective marketing textbooks often concur that a successful brand name should possess various attributes. Conciseness and catchiness are usually preferred over lengthier, complex alternatives. Ideally, it should hint at the benefits or features of a product. Simplicity in spelling, pronunciation and recall is essential. Additionally, it should be distinctive and free from negative connotations.

According to recent research by Johansson et al., (2023), the principles of branding hold true for businesses, especially within industrial or business-to-business sectors. The name of a company serves as a representation of its core identity. Furthermore, challenges may arise with translations when utilising the brand beyond its domestic market. Innocuous English names may carry significantly different meanings in languages such as French, German or others.

1.5.1 Brand Name Classification

The global landscape features numerous brand names, including those associated with services. A service brand name refers to the unique designation or label given to a service-oriented business, organisation or offering. This distinctive identifier is what customers link to

the service they receive. Service brand names wield significant influence in creating a brand identity and differentiating the service from competitors within the market (Davis, 2007). It serves as a powerful tool to communicate the essence, values and commitment of the service to the intended audience. These names are often carefully designed to evoke specific emotions, convey the intended brand image, and resonate with the target market. Selecting a service brand name requires careful consideration. It ideally mirrors the nature of a service, aligns with the brand's positioning, and possesses memorability and ease of pronunciation (Berry, 2000).

According to Lischer (2022), brands can be categorised into various types, including descriptive brands, person-based branding, geographic brand names, lexical brand names, and invented brand names. Descriptive brands are those where the name of the service defines a key element or characteristic of the business. They immediately convey the product or service offered by the company such as “Toys R Us”. Person-based branding involves naming brands after the individuals who founded them, often driven by reasons of legacy or personal pride. This approach employs the identities of founders, associates, or notable personalities to identify services. It is a common strategy in fields like law and medicine.

According to Turley and Moore (1995), geographic brand names encompass diverse approaches. One method involves infusing local or regional culture to create a ‘down-home’ ambience for the service. Alternatively, a patriotic appeal can be made by incorporating terms like ‘American’. Lexical brand names rely on wordplay to enhance memorability. This popular naming style includes wordplay techniques such as phrases, compound words, alliteration, onomatopoeia, intentional misspellings and foreign words. Lexical brand names often showcase cleverness, deriving significance from combining words for linguistic effect, which can be seen in ‘Krispy Kreme’. An advantage of brand names is that business owners can devise new terms if they cannot find an appropriate one. Invented brand names are unique

etymological creations. Invented names provide the utmost creative freedom for a brand, although generating them is not necessarily straightforward. Many invented names involve merging Latin, Greek or other foreign root words and adapting them to better encapsulate the personality of a brand. Examples include 'Adidas' and 'Pixar'.

Naming is one of the most difficult tasks. While a plethora of excellent names exists, a substantial portion of them are already protected by trademarks. The process of naming, whether it is an initial name or a renaming effort, can be intricate and demanding, but the outcomes are immensely valuable when executed successfully. Importantly, it is crucial to recognise that each naming approach carries its own array of challenges and limitations. Among the foremost responsibilities for a business owner embarking on a new venture is selecting an appropriate name. Deliberately choosing a brand name holds the potential to distinguish a brand and establish memorability. Therefore, this research was conducted to find provide insights and solutions to the aforementioned issues.

1.6 Introduction to Product Cosmetics

According to Khan and Alam (2019), the term "cosmetics" is derived from the Greek word "*kosmeticos*," which means "to beautify." Throughout history, products intended for enhancing beauty and appearance have been classified as cosmetics. The desire to appear attractive is deeply ingrained, dating back to the earliest days of humanity and civilisation. The desire to adorn the body and present a beautiful appearance has persisted within the human species since ancient times. This encompasses an array of beauty products, including skincare, hair care, perfumes, oral hygiene, and nail care. Cosmetics have served as a means to enhance human physical appearance across generations. In the contemporary era, the global value of the cosmetic industry is estimated at around \$20 billion (Khan & Alam, 2019). Consumers

continue to be drawn to the use of cosmetics and personal care products. These products have not only permeated the realm of fashion but also hold significant relevance in daily lives.

1.6.1 Cosmetics Consumption in Malaysia

According to Kaur et al. (2018), Malaysian women hold a crucial role as indicators of social transformation and progress in Malaysia. As their social status advances, women's economic opportunities and resources expand. This suggests that women can play a direct role in fuelling Malaysia's consumer spending trends. The wave of globalisation, which is marked by widespread technology usage, media exposure, travel, and the growing presence of working women, has brought Malaysian women in sync with fashion trends. Kaur et al. (2018) has asserted that approximately three-quarters of the respondents admitted to engaging in shopping therapy, spending an average of RM180 per month on shopping. This expenditure is equivalent to 17 percent of their monthly income. Malaysian working women, who are driven by increased financial flexibility and a desire to enhance their appearance (Kamaljeet, Syuhaily & Maziha, 2014), have significantly propelled the cosmetic and toiletry sector.

The decision-making process for purchasing cosmetic products involves a multitude of considerations. Factors such as product quality, application, cost, packaging and brand name are taken into account. According to Khraim (2011), a brand name carries more weight than be mere label. It can be a key product characteristic and an integral part of what the buyer purchases (Kenneth, 1981). A brand name is a complex symbol capable of conveying a spectrum of thoughts and attributes linked to the product it represents. The brand name serves as a communication tool for consumers. For instance, according to Rigaux-Bricmont (1982), the brand name has the potential to impact consumers' assessments of a product's quality. Moreover, it appears that a brand name can carry a specific "meaning" for individuals, and this significance is not necessarily tied to any specific promotion or usage experience. Previous

studies indicate that consumers tend to link specific words or sounds more frequently with particular product categories compared to others (Peterson & Ross, 1972). Consequently, customers can form intricate perceptions about a brand name, which is often influenced by its literal meaning, phonetic sound or associations that have been cultivated over time through business promotions or individual usage (Leone, 1981). A brand name exists and evolves in the minds and emotions of potential customers. Given this context, this study aimed to explore the use of the French language in product branding among Malaysian female customers.

According to Kadam and Deshmukh (2020), the skincare products market in Malaysia registered a value of \$804.5 million in 2019 and is anticipated to grow to \$1,288.7 million by 2027. This projection entails a robust growth rate of 8.1 percent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) from 2021 to 2027. The domain of skincare involves the utilisation of herbal gels, sunscreens and lotions to maintain skin integrity, address skin-related concerns, and enhance aesthetic qualities. A prevailing trend in Malaysia pertains to the external formulation of products, which is often conducted abroad, followed by the domestic amalgamation and packaging processes. Consumers in Malaysia have a range of channels at their disposal for procuring these products, including supermarkets or hypermarkets, online retailers, pharmacies and drug stores, specialised stores as well as beauty salons.

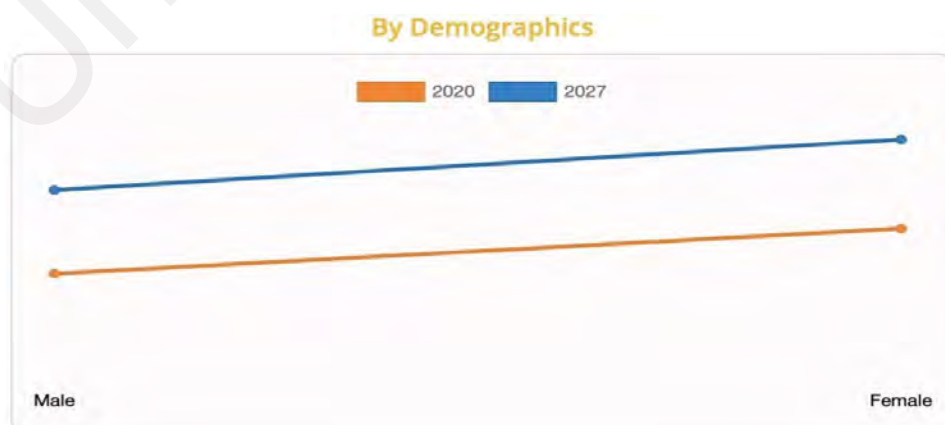


Figure 1.1: Consumers of skincare products in Malaysia

Figure 1.1 extracted from Kadam and Deshmukh (2020) shows that the female segment held a dominant position in the Malaysia skincare products market in 2019, accounting for over half of the total market share. This prevailing trend is predicted to persist throughout the forecast period. This prominence of the female segment can be attributed to an increasing awareness among female consumers in Malaysia regarding health and well-being. The expansion of the skincare market in Malaysia can be attributed to the adoption of daily skincare routines such as double cleansing, toning, essence and/or serum, eye and face cream, sunscreen as well as weekly exfoliation and mask treatments. As a result, a variety of intensive skincare products, including oils, lotions and creams, has been introduced into the Malaysian skincare market. This trajectory suggests that the Malaysian skincare market is poised for accelerated growth within the anticipated timeframe.

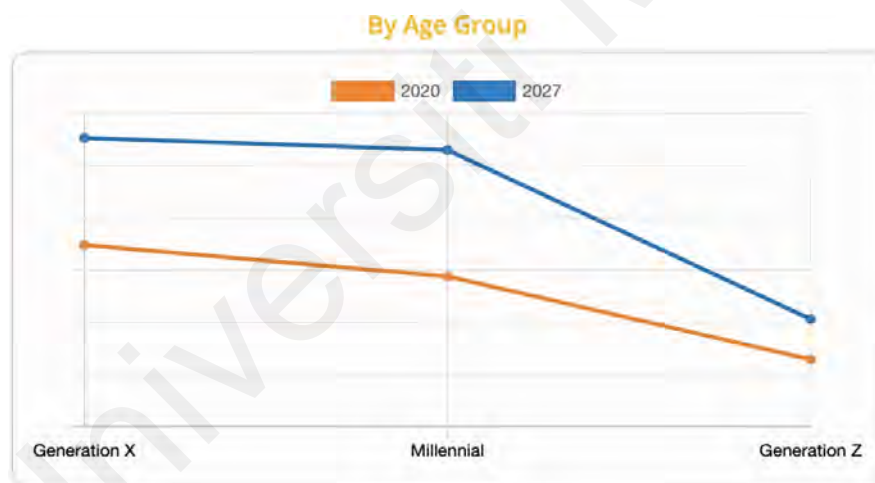


Figure 1.2: Consumers of skincare products in Malaysia by different generations

In 2019, the Generation X demographic emerged as the top revenue contributor within the market. This is attributed to the fact that individuals from this age group are the primary consumers of skincare products, particularly items like face masks and anti-ageing creams that address ageing concerns and enhance skin radiance. Additionally, marketing strategies involving skin products in print media such as magazines and newspapers have proven to be

effective in resonating with Generation X consumers. This connection has translated into heightened product sales, ultimately driving market expansion.

1.7 Problem Statements

France has established itself as a renowned producer of high-quality, top-tier cosmetics and beauty products. Within the cosmetics market, France maintains its global leadership status, representing an industry where it excels. The association of France with fashion and cosmetics is strong and enduring. Furthermore, local sellers often employ the French language in their product branding to convey an image of luxury and high quality. However, it is worth considering whether the meaning of the language accurately reflects the quality of their products. This study examined the brand 'NOIR', which offers health and beauty products. The brand is associated with a local vendor who has received numerous awards for their accomplishments in branding. When examining the brand naming, the term 'NOIR' in French means black although the product claims to be for whitening.

As a consequence, it deviates from the intended meaning of the brand name. People may misuse the language and have a limited understanding of the language used in brand names. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the perceptions and understanding of Malaysian female consumers regarding the use of French words in chosen product branding. In conjunction with their knowledge about the utilization of foreign languages in product branding.

1.8 Research Objectives, Research Questions and Limitations of the Study

Consumers' decisions can be influenced by foreign languages (Triyuni, Fadhilla & Putri, 2018; Leclerc et al., 1989; Olavarrieta et al., 2009; Malik, Ghafoor, Iqbal & Ali, 2013). Kelly-Holmes (2000) demonstrated the importance of comprehending the communicative component of a

message in a foreign language. However, local researchers have yet to conduct actual research on the utilization of French in product branding in the Malaysian market. Due to this gap in the field, this research aims to investigate the perceptions of Malaysian female consumers on the use of the French language in product branding.

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. to assess the level of awareness among female consumers on the use of the French language in selected products within Malaysia.
- ii. to investigate the perceptions of Malaysian female consumers on the use of French words in product branding.
- iii. to evaluate the understanding of Malaysian consumers regarding the French words used in product branding within the Malaysian context.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- i. To what extent are Malaysian female consumers aware of the language used in selected products?
- ii. How do Malaysian female consumers perceive the use of French in product branding?
- iii. How much do they understand about the meaning behind the French phrases utilised in certain product brandings?

1.9 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how Malaysian females perceive the use of French in product branding and the rationale behind choosing French over other languages. Besides, this study would facilitate the expansion of French influence in Malaysia as more business owners might contemplate utilising French for product

marketing. Consequently, society will become more acquainted with the French terminology employed by entrepreneurs. This initiative will enhance awareness of the French language on product labels.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study centres around its exclusive focus on investigating the perspectives of female consumers. While this offers valuable insights into their preferences, it restricts the scope of the study. Furthermore, due to time constraints and limited access to other product categories, this study predominantly focused on cosmetic products. The researcher selected a quantitative research approach for this study by utilising a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. Note that this study utilized convenience sampling, implying that the results may not be generalized to the entire population. Although this approach limits respondents to the predefined items in the questionnaire, it ensures a systematic and organised process for collecting data.

The data collection phase was extended for a period of two months, during which 102 women participated in the survey. While the sample size might be relatively small, it is important to note that time limitations posed challenges, thus impeding the researcher from widely distributing the Google Form link to reach a broader audience.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the theoretical frameworks concerning the perception of foreign languages among female consumers in Malaysia. It would specifically investigate consumer perception, consumer awareness and language awareness. In addition, the chapter addressed several subtopics to deepen the understanding of the subject matter. The examination of existing literature enables the researcher to become acquainted with other research endeavours and projects in a similar subject area, facilitating their ability to connect these with the current study within a broader context. To gain insight into and assess the existing body of literature relevant to the ongoing research, the researcher explored various sources of information, including books, conference proceedings, articles and electronic sources from the internet, thoroughly reviewing the content to identify related studies.

2.2 French in Malaysia

Language serves as a tool for verbal and written communication by carrying meaning in every element and it is employed by people or social groups to address comparable demands. Although French may not always be the official or native tongue of a region or nation, foreign language is frequently employed as a second language and is no longer confined to specific daily-life scenarios in Malaysia.

In accordance with Berlitz (2023), similar to the dissemination of Spanish and English worldwide through their respective colonial empires, French has also extended its influence. Presently, there exist 29 countries globally where French is spoken! While English serves as

the language of commerce, French is acknowledged as the language of culture. Its considerable significance is further evident as the third most widely spoken language among non-native speakers. The Duolingo website reported that the application has 101 million users learning French, securing its third-place position after English in first place and Spanish in second place. According to the website “Why French?” (2017), French has significantly impacted the English language, with estimates suggesting that French loanwords constitute up to 45 per cent of our language. The Foreign Office Institute designates French as one of ten languages closely related to English and relatively straightforward for English speakers to learn.

The use of the French language in Malaysia is an interesting topic that highlights the country's linguistic diversity, historical connections and cultural interactions. Here's an overview of the role and presence of the French language in Malaysia:

1. Colonial Legacy: Malaysia has a history of colonization by various European powers, including the French. While the French colonial influence was not as significant as that of other European countries in Malaysia, it did leave some linguistic and cultural imprints.

2. French as a Foreign Language: French is often taught as a foreign language in Malaysian educational institutions. It's among the options for students to learn as a second or third language. This is part of Malaysia's broader efforts to provide its citizens with the opportunity to learn multiple languages and engage with the global community.

3. Cultural and Educational Exchanges: The French government and various cultural organizations have been involved in promoting cultural and educational exchanges between France and Malaysia. This includes programs that encourage language learning, artistic collaborations, and academic partnerships.

4. French Influence in Cuisine and Culture: While not as prominent as other cuisines in Malaysia, French cuisine does have a presence, especially in urban centres with a diverse culinary scene. Elements of French cooking might be incorporated into fusion dishes or high-end dining experiences.

5. Francophone Organizations: There are Francophone organizations and cultural centres in Malaysia that promote the French language, arts and culture. These organizations often offer language courses, cultural events and platforms for promoting interactions between French-speaking communities.

While the presence of the French language in Malaysia might not be as prominent as some other languages due to historical and cultural factors, it still plays a role in the country's educational, cultural and international contexts. The learning and use of French in Malaysia contribute to its citizens' global language proficiency and understanding of different cultures.

2.3 Consumer Perception

According to Mahalder and Rahman (2020), consumers utilise various factors to assess the quality of a product, and those who perceive these attributes consider the product to possess that quality. A consumer's opinion of a product may render it superior to another's perspective. Customers attach significant importance to their perceptions. In the professional environment around us, numerous stimuli are constantly competing for our attention. The way we interpret and evaluate the stimuli or information entering our sensory system determines the accuracy of our perception. Perception entails the process by which individuals select, analyse and synthesise the information they gather to form a coherent representation of the external world (Kotler, 1997). Consumer perception is formally defined as a marketing concept that includes a customer's ideas, product knowledge and awareness. Specifically, consumer perception is

formally defined as a marketing concept that accounts for a customer's opinions, product knowledge and awareness of a business or the goods/services it offers (Korengkeng & Tielung, 2018).

Another definition of perception by Troy and Kerry (2010) refers to the process of understanding through the use of the senses and the mind. Therefore, perception encompasses both acquired knowledge or experiences and fundamental sensory impressions such as visual, gustatory and tactile qualities. Perception encompasses complex consumer behaviour attributes such as learning, motivation and contextual factors. Due to the intricate mechanisms that support this shift, it becomes challenging to predict how and through which path customer views will evolve.

2.3.1 Factors Influencing Consumer Perception

According to Wulandari and Kodrat (2015), there are four stages of perception, which include attention, exposure and interpretation systems respectively. Special sensory characteristics lead to a positive response or experience. Attention is generated when a stimulus activates specific receptors for sensory nerve sensations, and the brain processes the information. Exposure occurs when a person's sensory receptors are triggered by a stimulus. Consumers sometimes single out certain stimuli while ignoring others or even disregarding certain messages. Finally, interpretation involves forming a conclusion or suggestion that is acceptable. Depending on their specific needs, each person understands something differently.

Exposure, perceptual selection and interpretation are the three main components that Solomon and Stuart (2005) describe as influencing consumer perception.

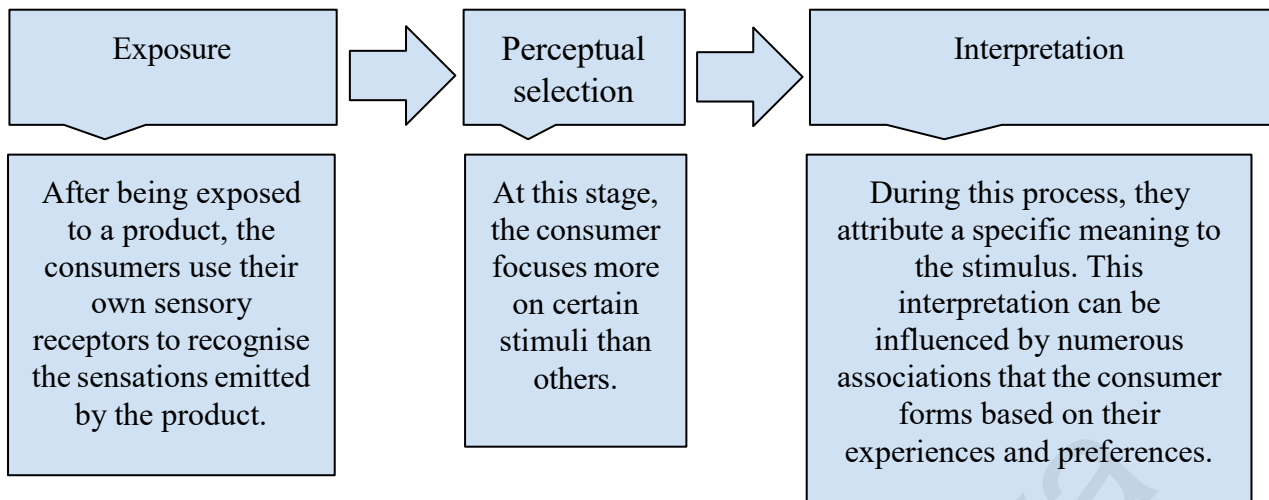


Figure 2.1: Impact on consumer perception (Solomon & Stuart, 2005)

2.4 Introduction to Perception

According to Alexandre & Tavares (2010), perceptions change based on the physical properties of stimuli and are interpreted based on past experiences with those inputs, allowing the brain to extract knowledge. Perception is the result of this continuous stream of sensory input. External senses represent the tangible aspects and characteristics of the external world that humans can perceive. "The perception process gathers information from the environment by employing the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. This data is then combined and evaluated" (Gupta, 2000, p. 221). The response of a specific sensory organ to the type of stimulus involved is determined by its adaptation. Subsequently, a sensation and the stimuli that elicit it should align.

According to the CollegeSidekick. (n.d.) website, perception encompasses a collection of processes used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various encountered every second, ranging from the brightness of a computer screen to the scent of a room to the sensation of an itch on the ankle. Our perceptions are shaped by how we interpret these diverse sensory impressions originating from the stimuli in our environment. Perception allows us to navigate

the environment and form judgments about everything. Due to the limitations of our brains, we cannot attend to every detail in our surroundings simultaneously, which is evident in optical illusions. When processing inputs, human brains follow three stages: selection, organisation and interpretation. Consider the example of Rubin's Vase, a well-known optical illusion. Initially, we choose the object of focus while ignoring most of the surrounding world. This is our brain's way of concentrating on a specific task. In this situation, the focus is on the image. Subsequently, the brain organises the components of perception. Some people interpret the dark sections of the image as the foreground and the light sections as the background, while others perceive the opposite. Some people see a vase because they focus on the black areas of the image, while others see two faces because they focus on the white areas of the image. Depending on the processes mentioned above, most individuals can perceive both interpretations, albeit one at a time. Every stage of the perceptual process occurs automatically and within a fraction of a second. This idea would also be employed in this study, where respondents would be presented with images of cosmetic products. The brain will then recognise the language used in the product's brand name, leading to the perception of the language used in the cosmetic brand name.

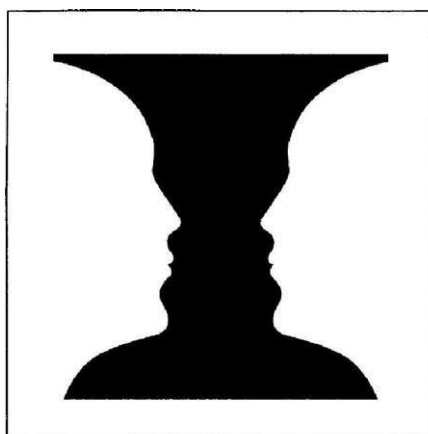


Figure 2.2: Rubin's Vase optical illusion (adapted from Edgar Rubin, 1915)

2.4.1 Theory of Perception

According to Alexandre & Tavares (2010), the Gestalt theory is one of the most well-known perception theories with applications across various domains. The Gestalt theory is built on the premise that comprehending the whole through the parts is impossible while comprehending the parts through the whole is possible; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Sets have their own rules and manage their elements, which is contradicted the previously held notion. The brain can only perceive, interpret and internalise a picture or an idea by grasping its entirety. The Gestalt theory asserts that the human brain organises information through the sensory organs, perception, and/or memory (thought, cognition and problem-solving). This configuration forms the basis of their constructed parts based on our environmental experiences; therefore including these individual elements would not enhance our comprehension of the whole. This illustrates a fundamental Gestalt principle: the underlying notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Sternberg, 2003). This aligns with the core visualisation principle encapsulated in the phrase coined by one of the field's pioneers, Ben Schneiderman (Shneiderman, 1996, p. 336): "Overview first, zoom and filter, then details-on-demand."

According to Klemfuss, Prinzmetal & Ivry (2012), recent research on the representation of conceptual knowledge has been focused on exploring between language, perception and action. A substantial body of work has emerged that highlights the intimate relationship between language and perception. However, precisely characterising these interactions remain a challenging task. Recent findings from visual search tasks indicate that top-down input from verbal representations can enhance visual feature detectors, implying that language exerts a direct impact on early visual perception. Language plays a role in describing the contents of our conscious experiences, enabling us to communicate with others about our perceptions,

thoughts, and intentions. Whorf (1956) claimed that individuals' conceptual knowledge is shaped by their language, embodying the idea that language shapes our cognition processes. Tasks that rely on verbal reporting or prioritise correctness come with certain limitations. In these activities, language can influence perception, memory and decision-making processes (Rosch, 1973). For instance, respondents were asked to choose the two-coloured chips that matched best in the research conducted by Kay and Kempton (1984). Even though the stimuli are constantly accessible, this type of comparison can strain working memory as individuals switch their attention between the stimuli, engaging top-down cognitive processes (Pinker, 1997). Researchers have used simple visual search tasks to examine the impact of language on perception in order to limit the involvement of memory and decision processes. Consider Lupyan and Spivey's research on visual search (2008). Participants were presented with an array of shapes and had to rapidly determine whether the display was uniform or contained an oddball (Figure 2.2). The forms were constructed using rotated letters '2' and '5'. In one condition, the linguistic labels of the stimuli acted as descriptors, while the stimuli were described as abstract geometric shapes in the other condition. Lupyan and Spivey (2008, p.412) stated that "visual perception depends on both what something signifies and how it looks".



Figure 2.3: Stimulus displays for Experiment 1: No Cue (A) and Cue (B) conditions (adapted from Klemfuss et al., 2012)

Language also has various effects on perception. Language can influence eye movements in response to rapidly visible visuals in the visual environment. Another theory by

McLeod (2018) stated that our sense organs such as eyes, ears and nose are responsible for receiving information from our surroundings. Each sense organ is a component of a sensory system that receives and transmits sensory information to the brain (McLeod, 2018). This debate focuses on Gibson (1966), who proposed a direct theory of perception referred to as a 'bottom-up' theory, and Gregory (1970), who proposed a constructivist (indirect) theory of perception known as 'top-down'. According to Gregory (1970), perception is a constructive process that relies on top-down processing.

Although stimulus information from our environment often presents ambiguity, we rely on additional cognitive information, either from previous experiences or stored knowledge, to interpret and infer its meaning. Gregory's view suggests that perception is a hypothesis based on previous knowledge. It involves constructing our perception of reality using both our surroundings and stored data. On the other hand, Gibson's bottom-up theory posits that perception relies on innate mechanisms developed through evolution, thus requiring no learning. According to Gibson (1966), perception is direct and does not subject to hypothesis testing as Gregory suggested. The environment provides sufficient data for us to directly understand the world. This theory is sometimes called the 'Ecological Theory' because it asserts that perception can be explained solely in terms of the environment. Gibson believes that perception is equivalent to sensation: what we see is exactly what we perceive. Interpretation is unnecessary since the information we gather about size, shape and distance is precise enough for us to engage with the world instantly. According to Gibson (1972), perception is a process in which sensed data is progressively analysed from a basic analysis of raw sensory data to a deeper analysis across the visual field. Therefore, Gibson's theory would be used for this study, which focused solely on female customers' perceptions regarding the use of the French language in selected brand products, regardless of their prior experience.

2.5 Visualisation

According to Alexandre and Tavares (2010), the term ‘visualisation’ generally refers to the formation of a mental visual image. However, visualisation goes beyond being a mere graphical representation of facts or concepts; it serves as a cognitive tool and has become a powerful method for knowledge construction by utilising human perceptual and cognitive skills. This concept is rooted in the work of Stuart Card (Card, 1999), who defined ‘visualisation’ as the use of visual representations of abstract data that is facilitated by computers and in an interactive manner to enhance cognition. serves a broader purpose than just data observation; it significantly contributes to the process of data analysis. When the input data adheres to established visualisation requirements, the main benefits derived include obtaining more information and the potential to gain new insight into the data.

According to Alexandre and Tavares (2010), visualisation technologies often assist in three activities, namely exploratory analysis, confirmatory analysis and presentation. Exploratory analysis involves users seeking to discover new insights. They utilise an analytical approach to study the visual display they have created, aiming to identify potential trends or relationships that could serve as the basis for forming hypotheses. In confirmatory analysis, the user begins with a specific assumption and aims to gather evidence either supporting or refuting that assumption by visually inspecting the graphical representation of the data. Presentation involves using visual representations to display the relationships, structures, behaviours and other essential aspects of information in a graphical format.

Visualisation has emerged as an independent field of research in the past fifteen years, drawing insights from various disciplines including psychology, computer science, semiotics, design, cartography and art (Alexandre & Tavares, 2010). Despite its interdisciplinary nature, the core objective of visualisation remains consistent: utilising visual metaphors to illustrate

the structure and relationships within input data (Vande, 2005). This approach involves using the original dataset to construct a visual representation, making the process of visually interpreting data almost interpretive in nature. Graphical models and visual data representations play a crucial role in analysing and extracting meaningful insights from data. These representations facilitate effective interaction between users and the computational models developed. Since a questionnaire would be used in this study, the visualisation of the products related to the topic would be incorporated into the questionnaire, which would significantly enhance the data analysis process.

2.6 Language Awareness

Understanding and appreciating language as a complex and nuanced system embedded with cultural, social and historical implications requires language awareness. This entails recognising language as a tool for interpersonal interaction, cultural expression and establishing connections. Language awareness underscores the importance of understanding one's own language and its impact on thoughts and ideas, as well as acknowledging the diverse languages and cultures spoken across the globe. It plays a pivotal role in fostering effective communication skills, critical thinking, and an appreciation for cultural diversity.

The concept of language awareness is not novel. According to van Essen (1997), it has a long-standing tradition in various European countries. However, its prominence grew in the 1980s as a response to more prescriptive language learning approaches that often dissected language automatically and relied heavily on formal methods such as drills, translation and pattern practice. Simultaneously, the movement emerged in reaction to the limited attention given to language forms within some versions of communicative language education. This approach has evolved in parallel with advancements in language analysis that delve into longer segments of discourse, particularly literary content, going beyond isolated phrases or individual

utterances. The development of critical language awareness (CLA) naturally stems from language awareness, which is characterised by a more comprehensive and text-centred approach to language. CLA delves into how language can both conceal and unveil the social and ideological fabric of all texts. It underscores that language usage is never neutral but rather intertwined with broader social struggles (Fairclough, 1992).

Language awareness is defined as a grasp of language and its use. The Association for Language Awareness (ALA), as cited in Bilgin (2017), characterises language awareness as "explicit knowledge of language and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, teaching and language use." In other words, language awareness encompasses people's understanding of language, a conscious awareness of how language is acquired and employed. According to Irwandi (2014), language awareness aims to provide individuals with explicit knowledge of the target language and how to effectively apply that knowledge in the process of language acquisition and usage. Language awareness posits a direct relationship between individuals' formal comprehension of a language and its practical application. Furthermore, language awareness improves individuals' motivation and attentiveness to language usage. It raises individuals' awareness and sensitivity towards language, nurturing their eagerness to learn about it.

2.7 Theory of Awareness

Various authors draw distinctions between different forms of consciousness (Block, 1995; Lau, 2008). In this context, terms like 'awareness', 'consciousness' and 'subjective experience' refer to the same phenomenon. According to Graziano and Webb (2015), there are two common methods for assessing awareness: objective awareness and subjective awareness. The authors explained that in the case of objective awareness, a participant is tasked with objectively discriminating a stimulus such as identifying its colour, shape or spatial location to

a level where this discrimination can be consistently made above chance. The participant's subjective belief regarding whether they perceived the stimulus or considered their responses as 'guesses' is irrelevant within the framework of objective awareness. Conversely, subjective awareness hinges on whether the individual, within their own judgment, perceives the stimulus. It encompasses personal emotions or notions derived from past experiences that affect internal experiences or external reality. As a result, subjective awareness aligned closely with the objectives of this study. The world individuals subjectively view is shaped and heavily impacted by the information stored in their subconscious minds. Hence, subjective awareness would be used to demonstrate the extent of female customers' awareness of the use of French in selected brand products.

2.8 Cosmetic Industry

According to Mahalder and Rahman (2020), health and beauty products include cosmetics, which not only contribute to physical appearance enhancement but also promote personal well-being and hygiene. Globally, the cosmetics industry stands as one of the most prominent sectors. According to the website "Statista" (2021), the personal care segment in Malaysia, with an approximate revenue of 1.1 billion USD in 2020, assumed a leadership role in the beauty and personal care market. Forecasts from the Statista Consumer Market Outlook indicate that the personal care segment's revenue could reach around 1.3 billion USD by 2025. In Malaysia, akin to many other countries, a robust cosmetics market exists, subject to fluctuations based on individual consumer needs and purchasing capacity. Although numerous local businesses cater to the demand, there is a surging desire for products from prestigious international brands. This dynamic highlights the contrast in how individuals within the industry view cosmetics with local branding compared to those with international branding, as well as how consumers respond to these aspects. To ensure the study's efficacy, a quantitative

method was selected to emphasize the significance of data analysis.

2.8.1 Cosmetic Products

Research conducted by the Office of Regulatory Affairs (2016) shows that the term "personal care goods" is frequently employed to encompass a wide range of items found in the health and beauty sections of drug and department stores. However, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states that the term "personal care product" lacks a specific definition. This regulatory agency in the United States is responsible for protecting and promoting public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy and security of various products, including food, drugs, medical devices, vaccines, biologics, cosmetics and tobacco products.

Items often encompassed by the label "personal care products" under regulatory guidelines encompass cosmetics. This category comprises various products, including skin moisturisers, fragrances, lipsticks, fingernail polishes, eye and face makeup preparations, shampoos, permanent waves, hair colours, toothpastes as well as deodorants. However, certain products fall within the classification of medications, including skin protectants such as lip balms and diaper ointments, medicated mouthwashes, antiperspirants as well as treatments for conditions like dandruff or acne. Moreover, some "personal care items" fall under both cosmetics and drugs. This is possible when a product serves dual-intended purposes. For instance, shampoo is classified as a cosmetic due to its primary function of cleaning hair, while anti-dandruff shampoo, which cleans hair while treating dandruff, straddles both cosmetic and medicinal categories.

Cosmetic Products (n.d.) delineates that cosmetics and personal care products are used by the human body for activities such as cleansing, beautifying, enhancing attractiveness or modifying its appearance. The range of cosmetics and personal care items can be grouped into

seven categories: oral care, skincare, sun care, hair care, ornamental cosmetics, body care and scents. Over centuries, humans have used cosmetics for these purposes, and in the present day, a substantial portion of Europe's 500 million consumers utilise cosmetics and beauty products on a daily basis to uphold their health, augment their well-being and elevate their self-esteem.

According to the Malaysia skincare products market study, Malaysia's skincare products market is thoroughly examined based on several criteria. The market analysis encompasses product type, demography, age group and sales channel. Skincare products available in the Malaysian market are divided into creams, lotions and other related categories based on their product types. Additionally, the market is segmented by demographics, classifying consumers into male and female categories. Moreover, the study further classifies consumers into three distinct age groups: Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z. In terms of distribution, the market includes various sales channels, including supermarkets /hypermarkets, speciality stores, department stores, beauty salons, pharmacies and drug stores, and internet sales channels.

Kadam and Deshmukh (2020) reported that the cream category maintained the largest market share within the skin care products industry in 2019. This can be attributed to the specific attributes offered by creams such as anti-inflammation and skin-firming properties. These features have contributed to an increased demand for skin care products in Malaysia, particularly among the elderly population. Furthermore, the rise in personal well-being and concerns related to physical appearance among Malaysian consumers has contributed to the growth of the skincare products market in Malaysia. In Malaysia, there is a high rate of anticipated growth in the lotion category.

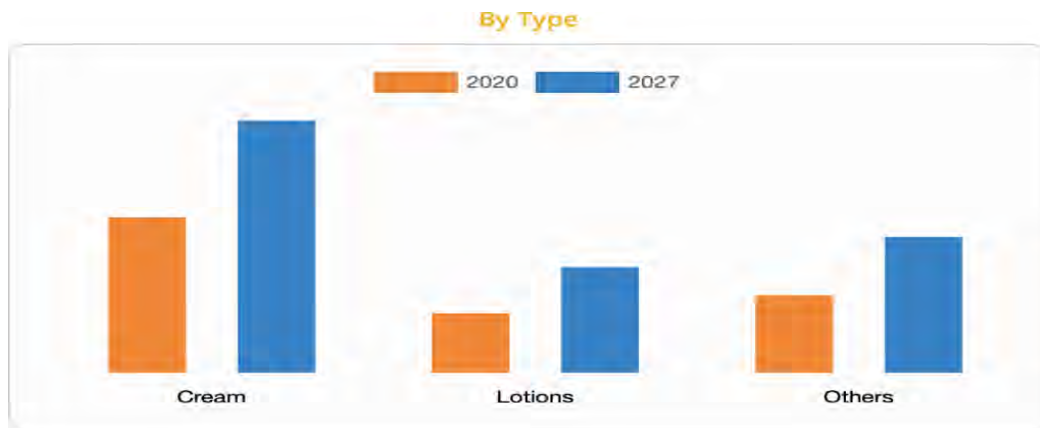


Figure 2.4: Prediction of sale trends of the lotion type skincare products in Malaysia from 2020 to 2027

In order to expand their market share, boost profitability and maintain competitiveness in the Malaysian skincare products market, companies have adopted new product introductions as a major developmental strategy. Kadam and Deshmukh (2020) highlight several prominent firms in the Malaysia skin care products sector, including L'Oréal Group, Procter & Gamble Company, Unilever PLC, Bejesdorf AG, Berjaya Corporation Berhad, Estee Lauder Companies Inc., Alticor Inc., Wipro Ltd., Shiseido Company Limited, and Avon Products Inc.

2.9 The Role of Language in Advertisement

According to Formation Media in May 2017, language wields the ultimate power in advertising. The fate of a product can be determined by a compelling corporate name and slogan. The significance of the written word has escalated, particularly with the advent of social media and web 2.0. The language used in advertisements is wide, diverse and ever-changing. This spectrum ranges from customer-specific advertisements that address individuals directly to advertisements that promise significant concepts such as health, love, sex, independence, and safety. Widyahening (2015) stated that linguistic systems possess power because of the constant concealment of ideologies within them. Language becomes a carrier of ideology, implying that its impact is magnified when contextualised within modernity, which is referred

to as the third wave. The influence of language has not only shaped but also concealed itself within advertising, eventually evolving into a societal structure with undeniable authority. Language can influence perception, attitude, behaviour and the collective viewpoint of society. According to Widyahening (2015), language is an important way of communication employed by humans to communicate with one another. An individual organises and produces reality using words. Language has the remarkable ability to unveil concealed elements, transforming them into tangible entities. Language plays a pivotal role in the advertising sector. Language is viewed as a mediation tool within the process of creating advertisements. According to Widyahening (2015), language is used for four purposes: self-expression, exposition, art and persuasion. According to Pahwa (2021), advertising involves the act of drawing public attention towards a product through compensated declarations by a designated sponsor. Print advertising, including content featured in newspapers, periodicals and brochures, resides within this particular category. Broadcast advertising includes television and radio commercials, while banners and flags are examples of outdoor advertising. Meanwhile, advertisements presented on the internet and digital devices are examples of digital advertising. Notably, product and brand integration manifests through strategic product placements within entertainment mediums such as television shows and YouTube videos.

El-Dali (2019) claims that the term "advertising" derives from the mediaeval Latin verb "advertere," which means "to direct one's attention to." It encompasses any form of public announcement designed to draw attention to the availability, characteristics, and/or price of certain goods or services. Advertising can be categorised into three distinct categories: (1) consumer advertising, which promotes products or services to the general public; (2) trade advertising, which targets dealers and professionals through relevant trade publications and media; and (3) public relations advertising, which is directed at society by citizens, community groups or politicians to promote social issues or political agendas. The fact significance of

advertising as an integral aspect of human existence is highlighted (Widyahening, 2015). It has evolved into a culture-shaping force within society. Advertising is one of the most crucial tasks to undertake. Through the association of image and ideology, it has the ability to influence consumer demand for products within society. Advertisements formulate an image ideology for products and employ language linked to moral ideals. This study did not exclusively focus on advertising, but instead aimed to elucidate how consumers perceive the language used in cosmetics advertisements across all social media platforms and in physical stores.

2.10 Concept of Meaning

According to Widyahening (2015), meaning is an abstract concept that has captured the attention of philosophers and social scientists for about 2000 years. Plato referred to the idea of meaning as ultra reality. The most fundamental challenge in the philosophy of language revolves around the meaning of linguistic expressions, which can be both meaningful and meaningless. The issue of meaning is certainly intriguing. For instance, consider a roadside advertisement bearing the title 'sluuuuupprt.' Initially, individuals may not grasp the intended meaning of the words crafted by the advertisement creator. Eventually, they comprehend that the term 'sluuuuupprt' signifies something delicious, delightful, or exquisite. If the word "yum" were used, people would quickly understand. The term "meaning" refers to the perplexing phrase, involving interpretation as a method for unveiling the meaning contained within speech. To fully comprehend human behaviour, we must first comprehend the fundamental reasons by placing ourselves in the speaker's position. Apart from pronunciation, interpreters must also focus on the underlying structure of meaning within the discourse. According to Wittgenstein (cited in Sobur, 2006), the meaning of a word is shaped by its usage in sentences, and similarly, the meaning of a phrase is determined by its usage in language. This suggests that isolating words from their contextual usage when explaining their meaning

can lead to ambiguity in language. Therefore, according to Widyahening, C. E. T. (2015, November), the context of a situation contributes to the interpretation of meaning. Meaning can be divided into three dimensions: 1) natural meaning explanation, naturally sentence description, and 3) natural meaning explanation in a communication process. (Pateda, 2001; Kempson, 2001).

In this study, the researcher would examine the term "Noir", which is used in the context and translates to "black" in French but does not accurately depict the product used for whitening. As a result, the concept of meaning becomes unclear, potentially confusing individuals who are familiar with French vocabulary. There are differing viewpoints on the nature of meaning. According to Fisher (1986), there are three types of meaning: 1) referential meaning, which signifies a relationship between the symbol and the referent; 2) meaning, which indicates that a symbol or a term is meaningful when it holds a 'legitimate' relation to another term; and 3) intentional, which suggests that the meaning of a term or a symbol is determined by the speaker's intention behind that symbol. On the other hand, Shipley (as cited in Sobur, 2006), there are seven different categories of meaning: 1) emotional meaning, 2) cognitive meaning, 3) referential meaning, 4) visual meaning, 5) dictionary meaning, 6) fringe meaning, and 7) core meaning.

2.11 Brand Name Concept

According to Ergin, Akbay, & Ozsacmaci (2014), the value and significance of a brand name to the success of a new product have been extensively debated by both academics and managers. In today's market, where even highly diverse products can be easily replicated, effectively positioning innovative brands has become exceptionally challenging. Companies making considerable efforts to implement various brand strategies in order to mitigate the impact of this issue, capture consumers' preferences, and secure a competitive advantage over

their rivals. As brands hold crucial strategic value for global expansion and competition in today's globalised market, the process of selecting a brand name becomes even more complex and critical (Soto, Mobarec & Friedmann, 2009).

In today's competitive market, brand names are essential assets that serve as vital identifiers of products and shape consumers' opinions of those brands (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). To differentiate the goods and services of a seller or group of sellers from those of competitors, a brand can be broadly defined as a name, phrase, symbol, sign, design or any combination above (Kotler, 1994). By facilitating consumers in distinguishing products, brand names enhance consumer choice (Friedman, 1985). Carefully chosen brand names also enhance the strength of products. Furthermore, consumers generally exhibit a preference for brands with names associated with positive qualities (Kohli, Harich & Leuthesser, 2005).

2.12 Language Knowledge

Language structure or its external features are referred to as language knowledge. Technical and operative knowledge must be explicitly acquired through thoughts and actions in order to be considered an attribute. Such learning scenarios must be predictable; they should not be unpredictable as in a target language application. Chomsky (1986) asserted that language information is typically acquired through brief exposure and that the nature of the knowledge can be substantially predetermined.

2.13 Past Studies

According to Lerman et al. (2017), a brand is a product or service that is recognised by and sold based on a distinct and enduring personality. Kenton (2020) defined the term “brand” as a commercial and marketing concept that helps consumers identify a certain firm, product or individual. Since a brand carries a unique promise such as technical quality, a specific

emotional attachment with its consumers or a range of beliefs and ideas that its creators seek to associate with via advertising campaigns, media exposure and other means, a brand holds greater value than a non-branded item with exactly equal functional attributes (Lerman et al., 2017). Brands are intangible, indicating that they cannot be touched or seen. As a result, they contribute to shaping people's views of businesses, their products or their personalities. Brands often use identifying markers to help establish brand identities in the market. They add significant value to the firm or individual, providing them with a competitive advantage within the same sector. Lerman et al. (2017) mentioned that language is an important strategic tool for building and maintaining brand awareness among potential consumers. Beyond the monetary value of products, brand equity encompasses both tangible and intangible aspects of a brand. In other words, brand equity is the added value that a product receives due to the reputation it carries and the perceptions associated with that reputation. Thus, the study aimed to examine the use of French language in product branding among Malaysian female consumers and understand how they perceive the use of the French language in product branding in Malaysia.

Marion (2015) described branding as the process of attributing significance to a certain organisation, company, product or service by building and defining a brand's identity in the eyes of customers. It is a strategy employed by companies to help consumers easily recognise and connect with their brand, while also providing them with a reason to choose their products over those of competition by clarifying what this specific brand represents. There are various types of brands, but the four most common are corporate brands, personal brands, product brands and service brands. A product is broadly defined as everything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a demand or need, including physical products, services, experiences, events, people, locations, assets, organisations, information and ideas (Kotler & Keller, 2015).

According to Macdonald, E., & Sharp, B. (2003), the recognition of a brand could

influence choices related to brands in the group being considered (Hoyer and Brown 1990; Keller 1993). Consumers might employ a simplification (a decision guideline) to exclusively select brands that are familiar and well-established (Roselius 1971; Jacoby et al. 1977, as referenced in Keller 1993). Consumers frequently don't invest significant time in their buying decisions. To illustrate, a research conducted by Hoyer (1984) regarding pre-purchase search for laundry detergent discovered that, on average, only 1.2 packages were examined in-store before making a selection. Similarly, Dickson and Sawyer (1986) observed that consumers took about 12 seconds from glancing at a shelf to placing an item in their cart when buying products like coffee, toothpaste, and margarine. In many instances, consumers attempt to minimize the effort and time spent on decision-making by using simple rules like "choose the brand I'm familiar with." This inclination is especially likely in situations where the consumer isn't highly invested and a basic level of brand awareness might be adequate for making a choice (Hoyer & Brown 1990; Mackay 1990). In these scenarios, the consumer might lack the incentive or ability to differentiate between brands (Petty & Cacioppo 1986). Another way in which brand awareness might impact decisions within the consideration set is by shaping the perceived quality of the options. In a study on consumer choices conducted by Hoyer and Brown (1990), it was found that over 70% of participants chose a familiar brand of peanut butter when presented with a selection of three choices. This occurred even when another brand was objectively of superior quality based on blind taste tests, and despite the fact that participants had no prior experience with the chosen brand. Notably, the participants had the chance to taste all of the brands, making this outcome even more unexpected. The mere fact that a brand was recognizable significantly influenced how the participants judged its quality. This finding aligns with common sense: consumers might logically justify their preference for a brand based on their familiarity with it.

In Latin American marketplaces, foreign brand names are quite popular in various product sectors. Olavarrieta et al. (2009) investigated the link between language and international brand evaluations. This research builds on the work of LeClerc et al. (1989, 1994) on the impact of foreign branding, but it does so in the context of a growing Latin American country, Chile. This is considered valuable in itself as it gives a cross-cultural analysis of their findings. The researchers used two foreign languages, French and English as well as their national, Spanish. Foreign branding, particularly English branding, yields superior results in Chile across all product categories (hedonic, hybrid and functional). Olavarrieta et al. (2009) employed 64 undergraduate Chilean students (selected from six different institutions and all fluent Spanish speakers) to assess eight pre-selected brands corresponding to four hedonic product categories and four utilitarian product categories. The items used in this experiment were chosen after a pre-test with a different group of 26 university students, who used a 7-point scale to rate whether 52 different product categories were more utilitarian or hedonic (-3=Highly Hedonic, +3=Highly Utilitarian). The general findings of this study were that international branding is vital in non-English speaking nations and leads to variations in consumer assessments. Leclerc et al. (1989) showed in two trials that the French language of a brand name is preferred for hedonistic items. In contrast, consumers may rate an English pronunciation of a utilitarian product's brand name higher than a French pronunciation of the same brand name. When the brand name is spoken in French, customers anticipate hybrid items to be more expensive than when it is heard in English.

In the context of Latin American, the selection of foreign brand names or names written in other languages is a common practice, with English and French being the most commonly used languages (Olavarrieta et al., 2009). Observational evidence shows that this practice has become even more popular in recent years due to multinational corporations launching "global" branding, despite the lack of specific numbers or research. Marketing professionals, advertising

agencies and corporate image agencies tend to favour foreign names over native language (Spanish) names. Kinra (2006) discovered a similar trend in another emerging country, India, where local customers prefer international goods.

According to Leclerc et al. (1989), another element that could impact how a product is perceived is the manner in which individuals pronounce the word. It is anticipated that the preference for a brand name and the impression of an item will alter depending on whether the brand name is spoken in English or French. Customers could also interpret the foreign pronunciation as a clue to the country of origin and then extrapolate a higher price based on that clue. According to the research of Olavarrieta et al. (2009), the phrase "foreign branding" should not be restricted to French terminology. The findings of the study implied that English branding can convey some of the hedonic qualities and connections generally associated with French in English-speaking markets, even in areas where English is not the national language (most of Latin America) (Olavarrieta et al., 2009). This suggests that preconceptions are rooted in cultural factors (Brouthers & Xu, 2002).

Moreover, a study by Salciuviene et al. (2010) investigated how brand names in a foreign language, the nation of origin, and the disparity between the two influence perceptions of service-related brands. The findings, which were based on congruity and categorisation theory, indicated that services with a French brand name are perceived as more hedonic. The disparity between foreign language brand names and their country of origin leads to increased perceptions of services being more focused on pleasure and enjoyment, especially in the context of services that are meant to provide such experiences. The identical inconsistency results in a higher perceived suitability and liking for brand labels in a foreign language within the framework of practical services. In another study by Hornikx et al. (2013), consumers are frequently exposed to foreign languages in advertising such as German or French in the United

States, but little is known about the conditions under which this is effective. According to the linguistic theory of foreign-language display, the key component to its effectiveness is congruence with the product. That research examined this idea by having 150 Dutch participants assess advertising campaigns that aligned (or didn't) with the slogan's language (French, German, and Spanish). The findings revealed that products that matched in congruence (like wine-French) gained greater advantages from presenting the foreign language, in contrast to products that were incongruent (like beer-French).

Language is a system of communication used by people to communicate with one another. According to Triyuni, Fadhilla and Putri (2018), language plays an important role in the manifestation of culture. Speakers can identify themselves and view their language as a representation of their personality. It is a means through which individuals communicate their thoughts to the rest of the world. As a result, it is apparent that language plays a significant role in trading, international affairs and a variety of other activities. Language impacts a person's life, not solely because of its literature, but because of the people who speak it. Since advertising is the most efficient way to interact with customers, the researchers examined youngsters' perceptions of the language used in advertisements. As mentioned by Triyuni, Fadhilla and Putri (2018), visual material and design in advertising have a significant influence on consumers, but it is a language that helps people recognise and recall products. In their research, both male and female teenagers were interviewed, and field observation was conducted on male and female teenagers in Langsa as part of the empirical inquiry of the study. According to Arikuntoro (2010), the descriptive qualitative approach was employed to depict a scenario or collect empirical data. This indicates that the research conducted by Triyuni, Fadhilla and Putri (2018) aimed to provide evidence to support a certain hypothesis but did not aim to discover a new one. The data was collected in the form of words rather than numbers, making it descriptive in nature. The findings revealed that simple language is supported by

straightforward phrases and the language used in advertisements is simple to comprehend and remember. The perception of using plain language that is easy to understand and the delivery of a clear message in commercials reached 70%, while 20% expressed dissatisfaction, and 10% provided no response.

Apart from the language used, advertising is a means for introducing products. In advertisements, the use of engaging language is critical as the effectiveness of an advertisement is influenced not only by product factors but also by the proper use of terminology. The utilisation of vocabulary and phrases in advertising is a strategy to capture customers' attention. The advantages of the products include clear terminology and easily memorable diction. This is the point at which customers begin seeking anything associated with the advertisement.

Menkveld (2015) also defined this, and it can be stated that adding the English language to the advertising in this study did not contribute to favourable ratings. As a result, unless the English used is simple to comprehend, it is preferable to use Dutch in advertising for Dutch brands. Within the advertisements used in this study, language preference was tested to see if individuals prefer Dutch, English or a combination of both languages. The research issue that this study aimed to address necessitates the use of a quantitative research approach. An (online) survey was a suitable research method since attitudes were measured (Menkveld, 2015). The objective of the study was to gain insight into the effects of using English in print ads for Dutch brands on consumer brand evaluation. The primary research consisted of a 3 (language: Dutch, mixed, English) x 4 (2 national vs. 2 foreign brands) x 2 (age: young and older) between-subject design. Brand recognition and attitude toward the advertisement were measured using a Likert scale. To enhance the reliability of the scale, one item was added to the original scale, resulting in at least four elements. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scale. The online survey, which was created using Qualtrics, received 289

responses. Due to incomplete or inadequate data, 84 of the 289 surveys were excluded from the study, resulting in a decent sample of 205 respondents available for statistical analysis using SPSS 22. The sample included 88 males and 117 women. While the proportion of men and women was not completely equal in all settings, it was enough based on Menkveld's standards. These examples make it evident that the language employed in these studies is crucial in ensuring that buyers remember those items.

Leclerc, Schmitt and Dube-Riox (1994) made a significant contribution to research on the impact of country-of-origin (COO) on product evaluations. Their findings showed that foreign branding (spelling out or pronouncing a brand name in a foreign language) changes customers' perceptions and attitudes. The authors defined foreign branding as the technique of spelling or pronouncing a brand name in a foreign language, primarily aimed at affecting the brand image aspect of brand equity. While brand names that sound foreign such as Klarbrunn, Giorgio di St. Angelo and Häagen Dazs may be less familiar, difficult to pronounce, and possibly less memorable than names derived from the English language, they still carry a significant relation that influences how consumers interpret the products. In research by Thakor and Pacheco (1997) that used similar stimuli and involved 266 undergraduate students (146 males and 120 females) from a prominent Canadian institution, the study aimed to replicate and expand upon their findings. However, the data revealed only limited support for the impact of foreign branding, despite large gender effects.

Overall, the data showed that while foreign branding has a greater impact on product evaluations than COO, the uni-cultural or multicultural nature of the research setting affects which brands are seen as 'foreign.' Another study highlighted the significance of choosing the right brand name as one of the most crucial marketing concerns (Keller, 1993). A good brand name has a high level of customer brand awareness and consumer preference (Chan & Huang,

1997). Brown (1963) stated that language is an integral component of culture, serving as one of the fundamental factors that distinguish individuals from one another. According to de Run et al. (2012), a variety of languages can be found in local brand names in Malaysia. Examples such as *Munchy*, *Gardenia* and *Old Town* represent brand names in the English language. *Seri Murni* and *Jati* are examples of local brand names employing Bahasa Malaysia. *Aik Cheong* and *Chek Hup* represent the Chinese language. The use of multiple languages in local brand names mirrors the diverse heritage of Malaysia. Moreover, scholars have recognised and emphasised the impact of language on consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly in understanding customer preferences and approval of global brands. Language expresses, reflects and represents cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998). Previous studies have demonstrated that language variations can alter consumer information processing (Schmitt, Pan & Tavassoli, 1994). Conversely, local researchers have not undertaken many studies on branding in Malaysia, particularly on the language employed in local brand names.

In another study by Pogacar et al. (2018), the researchers examined how the linguistics of brand names affects brand loyalty. Language complexity and processing mode are two continuous dimensions that the researchers established as a framework for defining linguistic devices. The framework was then used as a basis for examining and synthesising previous research regarding the impact of linguistic devices on persuasion. This study aimed to identify circumstances in which these devices can be most effective and to bridge gaps in prior studies. According to the findings of this study, longer names that end in a vowel like Burberry project a warmer and more feminine impression than shorter names that end in consonants (e.g. Ford). This study showed that consumers exhibit greater loyalty to brands with feminine names, predict that brands with feminine names are more likely to perform well than brands with equivalently masculine names, and find that prominent brands tend to have more feminine names than less successful brands in the market. These conclusions are drawn from

experimental manipulation of fictional brands and observational analysis of actual brands. For hedonic products, a feminine brand name is much more advantageous. When the typical consumer of a product is a man, the benefit associated with feminine names is reduced, and masculine brand names are favoured when warmth is not the desired product quality.

Another study by Ergin, Akbay and Ozsacmaci (2014) took a different approach from LeClerc et al. (1989, 1994). This study examined the effects of foreign branding on a rapidly developing Eastern European nation like Turkey. This exploratory study aimed to delve into customer perceptions of goods with foreign brand names and the impact of these names on consumers' purchasing behaviour. In-depth interviews with 23 participants were conducted in the Turkish city of Ankara during the data collection phase of the study. The findings indicated that products with international brands generate more favourable consumer perceptions compared to products with domestic brands. Collectively, the findings suggest that consumers prefer products with foreign brand names for various reasons, including quality, dependability, practicality and status. These findings hold significant implications for both local and international manufacturers concerning the consumer outcomes of their brand strategy decisions and competitive foreign brand name choices.

Besides, prior research by Mahalder and Rahman (2020), aimed to comprehend the behaviour of cosmetic buyers and their perceptions of locally and internationally marketed cosmetic items in Bangladesh. By conducting interviews with local business people and online surveys with cosmetics consumers in Bangladesh, the study successfully achieved its objective by using an effective combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The relevant data and information for the current study were gathered by conducting interviews with local businesspeople who possessed first-hand knowledge of the Bangladeshi cosmetics industry. Furthermore, an online survey involving 17 Bangladeshi cosmetics consumers, representing

the general population of regular cosmetic users in Bangladesh, was also carried out. This study identified seven characteristics that affect consumer views of cosmetic items in Bangladesh. These include the country of origin, consumer psychology, the sales location of the product, exterior qualities, product quality, individual customer traits and consumers with greater disposable income. The findings of this study were supported by existing literature, which was used to extract all but one of these elements. A novel finding from this study is the significant influence of the growing middle-to-high-income customer base in Bangladesh on consumer views of cosmetics in the country.

Besides, Rabiah (2018) stated that language and culture cannot be separated as culture not only determines who communicates with whom, about what topics and where the conversation occurs, but it also affects how messages are encrypted, their meaning and the expectations people have for receiving, understanding and transmitting them. As a result, culture serves as the foundation of communication. Cultural diversity includes various communication styles. Rabiah (2018) also added that it is impossible to separate language from culture as language represents a nation and has a strong connection to the attitudes and behaviours of language speakers. The role of language in expressing cultural reality becomes evident through several aspects. Firstly, language is an integral part of culture. Secondly, despite their differences, language and culture are closely intertwined. Thirdly, culture significantly affects language. Lastly, language is vital in shaping culture and the cognitive patterns of its speakers. In communication, the language used by individuals is affected by their culture and conversely, language also affects culture. Culture and language are like inseparable twins, entities that cannot be detached from one another.

Since a language is needed to label a brand, brand names are also indirectly interconnected with the culture of the language used. Language influences brand names through phonetics, meaning, and ease of pronunciation. The sound of a brand name can evoke specific feelings or associations, and words can carry different connotations in various languages,

affecting brand perception. Additionally, cultural factors play a critical role in shaping how a brand name is received. Cultural relevance, symbolism, and local sensitivities must be considered to ensure that a brand name resonates with the target market's values, traditions, and norms. When expanding internationally, brands face the challenge of deciding between localization and standardization. Localization refers to tailoring the marketing mix to the unique requirements and preferences of each market, whereas standardisation refers to using the same mix throughout all markets. Localization makes a brand more relatable, while standardization maintains consistency across markets. Companies must conduct thorough market research to understand the linguistic and cultural landscape of each market and navigate legal considerations, as trademark laws vary by country. For instance, Coca-Cola's adaptation to "Kekou Kele" in China maintains its positive image, while Chevrolet Nova's failure in Spanish-speaking countries highlights the importance of linguistic nuances. Thus, the intersection of language, culture, and brand name necessitates a nuanced approach, balancing brand identity with local adaptation to ensure a positive reception globally.

Due to Malaysia's practice of linguistic variety, business owners frequently utilise foreign languages to promote their brands. Consequently, this study examined how Malaysian women perceive the use of French language in product branding.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodological approach used to investigate consumer awareness, perception and understanding of French language usage in product branding. A robust quantitative research methodology was employed to effectively tackle the core research issues of this study.

3.2 Research Design

To investigate the use of French in product branding among Malaysian female consumers, a quantitative research design was employed. This approach aimed to collect numerical data to provide insights into the perceptions and preferences of Malaysian female consumers regarding the use of the French language in product branding. The data collection process involved the distribution of structured questionnaires to a sample of Malaysian female consumers. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative information about their awareness, perceptions and understanding regarding products with French branding. The sample was chosen using suitable sampling techniques to ensure representativeness and generalisability of the findings.

The questionnaire included items that assessed respondents' familiarity with the French language, their perceptions of French branding in terms of sophistication, attractiveness and perceived quality as well as their inclination to purchase products with French brand names. Additionally, demographic information such as age, race, education level and profession were collected to examine potential variations in responses based on these factors. The collected data was analysed using statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and

standard deviations were used to summarise the data and provide an overview of respondents' perceptions and behaviours.

The use of quantitative research design enabled the researchers to quantify and measure the extent to which Malaysian female consumers are influenced by the use of French in product branding. The findings will provide valuable insights for businesses and marketers in understanding the impact of using French language in their branding strategies, thus enabling them to customise their marketing endeavours more effectively towards Malaysian female consumers. Additionally, this study will contribute to the advancement of the French language among consumers in Malaysia and enhance awareness of the French language in the country.

The theory of perception will be utilized to understand how Malaysian female consumers perceive and interpret the use of French language in cosmetic product branding. This theory can help in exploring how do the perceptions of French language influence consumers' attitudes, preferences and purchasing behavior towards cosmetic products. On the other hand, the theory of awareness will be used to understand how participants' awareness of the use of French language in branding impacts their understanding of product quality, prestige, or cultural associations.

3.3 Population

In research, the term 'population' refers to the entire group of individuals or elements that a researcher intends to study and make inferences about. It represents the broader target group to which the research findings are intended to be applicable. In this study, the population would encompass all Malaysian female consumers who have the potential to encounter and engage with products featuring French branding. This demographic could include women across various age groups, educational backgrounds, income levels, races and cultural

backgrounds residing in Malaysia. However, it is crucial to note that studying the entire population of Malaysian female consumers may not be practical due to its size and diversity. Hence, researchers often work with a subset of the population, which is known as a sample. According to Salkind (2000), the sample is a smaller, representative subgroup selected from the population, and the findings obtained from the sample can be generalised to the larger population.

In this study, the researcher chose a sample of Malaysian female consumers that can represent the broader population. The sample should reflect the diversity of Malaysian female consumers in terms of age, education, profession and other relevant characteristics. Through the study of this sample, the researcher could draw conclusions and make inferences about the perceptions and behaviours of the larger population of Malaysian female consumers. The process of selecting the sample should be carried out using suitable sampling methods to ensure its representativeness and avoid biases. Common sampling methods include random sampling, stratified sampling or cluster sampling, depending on the research objectives and available resources. By studying the population of Malaysian female consumers, this study aimed to provide insights and understanding into how this specific group perceives and reacts to the use of the French language in product branding. Furthermore, the findings can guide marketing strategies and help businesses effectively engage Malaysian female consumers through their branding initiatives.

3.4 Sampling Design

Sampling design refers to a method or approach used to select a subset of individuals or elements from the larger population for a search. It involves making deliberate choices about how the sample will be selected to ensure that it is representative of the population and can provide reliable and valid results. Convenience sampling, which is also known as non-probability or availability sampling, is a type of sampling design that involves selecting

individuals who are readily available and easily accessible to a researcher. In convenience sampling, participants are chosen based on their convenience or accessibility rather than through a random selection process. Convenience sampling was used in this study. The researcher would select Malaysian female consumers who are conveniently accessible for the study, including those who can be easily reached via online platforms, social media or specific locations. Convenience sampling is often used when researchers face limitations in terms of time, budget or access to the entire population. While convenient sampling offers convenience and ease in recruiting participants, it may introduce bias into the study. The sample obtained through convenience sampling may not fully represent the diversity and characteristics of the larger population, thus leading to limitations in generalising the findings to the broader population.

3.4.1 Participants of the Research

A total of 102 people participated in the online survey conducted through Google Forms. The age range of the respondents in this study spanned from 18 to 65 years old. This study solely focused on women. The specific criteria for participation in this survey were limited to Malaysian women; however, race and demographics would not be considered in the research design. The decision to focus solely on women stemmed from the recognition that women play a significant role in driving social change and progress in Malaysia (Kaur et al., 2018). With the rise in the social status of women, their economic opportunities and resources also increased. This suggests that women in Malaysia have a direct impact on the country's consumer spending trends. The impact of globalisation has brought Malaysian women up to date with fashion trends through the extensive use of technology, media, travel and the social interactions of working women. The success of the cosmetic and toiletry industries is greatly attributed to Malaysian working women who possess greater financial flexibility and a desire

to enhance their appearance (Kamaljeet, Syuhaily & Maziha, 2014). Targeting female consumers in surveys is a strategic method employed by researchers to collect specific and relevant data. By gaining insights into the unique preferences and behaviors of women, companies can create products that more effectively meet their needs, resulting in higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Geographical limitations are not a concern due to the accessibility of information and online shopping for consumers. For the sample selection, the researcher employed a convenience sampling technique. The survey was distributed to family, friends and participants within the Facebook group "Kosmetik dan Makeup Malaysia," which had a membership of 17.3 thousand individuals as of November 2021. Despite the substantial membership of the group, only 102 Malaysian women from various sources found it convenient to participate and complete the questionnaire.

3.5 Research Instrument

The data for this study were gathered through a questionnaire administered using Google Forms. The questionnaire was used to answer the research questions. According to Sugiyono (2014), a questionnaire is a method used for data collection by presenting a series of questions or statements to a respondent. Closed-ended questions and short answers were used in the study. Closed-ended questions necessitate a quick response and require respondents to select one option from the provided choices for each question. These questions facilitate quick responses from participants and enable researchers to efficiently analyse data from the received questionnaires. On the other hand, short answers allow respondents to provide concise explanations for their answers. This format offers a chance to assess participants' understanding and can be less time-consuming than other response formats. The questionnaire, which was adapted from the work of Chen (2020) and Awadh et al. (2016), comprised four sections:

Demographics, Awareness, Perceptions and Understanding. The demographic background section included five questions about age, race, location, educational level and occupation. The second section comprised nine questions related to awareness. For questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9, respondents could select either 'yes' or 'no', while questions 2 and 5 allowed for short responses. The third section three comprised nine questions that focused on perceptions, with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The fourth section was related to understanding and contained a total of ten questions. In this section, respondents were prompted to answer five multiple-choice questions (questions 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8) and provide five short answers (questions 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10). An online questionnaire was administered via a Google survey (Appendix I), allowing respondents to share their perspectives on the usage of the French language in specific product brands, thus providing answers to all research questions. The advantage of using Google Forms lies in its capability to efficiently gather information. Additionally, Google Forms retains the collected data, enabling in-depth analysis. The connection between the forms and Google spreadsheets enables researchers to access a spreadsheet version of the gathered data.

3.6 Stimuli Materials

This research focused on the analysis of cosmetic brand names that incorporated the French language in their product labelling. The selected products, which served as stimuli for this research, consisted of local and international products. Among the local brands were *Beausiti*, *Noir*, *Chique Cosmetics*, *Sugarbelle*, *BeauTyra*, and *À la-carte skincare*. Conversely, international brands such as *Laneige*, *Mamonde*, *Etude House* and *Mise-en-scène* are products originate from Korea, while *Enchanteur* originates from the United States. It is important to highlight that these brands are not of French origin; however, they utilize the French language in their product naming strategies. These products were selected based on specific criteria. First,

each brand uses a French name, even though the brand is not from a French-speaking country. Second, the brands must originate outside of France, as the research aims to examine the use of the French language in branding beyond France. Third, the products must be beauty items commonly used by female consumers.







3.7 Data Sources

Data refers to factual information and other resources, spanning both historical and contemporary sources, which are deemed significant and act as a foundation for research, investigation and analysis (Chih-Pei & Chang, 2017). In this study, the necessary information was categorised into two main groups: primary data and secondary data. The collection of data holds a crucial role in statistical analysis. In research, various methodologies are used to gather data, resulting in two distinct categories: primary and secondary data (Ajayi, 2017). The next paragraph would outline the procedures employed to gather these types of data.

3.7.1 Primary Data

The primary data collection process commenced with the use of quantitative questionnaires. This method served as the initial approach for gathering data. A questionnaire, which is used as a research instrument, encompasses a series of inquiries and is designed to gather information from respondents (Bhandari, 2023). The benefit of using questionnaires is their ability to enable respondents to freely express their thoughts, ideas and suggestions without any constraints (Bryman & Cramer, 2012). Furthermore, questionnaires prove to be particularly suitable for addressing sensitive topics such as products, particularly when maintaining respondent anonymity as this encourages openness and discourages hesitation or divergence in responses. In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was formulated, featuring questions specifically aimed at addressing the research objectives. These questions were relevant to the scope and objectives of the research. To ensure consistency in responses and to facilitate the collection of quantitative data, the questionnaire employed statements aligned with the research objectives. Additionally, closed-ended questions were designed with a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932). This scale format was used to assess the extent of participants' inclinations and opinions regarding the subject matter under consideration.

3.8 Data Collection

To answer research questions of this dissertation, a quantitative research approach was employed. Quantitative research allows researchers to gather a large sample size, which enhances the comprehensiveness of the study and includes participants from diverse backgrounds. The findings derived from quantitative research can be generalised to a broader population. This dissertation used a quantitative research methodology to address its research questions. Data collection took place over a period of two months, spanning from October to early December 2022. Participants were recruited through various channels, including friends, family members, and members of the Facebook group "Kosmetik dan Makeup Malaysia." Prior to initiating the survey, the researcher sought and obtained permission from the group administrator to conduct the research within the group. Following a brief presentation to the group administration, permission was granted, and the questionnaire was shared with the admin to facilitate its distribution among the group members. Additionally, the survey link was circulated among friends and family via the WhatsApp messaging platform. Data collection was carried out using convenient sampling, resulting in a total of 102 responses obtained from group members, friends and family over the course of two months.

3.9 Data Analysis

To raise awareness, perception and understanding directly, a range of rating scales were developed, with participants being aware that their perceptions, awareness and understanding were under evaluation.

In this study, the three factors, which were awareness, perception and understanding of the language used, were measured using distinct approaches. The awareness and understanding components were adapted from Awadh et al. (2016) and were graded as follows: a response of 'yes' was assigned a value of '1' while a response of 'no' was given a value of '0' for each

‘yes’ response to the questions in this section, participants received one point. This section contained nine questions, each carrying one point, except for question number two. For question two, respondents would be awarded two points for providing both correct answers – Malaysia and Korea. If respondents answered just one correct country, they would receive one point. If the response included any country other than Malaysia and Korea, zero points would be assigned. Question five was evaluated for one point if respondents provided ‘French,’ ‘Malay’ and ‘English’ as the answers. Any response other than these languages would be awarded zero points. Participants scoring between 5 and 10 were considered to possess knowledge about the language used in product names, while those scoring between 0 and 4 were deemed unaware of the language used in product branding.

To reflect participants' perceptions of the French language used in the selected product branding, descriptive statistics were presented using Pivot Tables. According to the Association of Business Training RSS website, a pivot table is an effective tool for summarising data since it can automatically sort, count and summarise data within tables, subsequently showing the consolidated data. The benefits of using pivot tables include the ability to manage data with user-friendly features and expedite decision-making through readily available information.

Five-point Likert scales, which consisted of response options ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ were used for each perception-related question in Section C, covering questions 15 to 23. Responses indicating ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ were considered positive, while responses indicating ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ were considered negative. The pie chart from Google Forms was used to provide descriptive data, visually displaying participants' perceptions of the use of the French language in specific product branding. The pivot table exhibited the mean for each question, offering insight into the average sentiment among participants regarding the use of French in product branding. By using the

pivot table, this research would draw conclusions on the statement best captures Malaysian female customers' feelings about the use of French in product branding.

In addition, the final section of the questionnaire delved into the respondents' understanding of the language used in product branding. Awadh et al. (2016) used the same method to measure understanding. For questions 2, 4 and 8, respondents would score 1 point if they answer 'yes' and zero point for an answer of 'no'. For question 1, respondents would be awarded 1 point for responding 'yes, I know all.' and 'I know some of the words.' and 0 points for answering 'not at all'. For question 6, respondents would be awarded 1 point if they provide an answer of 'two words', while a response of 'one word' would result in zero point. For questions 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10, participants would score 1 point for providing the correct meaning of the words and 0 point for offering an incorrect interpretation. In the final step of the analysis, Spearman's rank correlation was used to establish the relationship between respondents' awareness and their understanding of the French language used in product branding. This statistical method would evaluate if there was a significant correlation between the level of awareness and the level of understanding.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the outcomes of the surveys conducted among women in Malaysia. The chapter is organised into five primary parts: assessing reliability, examining consumer awareness, analysing consumer perception, exploring language comprehension, and summarising the relationship between awareness and comprehension. Since the aim of this research was to examine how female consumers perceive foreign languages, the data analysis would primarily focus on addressing the three research questions outlined in this study.

4.2 Results of Demographic Survey

A total of 102 participants took part in the survey, ranging in age from 18 to 65. The majority of participants were women aged 20 to 29, totalling 50 individuals. The second largest group consisted of 21 women aged 18 to 19. Additionally, there were 13 women aged 30 to 39, 8 women aged 40 to 49, 7 women aged 50 to 59 years, and only 3 women aged 60 to 65 who took part in this study. Despite variations in participation across age groups, this study was able to include women of all age ranges in the survey. The summary of research participants is presented in Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

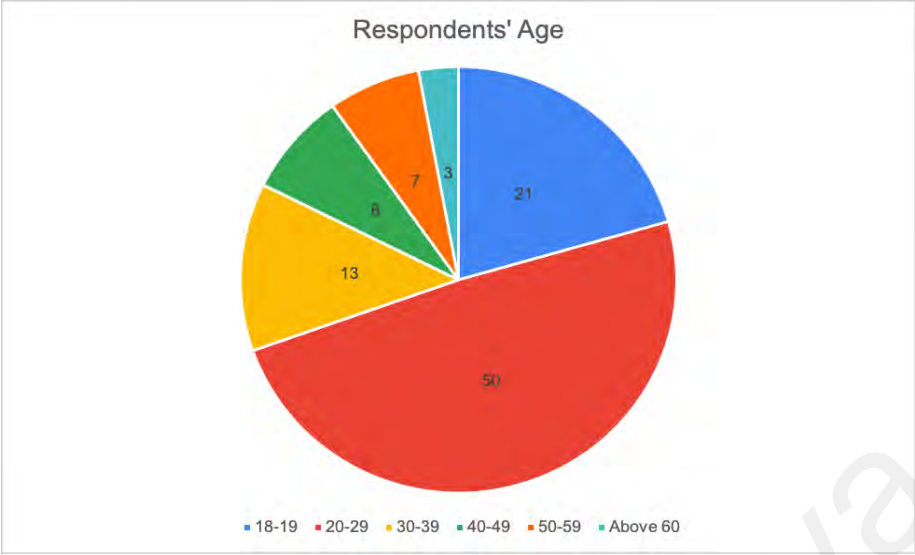


Figure 4.1: Age of respondents

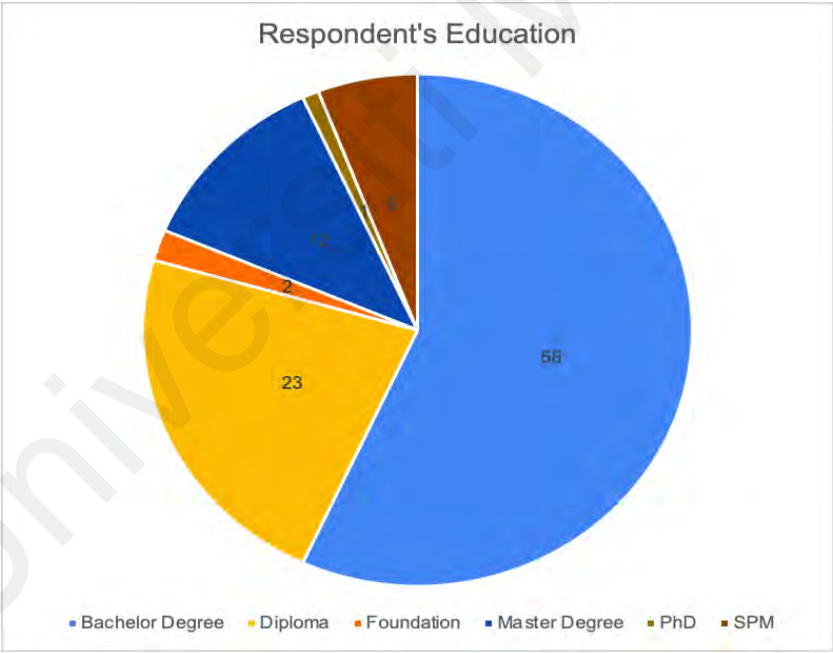


Figure 4.2: Qualification of respondents



Figure 4.3: Profession of respondents

Professions can be indicative of respondents' socioeconomic status, educational background, and lifestyle. This demographic information helps researchers better understand the composition of their sample population. According to the data presented in Figure 4.3, the largest professional group consisted of 39 individuals categorized as executives. Following this, the second-largest group comprised 28 female respondents who identified as students, while 21 female respondents were classified as non-executives. The remaining professional categories had fewer respondents, with 6 females identifying as entrepreneurs, and both managers and individuals not currently employed each totaling 4 female respondents.

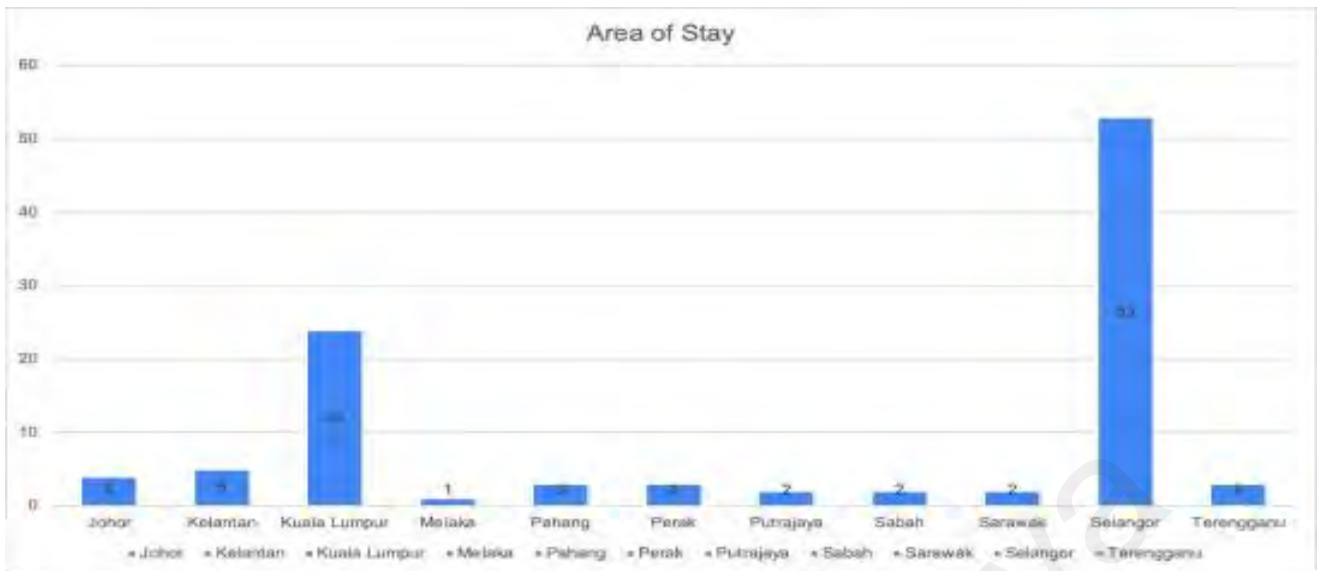


Figure 4.4: Respondents' area of stay

Based on the findings of this research, a significant portion of respondents resided in Selangor, comprising 53 individuals, while the second most common area of residence was Kuala Lumpur, with 24 individuals. Among other states, Kelantan had 5 female respondents, Johor had 4, and Pahang, Perak, and Terengganu each had 3 respondents. Putrajaya, Sabah, and Sarawak had an equal number of respondents, with 2 each, while Melaka had only one respondent.

4.3 Findings on Awareness

The main goal of this part B questionnaire was to determine the level of familiarity that Malaysian female consumers have with the language used in branding the selected items. There were nine awareness-related questions in total. Each correct answer was awarded 1 point, while each incorrect answer was awarded 0 point. Figure 4.5 below shows the respondents' level of awareness for the nine questions posed. Respondents who scored between five and ten points were categorised as 'aware', while those who scored less than five points were categorised as 'unaware' of the languages used in the branding of the selected items.

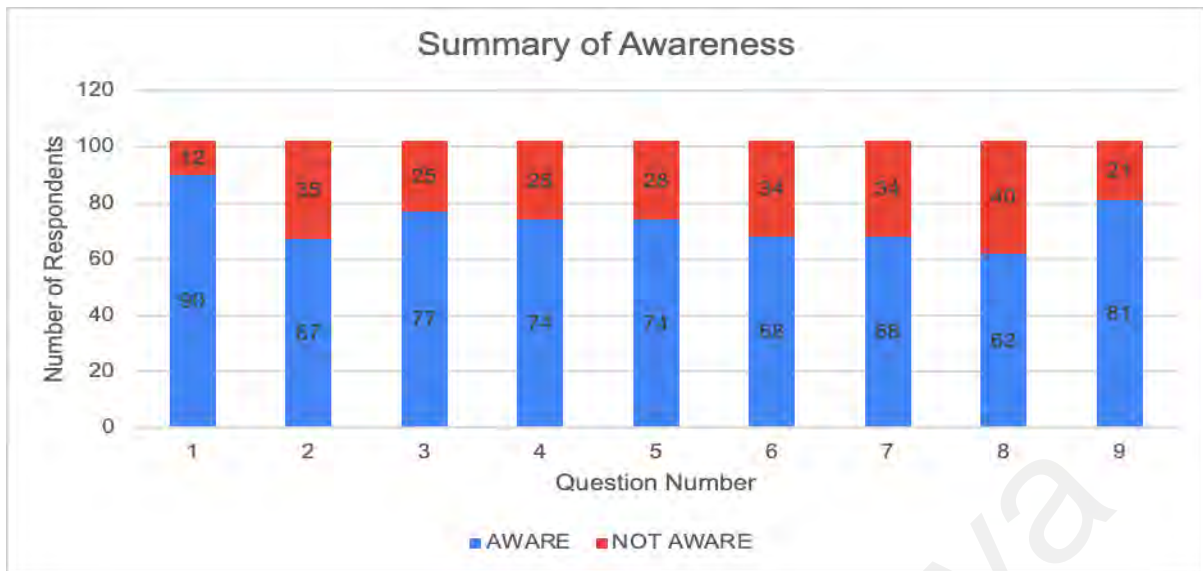


Figure 4.5: Summary of the questions about awareness

Most respondents could score more than five points on most of the questions, showing that the respondents possessed knowledge and awareness regarding the language used in the brand names of the selected items. Overall, most respondents showed awareness of the brands related to the chosen items as shown by their responses to question 1. 90 respondents answered ‘yes’, while only 12 respondents answered ‘no’. Question 8 received the lowest score, with 62 respondents indicating awareness of the language, while 40 respondents did not. The subsequent section would entail the analysis of each question in the awareness part.

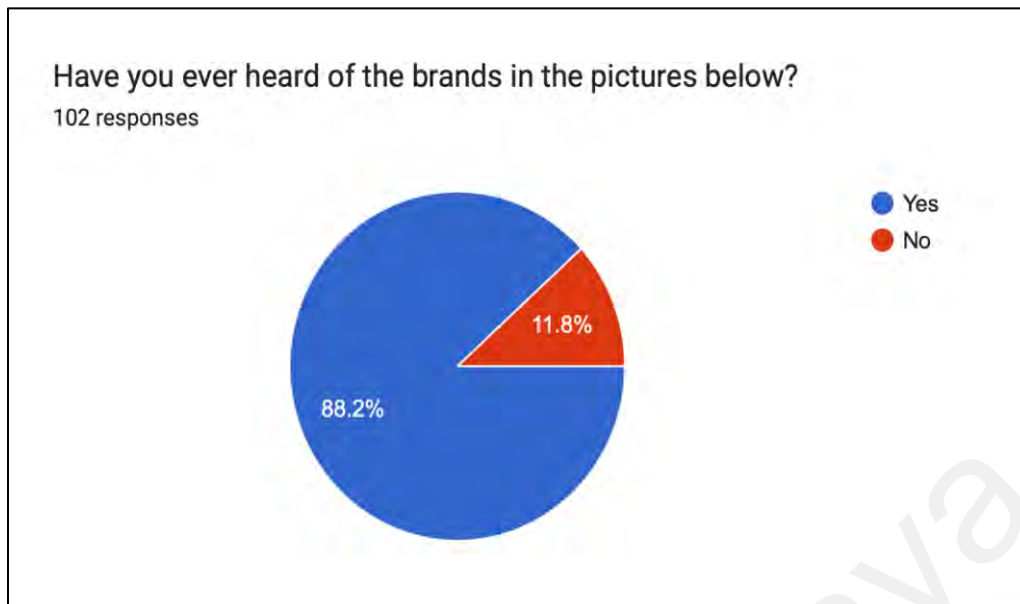


Figure 4.6: Percentage of respondents who have heard of the brands

As shown in Figure 4.6 above, survey participants were presented with a list of brands and asked whether they were familiar with each brand. Out of all the survey participants, 90 of them answered "Yes" to the question, indicating that their familiarity with the brands stated in the questionnaire. Conversely, 12 respondents responded with a "no" or "never heard of them" when asked about their familiarity with the mentioned brands. The survey was conducted to assess the respondents' familiarity with certain products' branding, even when the brand names were in a foreign language. The results revealed that a significant majority of the respondents (88.2%) were familiar with the branding of these products, despite the language barrier. On the other hand, a smaller proportion of the respondents (11.8%) had not encountered these brands before, suggesting that a minority remained unfamiliar with them.

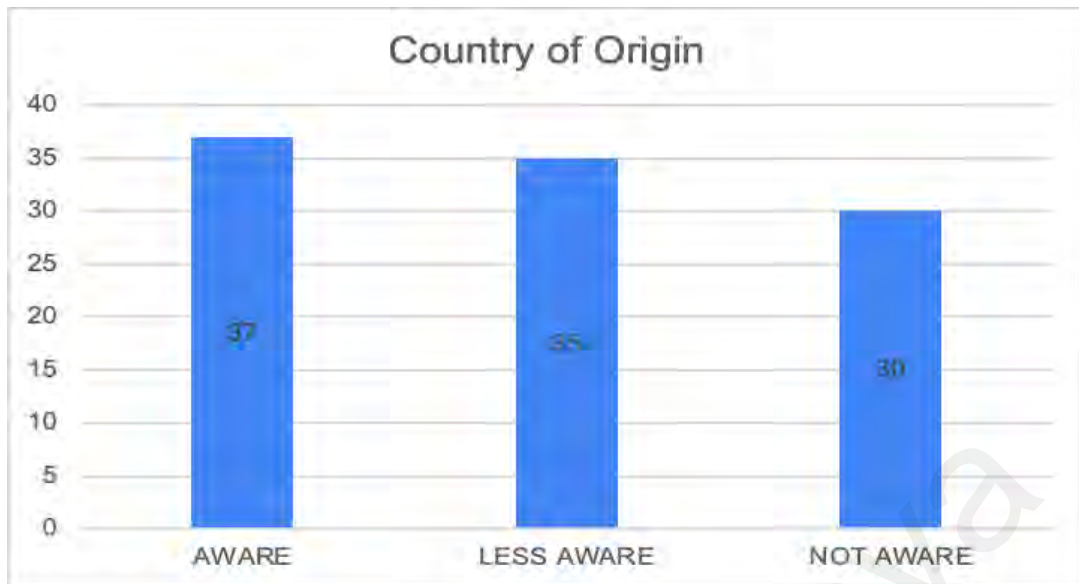


Figure 4.7: Awareness of Products' Country of Origin

To further assess awareness of the language used in product labelling, respondents were asked if they knew the countries of origin of these products and were asked to name two countries. As shown in Figure 4.7 above, 37 respondents provided the correct answer by identifying Malaysia and Korea as their responses. Meanwhile, 35 respondents demonstrated a lesser degree of knowledge by providing only one correct answer, either Malaysia or Korea. Among the respondents who were not able to answer the question correctly, 30 of them indicated their lack of awareness about the products' country of origin. Interestingly, on the response sheet, 11 out of 30 respondents incorrectly indicated France as the product's country of origin. This suggests that consumers might associate the usage of the French language with a product's origin being in France. This underscores the role of language in shaping perceptions of a product's country of origin based on labelling.

Do you think these brands (SugarBelle, Beausiti, Noir, Chique Cosmetics, À La Carte and Beautyra) are Malaysian brands?
102 responses

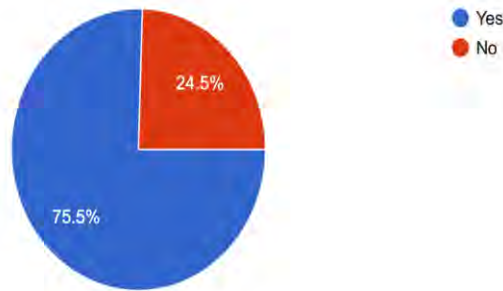


Figure 4.8: Percentage of respondents who think the brands are Malaysian brands

Additionally, brands across various industries have increasingly adopted the use of foreign languages in their branding. While certain customers may accurately deduce a product's origin from its brand name, others may only come to realise the origin after examining the product's specifications more closely. As shown in Figure 4.8 above, 77 respondents correctly identified the brands *Sugarbelle*, *Beausiti*, *Noir*, *Chique Cosmetics*, *À La Carte* and *Beautyra* as Malaysian brands. However, 25 respondents believed that those products were not of Malaysian origin. This shows that a portion of the respondents were not aware of the language used in the product branding. According to Harun et al. (2015), the language and linguistic aspects of a brand name encompass cultural elements that provide distinct information to consumers. The linguistic features of a brand name, including language, word choice, sound and literal meaning, can contribute to the distinct identity of a brand, particularly in terms of conveying information about the brand's origin. For instance, if a Malaysian business owner chooses a French brand name, some customers may assume solely based on the name that the product originates from France.

Are you familiar with the words/language used in the products?

102 responses

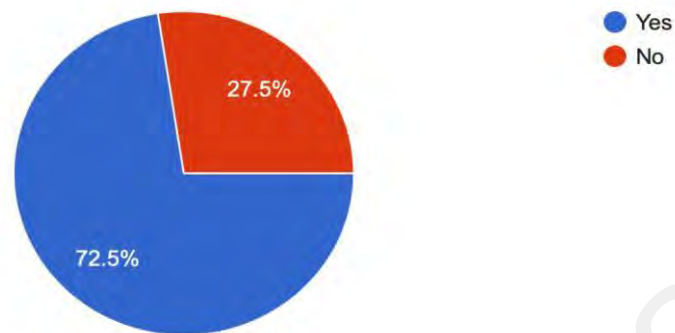


Figure 4.9: Percentage of respondents who are familiar with the words/language used in the products

Subsequently, the participants were asked about their familiarity with the specific words or language used in the product branding in order to gauge their awareness towards the language used in the branding of the items. As shown in Figure 4.9 above, 74 respondents responded that they were familiar with the word or language used in the product branding. On the other hand, only 28 respondents were not familiar with the terminology used. This demonstrates that a considerable number of Malaysians possess knowledge of French vocabulary, despite the language not being widely spoken in this country nor being a prominent part of the educational curriculum. Besides, the brand names of these products also incorporate other languages. Many beauty product names such as 'Chique Cosmetics', 'Etude House' and 'SugarBelle' consist of a combination of English and French. These products utilise a diverse array of languages to market their products,

Question 5 inquired if respondents were familiar with the language used in these beauty products. The majority of respondents provided a mixed response, indicating that the product names were created using a combination of two languages. Specifically, 74 respondents out of

the total provided answers that indicated French, English and Malay were the languages used in these beauty items. Even though some respondents only provided one language, their response was still considered correct. The respondents also mentioned either English or Malay as the language used. This observation aligned with the fact that several beauty product names, including ‘Chique Cosmetics’, ‘Etude House’ and ‘Sugar Belle’, comprise a blend of English and French. Similarly, ‘Beautyra’ and ‘Beausiti’ are combinations of French and Malay. Furthermore, ‘Laneige’, ‘Mamonde’, ‘Enchanteur’ and ‘Mise en Scene’ exclusively feature French words in their branding. These products employ a diverse array of languages to market their offerings. However, 28 respondents did not receive a point because they provided incorrect answers. Out of these 28 respondents, 16 of them did not understand the language used. Table 4.1 displays the list of languages reported by the respondents.

Table 4.1: Respondent’s answers about languages used in the selected products

Language(s)	No. of respondents
French, English, Malay	74
Korean	7
Latin	1
Spanish	2
German	1
Chinese	1
Do not know the language	16

Do you know how to pronounce those brand names?

102 responses

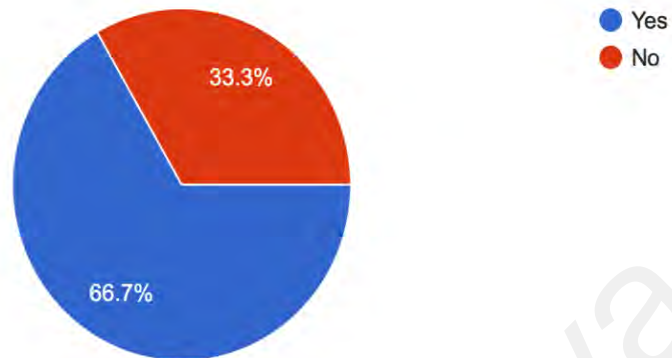


Figure 4.10: Percentage of respondents who know how to pronounce those brand names

In addition, 68 of the respondents indicated that they are capable of pronouncing these brand names when they come across them, while only 34 respondents expressed difficulty in pronouncing these brand names. This shows that Malaysians possess an awareness of the French names used in these product brands, despite the challenges associated with learning a foreign language, particularly one like French that presents pronunciation difficulties. French is often perceived as phonetically ‘challenging’ and it shares similarities with English in terms of the intricate relationship between orthography and phonetic form (Anderson, 1989) regarding the phonetics of French. Relative to other languages, courses focused on French phonetics are more prevalent in educational curricula at intermediate and advanced levels.

Do you think that it is important to know the meaning of a product's name?

102 responses

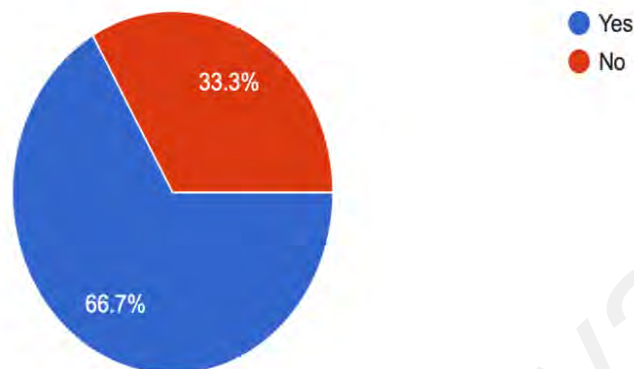


Figure 4.11: Percentage of respondents who think it is important to know the meaning of a product's name

Further analysing the awareness component, it became evident that some consumers might attach value to understanding the meaning behind the name of a product, while others might not prioritise it. In line with the findings of this study, when each product featured a name in a foreign language other than English, 68 of the respondents perceived it as important to know the meaning of the name of a product, even if it was in an unfamiliar language. Conversely, only 34 of the respondents considered knowing the significance of the name of a product to be unimportant. The language used in the name of a product can hold value as it may convey a deeper meaning associated with the product. For instance, consider the word 'Laneige' from the French language, which translates to snow in English. Individuals who are familiar with this translation may be more inclined to purchase the product by anticipating positive outcomes aligned with the language itself. On the other hand, consider the term 'Noir' in a product name, which means black in French. Consumers who comprehend this meaning may find it contradictory to the product's claim, thus leading to confusion and potentially forming a negative perception of the brand.

Have you ever used one of those products?

102 responses

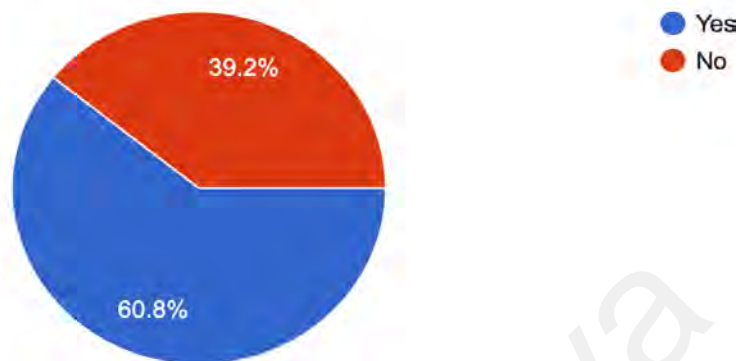


Figure 4.12: Percentage of respondents who used one of those products

To further test respondents' awareness of the language used in product advertising, they were asked whether they had previously used any of these products. Respondents who have used a particular product might possess some level of knowledge about it, whereas those who have not used the product likely lack information about it. According to the findings of the study, 62 respondents had experienced these products, while 40 respondents had not yet tried them. Engaging with consumers who have previously used the products could yield more insightful information as these respondents may offer first-hand insights based on their experience. The difference between respondents who have tried the products and those who have not was relatively minor. This shows that not all foreign language brand names effectively drive consumer purchase decisions, and individuals may form their own opinions about the product regardless of their branding.

Is the language employed in these product cosmetics easily recognizable in the local market?
64 responses

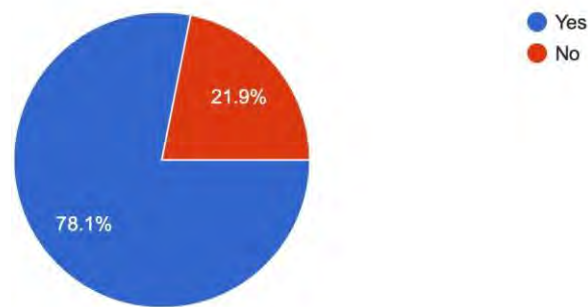


Figure 4.13: Percentage of respondents who believe these products are easily recognised in the local market

Last but not least, a variety of products is available in markets across the nation, featuring various languages. Within the Malaysian market, numerous cosmetic products are introduced with branding in different languages, including French, regardless of whether they are local or imported items. As a secondary objective of this study, the aim was to ascertain whether products labelled in the French language are more easily recognisable in the local market or the opposite. Surprisingly, as depicted in the pie chart above, 81 respondents believed that the French language used in product branding is easily recognised in the local market, while only 21 respondents perceived the French language as challenging to comprehend in the local market. This finding demonstrates that despite French being a foreign language and not commonly spoken by locals, it can still be deemed as easily recognisable within the local marketplace. The fact that many respondents are already familiar with the French language in the local market suggests that it is no longer considered novel. Moreover, the utilisation of the French language to market cosmetic products is deemed acceptable as the French language has become synonymous with cosmetics products available in the global market.

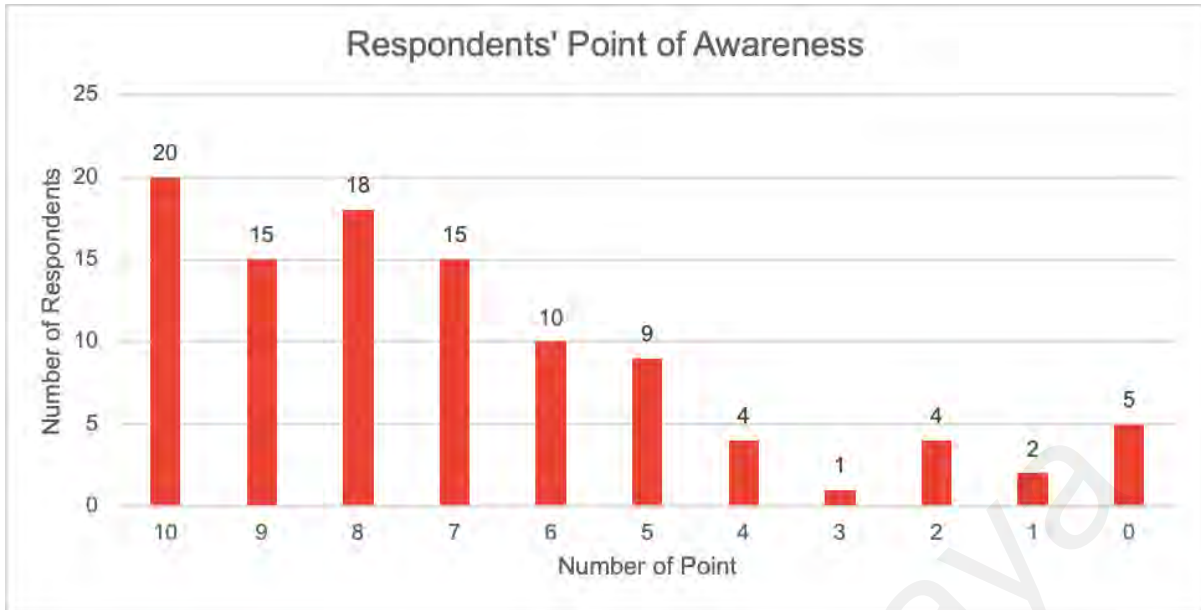


Figure 4.14: Summary of respondents' awareness

The main goal of this part B questionnaire was to determine the extent to which Malaysian female consumers are familiar with the language used in the branding of the selected items. According to the results presented in Figure 4.14, it could be observed that only 16 out of 102 respondents exhibited a lack of awareness regarding the language used in product branding. They scored less than five points. In contrast, 87 respondents achieved a score of 5 or higher, indicating their familiarity with the language used in product branding. 20 respondents achieved a perfect score of 10 points. This shows that Malaysian female consumers are well-acquainted with the language used in product labelling, even when it involves foreign languages. This finding also shows that Malaysian people are increasingly receptive to diverse languages used in Malaysia and they are not solely adhering to the languages taught or used in Malaysia.

4.4 Findings of Perception

This section discussed respondents' perceptions about the use of French in product branding. It aimed to provide an overview of the range of perspectives held by respondents regarding the use of the French language in the branding of specific products.

I believe these products (Enchanteur, Laneige, Mamonde, Mise-en-scene, Etude House Beausiti, Beautyra, A la carte, Chique Cosmetic, Sugarbelle, and Noir Cosmetic) are all in a foreign language.
102 responses

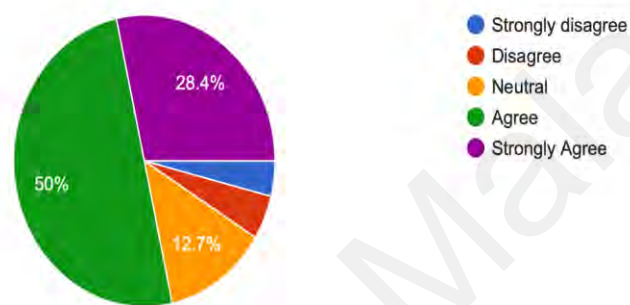


Figure 4.15: Percentage of respondents who believe those products are all in a foreign language

The purpose of the first question was to assess the respondents' familiarity with the language used in product branding. The pie chart shows that a majority of the respondents (n=80) agreed that foreign languages were used to name the selected products. Only 13 respondents were uncertain about this claim. They believed that a foreign language was employed in branding these items. Despite the clear indication from brand names like *Beausiti* and *Noir* that Malay was not used, 5 respondents disagreed and 4 strongly disagreed with this proposition, constituting a total of 9 respondents. These respondents believed that since all the chosen brands did not originate in France, they would not employ foreign language branding. In reality, none of the brands were made in France. For instance, *Noir* was produced in Malaysia and was given a French name.

The respondents' perceptions regarding the use of French in product branding were then examined through questions three to eight. These responses were scored to determine the prevailing perception endorsed by the respondents. The analysis is presented in the Pivot Table shown below.

Table 4.2 Overview of respondents' perception of products as high-end in the market

	In my opinion, pretty high-end products are on the market.
Agree	47
Disagree	10
Neutral	38
Strongly agree	7
Strongly disagree	0
Grand Total	102

In this second question, the respondents were asked whether they believed that using the French language in brand names indicated higher-priced products in the market. Around 47 respondents agreed with this statement, and another 7 respondents strongly agreed, resulting in a total of 54 respondents who held this positive view. Conversely, a total of 10 respondents disagreed with the notion that incorporating French in product branding would confer a premium image to the products in the market. They believed that the use of the French language did not necessarily elevate the products' perception as high-end in the market. There were also 38 respondents who expressed uncertainty regarding this claim.

Table 4.3: Overview of respondents' confidence levels in using foreign brand products

	I feel more confident when I use a product from a foreign brand.
Agree	50
Disagree	8
Neutral	38
Strongly agree	6
Strongly disagree	0
Grand Total	102

Regarding the second perspective, which inquired whether respondents felt more confident using products with brand names in the French language, the results revealed that 50 respondents agreed with the statement and 6 respondents strongly agreed. A total of 56 respondents believed that the use of the French language somehow instilled greater confidence in them when utilising the product, both concerning its components and the results it claimed to deliver. However, 38 respondents were unable to decide or did not consider this perception when evaluating the advertised product. It is also plausible that these 38 respondents had not tried any French-labelled products; therefore, they might not could agree with this statement. Only 8 respondents expressed a negative perspective towards this claim, suggesting that using products with French branding would not enhance their confidence.

Table 4.4: Overview of respondents' comfort level in purchasing foreign brand name products due to premium ingredients

	I feel comfortable purchasing foreign brand-name products because they contain expensive ingredients.
Agree	40
Disagree	15
Neutral	41
Strongly agree	4
Strongly disagree	2
Grand Total	102

Additionally, the third perception, which inquired whether respondents felt comfortable buying products with French brand names because they believed the products contained only premium ingredients, revealed that 40 respondents agreed with the statement, and a slightly smaller number of 4 strongly agreed, totaling 44 positive responses. Conversely, 15 respondents disagreed with the statement, while only 2 respondents strongly disagreed, accumulating a total of 17 negative responses. On the other side, 41 respondents indicated uncertainty regarding the above claim. This shows that not all consumers perceive products with foreign brand names, particularly French ones, as necessarily comfortable choices and associated with the use of expensive ingredients.

Table 4.5: Overview of respondents' perception of foreign language used in product branding as enhancing trustworthiness

	The use of foreign languages in the product branding makes the products sound more trustworthy.
Agree	42
Disagree	8
Neutral	41
Strongly agree	9
Strongly disagree	2
Grand Total	102

The fourth perspective aimed to determine whether respondents believed that using the French language in product branding would increase the reliability of the products. The pivot table indicated that only 9 respondents strongly agreed with the statement, whereas 42 respondents agreed with it, resulting in a combined total of 51 respondents who believe that incorporating the French language increases the credibility of the products. On the other hand, only 10 respondents provided negative responses to this statement, with 8 respondents disagreeing and 2 respondents strongly disagreeing. The notion that employing the French language in product branding would increase customer trustworthiness was disputed by 41 respondents, leading to the conclusion that this notion is not accurate. The language itself does not serve as a reliable method for assessing customer trust.

Table 4.6: Overview of respondents' perception of brand names influences purchasing power

	The language used in brand names influences purchasing power.
Agree	58
Disagree	2
Neutral	25
Strongly agree	17
Strongly disagree	0
Grand Total	102

Additionally, the fifth perspective examined whether the language employed in product branding affects consumers' willingness to pay. A substantial total of 75 respondents agreed with the notion that employing a foreign language in product branding increases customers' purchasing intent as shown in Table 4.7. Among them, 58 respondents agreed, while 17 respondents strongly agreed with the statement. However, only 17 respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, asserting that the use of a foreign language in product branding does not augment purchasing intent. Meanwhile, 25 respondents remained unsure about the aforementioned statement, suggesting that the language used might not significantly impact their purchasing decisions.

Table 4.7: Overview of respondents' perception using a foreign language in a brand name will make it sound more expensive and luxurious

	Using a foreign language like French in a brand name will make it sound more expensive and luxurious
Agree	57
Disagree	4
Neutral	19
Strongly agree	22
Strongly disagree	0
Grand Total	102

The final question regarding perception examined whether giving a brand name in French would enhance its perceived level of luxury and expense. An overwhelming majority concurred with the assertion that incorporating the French language in a brand name would indeed elevate its perceived level of luxury and expense. Specifically, 57 respondents agreed, while 22 respondents strongly agreed, resulting in a total of 79 respondents affirming this perspective. This consensus highlights their perception that using French imparts a premium quality. Conversely, only 4 respondents disagreed with the statement, and 22 respondents strongly disagreed, accounting for 26 respondents in total who were of the opinion that the usage of French in a brand name did not impart an aura of luxury and high cost. Meanwhile, 19 respondents remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.

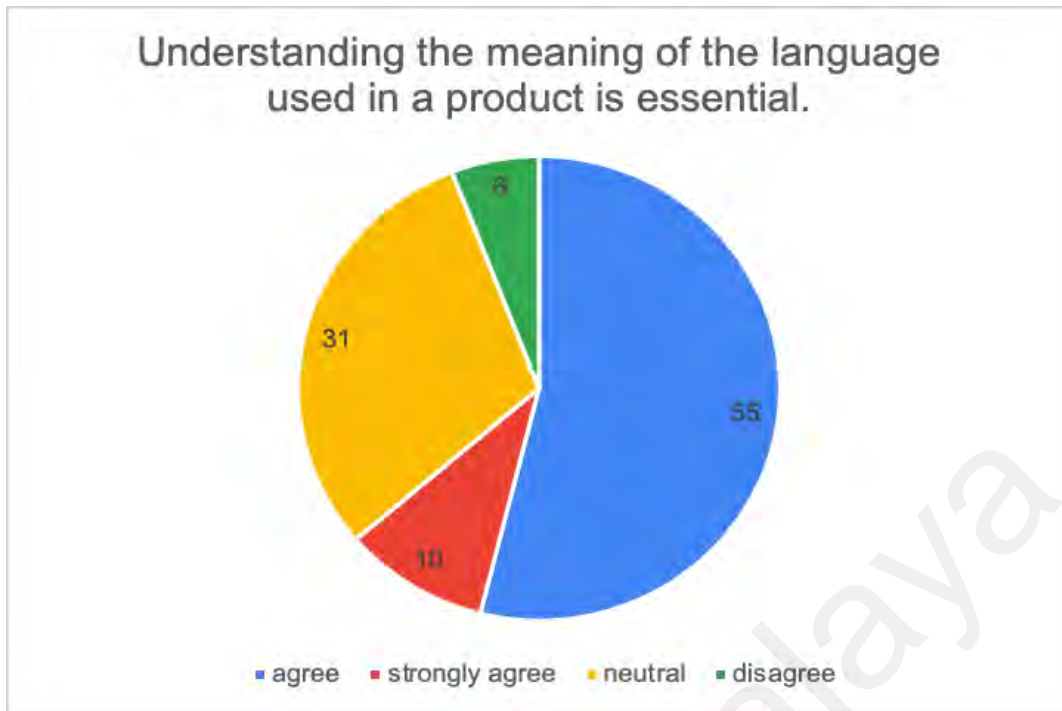


Figure 4.16: Summary of the essentiality of understanding the meaning of the language

The penultimate question in the perception section explored the importance of users understanding the language used in a product. A total of 65 respondents agreed that it is crucial for users to comprehend the meaning of the language used in the product they select. Among them, 55 respondents agreed, while 10 respondents strongly agreed. This collective perspective reveals that a majority of respondents consider this aspect to be significant. This finding indicates that that even when the language is foreign, buyers still need to comprehend its meaning. Conversely, no respondent strongly disagreed with the assertion, while only 6 respondents disagreed that comprehending the meaning of the language employed in a product is crucial. These 6 respondents expressed the view that understanding the language of the product was unimportant. Meanwhile, 31 respondents remained neutral, lacking a clear opinion regarding this statement.



Figure 4.17: Summary of respondents' perception of the use of foreign languages on local products

Last but not least, the respondents were asked about their views on whether it was acceptable for local business owners in Malaysia to brand their products using a foreign language. Figure 4.17 shows that 63 respondents agreed and 6 respondents strongly agreed that it was acceptable for local business owners in Malaysia to use foreign languages in their product marketing. Meanwhile, only 4 respondents, including 2 respondents disagreed and another 2 respondents strongly disagreed, held the belief that local entrepreneurs should not use foreign languages to label their products. They believed that it is crucial for local business owners to promote their brands in their native language rather than adopting a foreign language, particularly French. In contrast, a total of 29 respondents did not offer a definitive response to this assertion.

Table 4.8: Summary of perceptions as selected by the respondents

Perceptions	Positive Answer	Negative Answer	Uncertain	Total of Respondents
Using a foreign language like French in a brand name will make it sound more expensive and luxurious.	79	4	19	102
The language used in brand names influences purchasing power.	75	2	25	102
I feel more confident when I use a product from a foreign brand.	56	8	38	102
All of them, in my opinion, are pretty high-end products on the market.	54	10	38	102
The use of foreign languages in product branding makes the products sound more trustworthy.	51	10	41	102
I feel comfortable purchasing foreign brand-name products because they contain expensive ingredients.	44	17	41	102

The range of views expressed by Malaysian women on the use of French in product branding is seen in Table 4.9. The highest and the second highest perceptions do not appear to significantly differ in the table. A total of 79 respondents stated that using a foreign language like French in a brand name would make it sound more expensive and luxurious, while only 4 respondents disagreed with the statement. 19 respondents were uncertain about the statement. Next, the second-highest perception, with a total number of 75 respondents, agreed that the language used in brand names influences purchasing power, while only 2 individuals disagreed with the statement. Another notable perception obtained from the study was the increased confidence felt by consumers when using a product from a foreign brand. 56 respondents agreed with the statement, while only 8 respondents disagreed with it.

Besides, the fourth perception garnered 54 respondents who agreed that a French language brand name signifies high-end product on the market, while only 10 respondents held a different view. It is worth noting that not all products with a French language label are necessarily very expensive. For instance, the Enchanteur brand, which has been established since 1989, offers soaps and fragrances with distinct French inspiration and catering to women of all ages. These products are readily available and reasonably priced in chain retailers. Additionally, 38 respondents were uncertain about this statement and did not strongly agree or disagree with it.

Additionally, the concept of increased trustworthiness associated with the use of the French language in product branding received agreement from 51 respondents, making it the second-to-last perception expressed by the respondents. Only 10 respondents disagreed with this perspective, while 41 respondents remained uncertain about this claim. Evidently, customers seem to seek out products with foreign brands. The survey's respondents indicated that perceived cosmetics originating from developed countries to be of high quality and trustworthy. This finding was supported by Alam (2020), who highlighted the significant influence of the country of origin on consumer perceptions of cosmetics. The results gained from the interviews align with the conclusions reached by Kaynak et al. (2000), who discovered through their research that consumers are more drawn to products originating from developed countries due to their perceived superior quality, functionality and craftsmanship.

Lastly, the notion of feeling comfortable when purchasing a French brand-name product due to the belief that the products contain exclusively expensive ingredients garnered positive responses from 44 individuals, while 17 respondents held a contrary view. Additionally, 41 respondents expressed scepticism towards this assertion. This underscores the fact that the use of a French brand name does not necessarily equate to the use of costly

ingredients in the product. French brand names do not consistently indicate the utilization of high-priced or organic components. For instance, consider the Laneige Sleeping Mask, which prominently features Ascorbyl Glucoside, an antioxidant and skin-brightening ingredient. Elise (2018) claimed that synthetic raw materials are typically less expensive than natural raw materials and that natural and organic products tend to be more expensive than conventional ones. This illustrates that while the French language may convey an air of opulence, the actual ingredients used in the products are not necessarily costly.

4.5 Findings on Understanding/Comprehension of French Language

This final section of the analysis focused on evaluating respondents' comprehension of the use of the French language in product branding, addressing the third objective of this research. The data in this section was analysed based on the grading framework established by Awadh et al. (2016). Respondents who scored below 5 points were categorised as not comprehending the language employed in product branding, whereas those who scored 5 or more points were categorised as having understood the language used in product branding. Furthermore, a statistical correlation between respondents' awareness and their understanding of the French language would be conducted.



Figure 4.18: Summary of respondents who know the meaning of the products

The first question in this part pertained to whether respondents understood the French language used in product names. This assessment was important to ascertain whether the language influences respondents' understanding. Figure 4.18 showed that 56 respondents indicated that they were familiar with some of the words used in the product names, while 9 respondents claimed a full understanding of the meanings of the words used. On the other hand, 37 respondents admitted not knowing the meanings of the words. Despite the presence of respondents who were unfamiliar with the word meanings, a substantial portion of the respondents demonstrated an understanding of the language. This is noteworthy given that the French language is not widely spoken in the country. This shows that consumers exhibit an inclination to explore the meanings of the words in the products they use, even if it is a foreign language. As a result, 65 respondents received one point each, while the remaining 37 respondents received zero point.

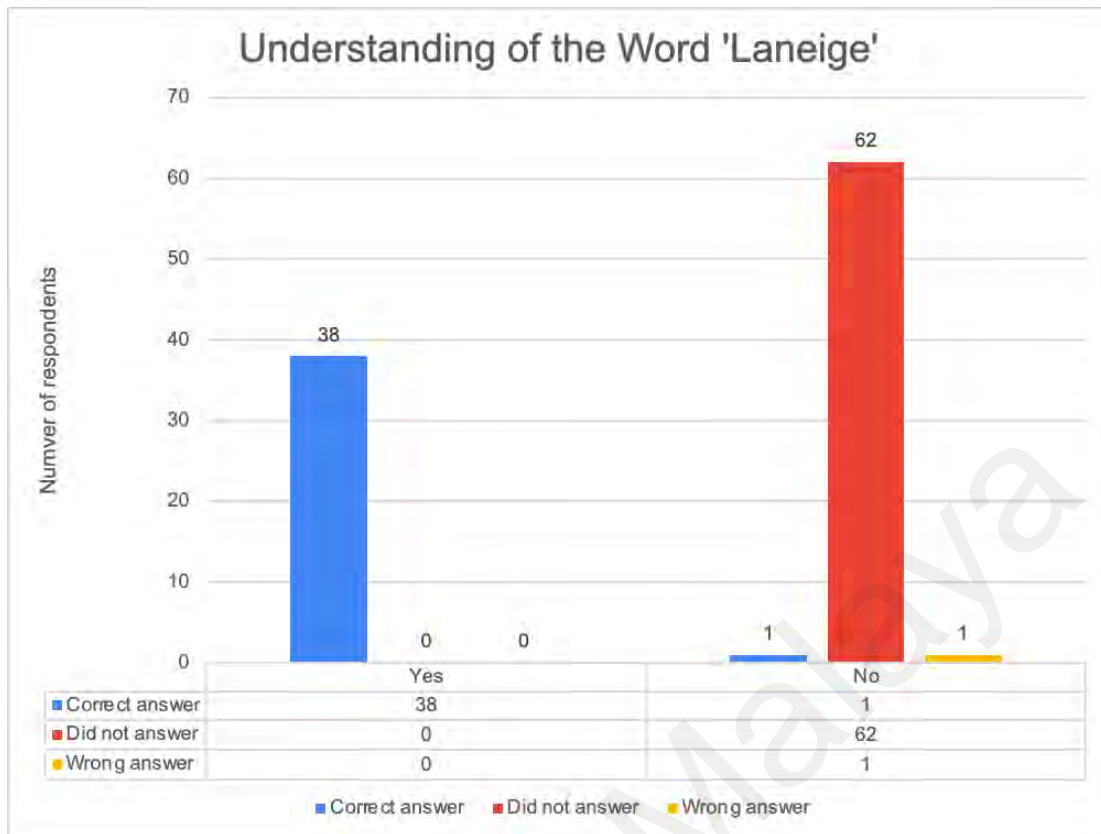


Figure 4.19: Summary of the understanding of the word ‘Laneige’

To further examine respondents' knowledge of the French language in product naming, they were presented with the brand name 'Laneige' and asked if they knew its meaning. As shown in Figure 4.19, out of the 102 respondents, 64 respondents indicated that they were unfamiliar with the meaning of 'Laneige,' while 38 respondents claimed to know its meaning. This indicates that only a minority of the respondents were able to comprehend the French language used in the name of this particular product. In the subsequent question (Question 3), the respondents were prompted to provide a brief response to further demonstrate their understanding. According to the data presented in the same bar chart, only 39 respondents provided an accurate answer, which could be either 'the snow' or 'snow'. Both responses were considered correct. Out of the 39 respondents who accurately answered question 3, one of them had initially chosen the 'no' response in question 2; however, this same respondent answered

question 3 correctly. On the other hand, one respondent indicated 'no' for question 2, stating that she was unaware of the meaning of 'Laneige'. However, when addressing question 3, she made an attempt to respond, although her answer, which was 'white', turned out to be incorrect. In summary, only 39 respondents received 1 point for question 3, while 63 respondents received zero points.

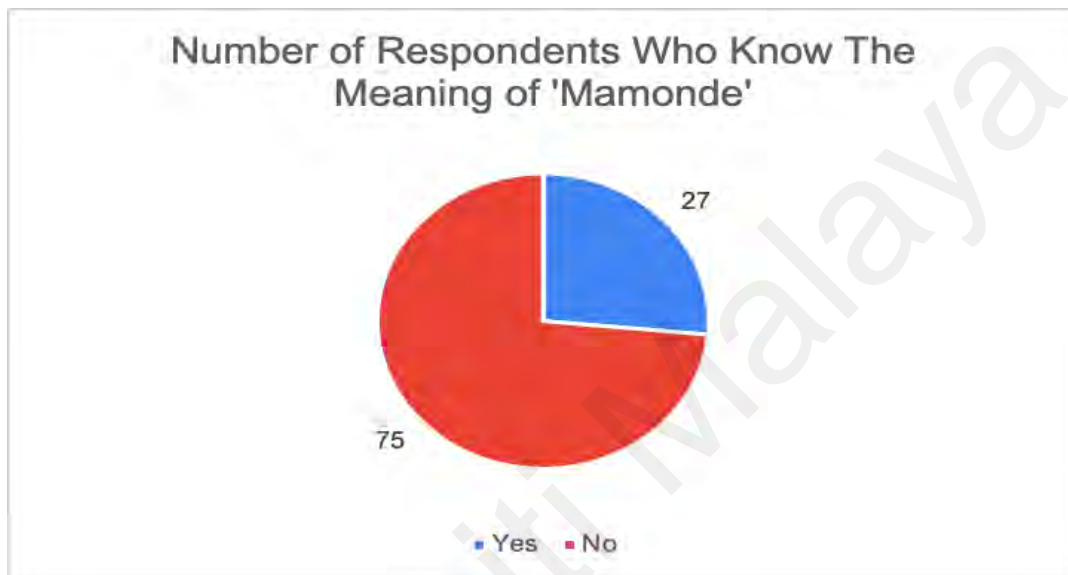


Figure 4.20: Summary of respondents who know the meaning of 'Mamonde'

To gain a more profound understanding of the brand name, respondents were subsequently asked about their familiarity with the meaning of 'Mamonde'. 27 respondents indicated that they were aware of its meaning, earning each of them a score of 1 point. Conversely, 75 respondents admitted their lack of knowledge regarding the language and responded with a 'no' to this particular question.

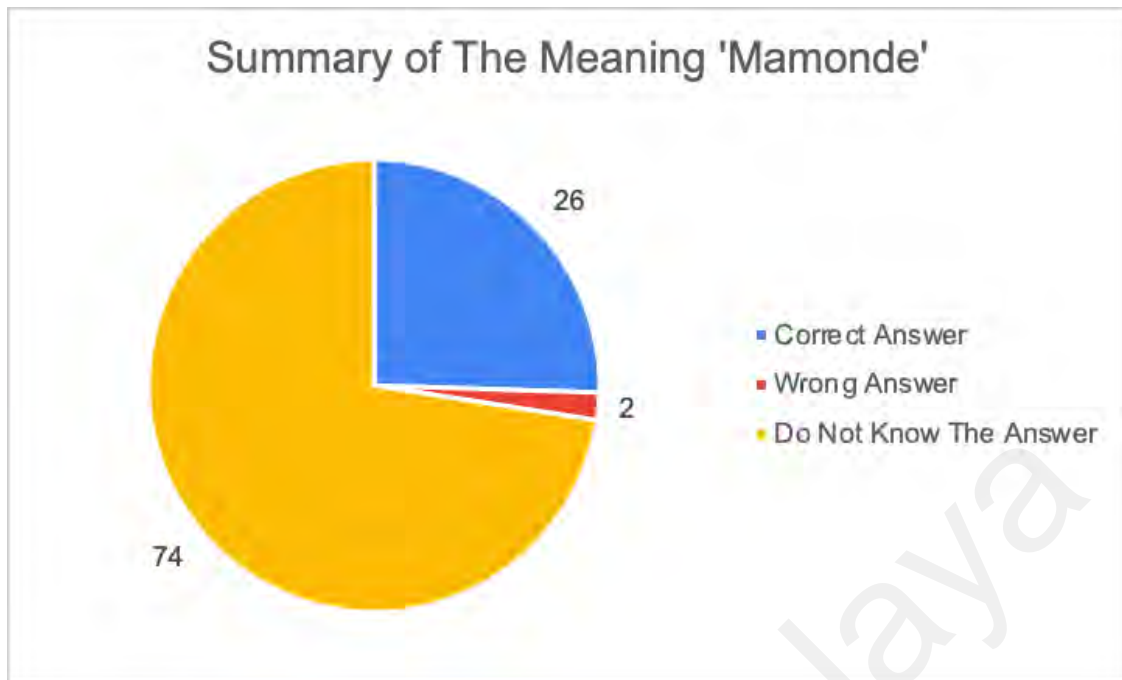


Figure 4.21: Summary of the meaning of 'Mamonde'

To further delve into the analysis, respondents were required to provide a short answer to the meaning of 'Mamonde'. Among the 27 respondents who previously answered 'yes', only 26 respondents provided correct answers, including 'my world', 'the world' and 'world'. These three answers were accepted as correct since the accuracy of the answer was more relevant than grammatical precision. Conversely, 2 respondents offered incorrect answers despite claiming familiarity with the word's meaning. One respondent answered 'my word' as the meaning of 'Mamonde', while another respondent provided 'no' as the answer. In contrast, 75 respondents responded 'no' to question 4, but there was one respondent who tried to provide a short answer by writing 'world'. Even though this respondent scored zero point for question 4, she managed to receive a point in question 5, resulting in 26 respondents receiving one point for question 5.

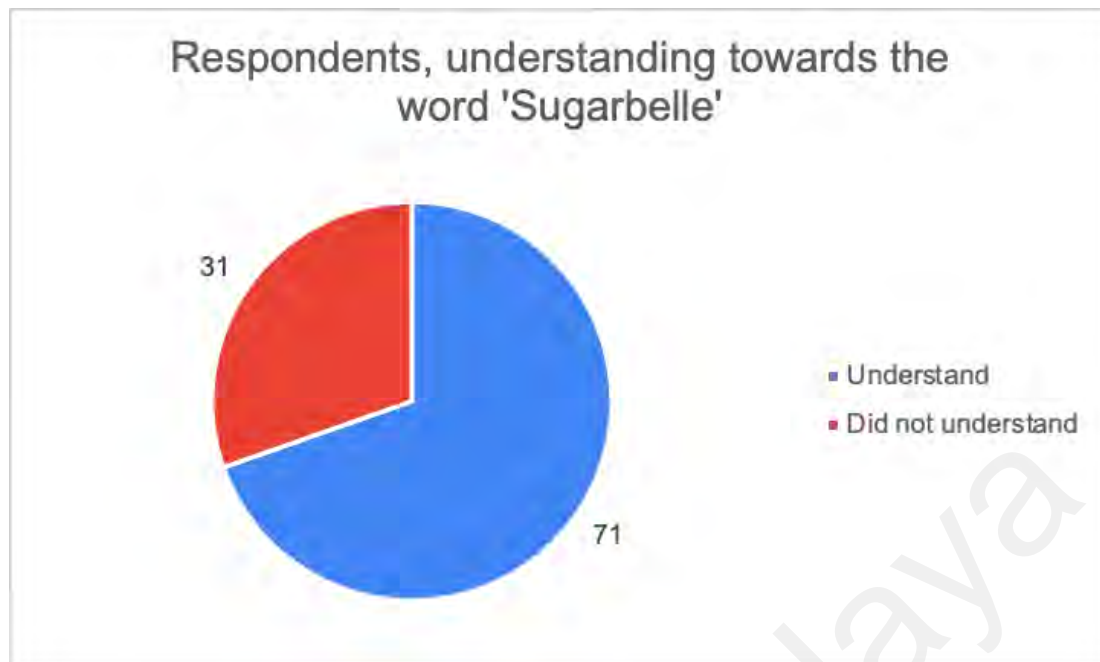


Figure 4.22: Summary of the understanding towards the word 'Sugarbelle'

According to Danilović Jeremić (2019), brand names can serve a multitude of purposes, ranging from product differentiation to corporate branding. In the realm of brand naming, creativity and cleverness are used, resulting in the creation of blends. Brand names serve as identifiers and advertisements; they are designed to convey information, evoke positive connotations and generate favourable opinions. A captivating brand name can significantly contribute to increase product recognition and admiration. Blends in brand names are clearly popular as they not only exemplify highly innovative linguistic constructs but also serve as playful tools that blend elements of clipping and compounding. One of the brands analysed in this research was 'Sugarbelle'. This brand name combines words from two languages, resulting in a fusion. English and French words are combined together to shape the brand name. To assess the respondents' understanding, they were asked whether 'Sugarbelle' consists of one or two words. A large number of 71 respondents correctly identified this brand as consisting of two words. Conversely, 31 respondents provided an incorrect response, indicating a single word. This underscores the curiosity of the respondents in attempting to discern that

'Sugarbelle' is a combination of two languages, with 'sugar' from English and 'belle' from French.

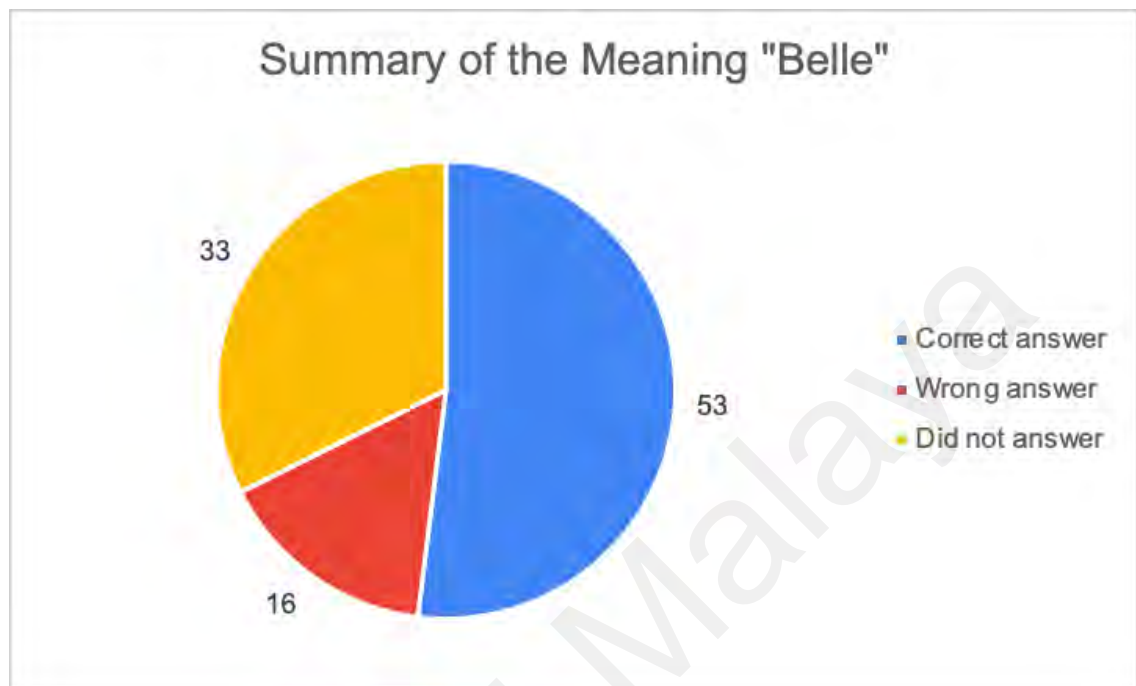


Figure 4.23: Summary of the meaning of 'Belle'

To further delve into the comprehension of the French language used in this brand name, respondents were asked to provide a brief explanation of the meaning of 'belle'. The term 'belle' is an adjective signifies 'beauty' or 'beautiful' as stated in the dictionary. As shown in Figure 4.23, 25 respondents correctly stated that it means 'beautiful', while 23 respondents correctly identified it as 'beauty' and 5 respondents described it as 'pretty'. These three responses were deemed correct and awarded one point each. However, when some respondents responded that the meaning is 'lady', 'princess', or 'founder of beauty', 16 respondents provided incorrect responses, leading to a score of zero. Lastly, only 33 respondents were unaware of the meaning of the word 'belle', receiving a score of zero for this question.



Figure 4.24: Summary of the word 'Beau'

Besides, the term 'Beau' has been used in various product names in Malaysia such as 'Beausiti', 'Beautyra' and 'Beautéssence'. This shows that the word may be familiar among entrepreneurs and they used the word because it could convey a meaning that aligns with their products. The third-to-last question aimed to ascertain whether respondents recognised the foreign word in the brand names 'Beausiti' and 'BeauTyra'. 70 respondents answered 'yes', indicating their awareness of the foreign word used in those product names. Only 32 respondents answered 'no,' showing their lack of awareness of the foreign word in those product names. To sum up, only 70 respondents received one point, while 32 respondents received zero points.

The second-to-last question in the comprehension section aimed to ascertain whether respondents could find out the foreign word in the product names, including 'Beausiti' and 'Beautyra'. According to the dictionary, 'beau' or 'belle' is an adjective and a common way of saying 'beautiful' in French. 'Belle' is used to describe something feminine, while 'beau' describes something masculine. Out of 70 respondents, 45

respondents were able to provide the correct answer, 'beau,' earning them 1 point for this question. In contrast, 19 respondents gave wrong answers and 6 respondents did not provide an answer. Among the 32 respondents who had previously answered 'no', only one respondent correctly identify 'beau' as the foreign word in these product brands. Thus, 46 respondents scored one point on question 9, while 57 respondents did not score any points.

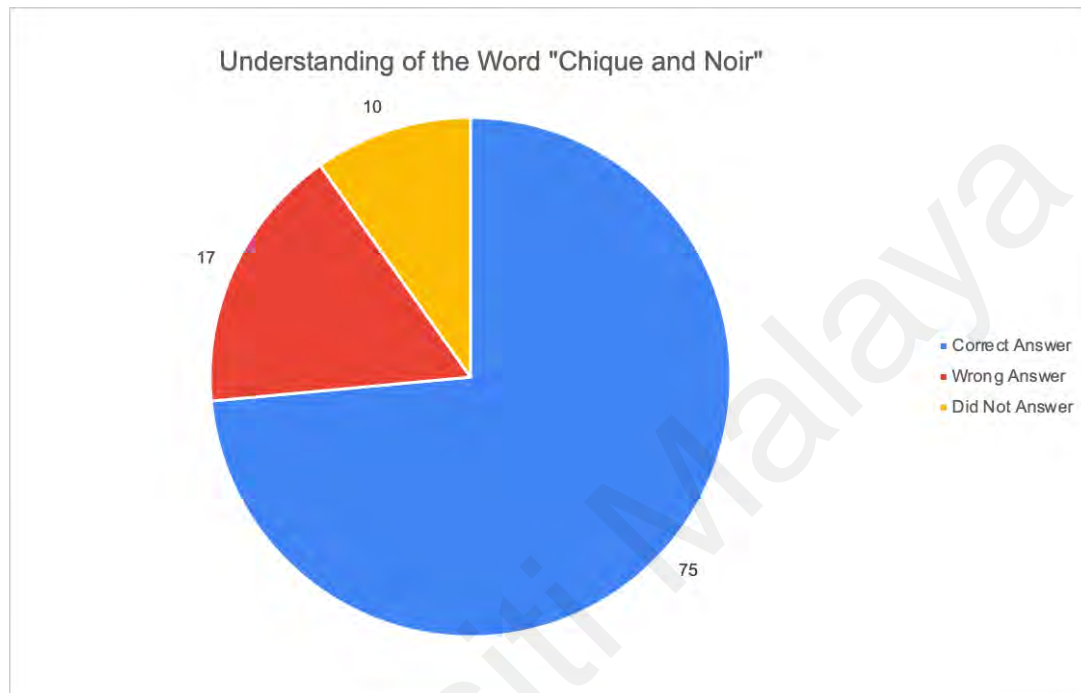


Figure 4.25: Summary of the words 'Chique' and 'Noir'

The last two products analysed in this research were 'Chique Cosmetics' and 'Noir Cosmetics'. These two brand names are a combination of two languages, namely English and French. The English word refers to cosmetics, while the French language refers to the words 'Noir' and 'Chique'. In this question, respondents were asked if they could identify the languages used in these product brands. Out of the 102 respondents, 75 respondents provided correct answers by indicating either French or a combination of English and French. Both of these responses were considered correct and were awarded 1 point. Even if respondents only mentioned French, they

still received 1 point because they correctly identified the origin of the word. Similarly, if they did not mention English, this was also deemed correct since the questionnaire was in English, and respondents identified the English word in the product name. Conversely, 17 respondents provided incorrect answers, including Latin, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Malay, German and Russian. Respondents who solely mentioned English were also considered incorrect because they failed to identify the foreign word in the product name. Thus, only 75 respondents received one point, while 27 respondents received zero points.

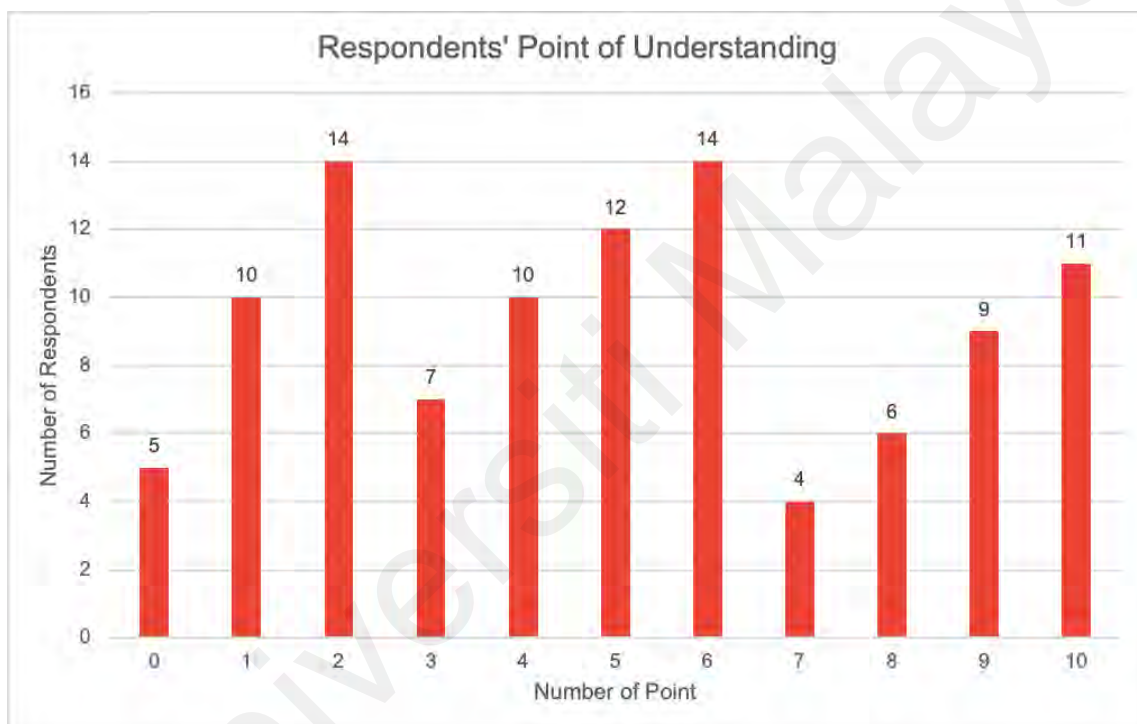


Figure 4.26: Summary of respondents' points of understanding

In conclusion, respondents who scored a total of 0 to 4 points could be categorised as consumers who did not fully comprehend the language used in product branding, while respondents who scored a total of 5 to 10 points could be considered consumers who understood it. Out of the respondents, 46 respondents earned 4 points or less, indicating a lack

of understanding of the language used in the product branding. On the other hand, a total of 56 respondents scored more than 5 points, demonstrating their grasp of the language. The bar chart above shows the distribution of scores, with the highest-scoring respondents achieving 6 points and 2 points, each having 14 respondents. There were still respondents who received a score of zero points, indicating that they had no understanding of the language used in product branding. This is not surprising, considering that French is not commonly spoken in Malaysia, and Malaysians are not typically exposed to the language. In contrast, some respondents scored a maximum of 10 points, totalling 11 respondents. This highlights that despite being a foreign language in the country, there are individuals who possess a strong command of the language.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In general, the study was conducted to investigate the use of French words in product branding among Malaysian female consumers. To elaborate, the study was conducted with the specific objectives outlined as follows: 1) to assess the level of awareness among female consumers regarding the use of French words in selected products, 2) to investigate the perceptions held by Malaysian female consumers on the use of French words in product branding, 3) to evaluate the extent of comprehension among Malaysian female consumers regarding the French words used in product branding.

In order to achieve the research objectives, two types of analyses conducted: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Perception, awareness and language awareness are interrelated cognitive processes that support and enhance one another. Perception provides the sensory input, awareness processes and prioritizes this information and language awareness applies it to communication and comprehension. This integrated system creates a feedback loop that continuously improves cognitive processing, learning, and effective communication.

For descriptive analysis, the results are tabulated in the form of percentages and means. In terms of awareness of the use of French words for branding purposes, it could be seen that the level of awareness was satisfactory. As for consumer perception regarding the usage of French words in product branding, it was evident that there was a positive perception as it encouraged them to purchase the product. Regarding the understanding of French words used in product branding, it was evident that the respondents had a good understanding as they recognised some of the words.

5.2 The Awareness among Female Consumers on the Use of French Words in Selected Products

By referring to the reported findings, it was evident that the respondents showed satisfactory awareness regarding the use of French words in the selected products. Specifically a majority of the respondents heard about the brands, indicating their familiarity with the respective products. This connection is rooted in their knowledge of the products, making them familiar with the specific items. In addition, the respondents' awareness extended to their knowledge of the country of origin for the products based on the product labelling. The majority of respondents displayed an awareness of the origin.

Additionally, a high level of awareness existed among the respondents towards the brands themselves. This is reflected in the fact that most of them correctly associate brands such as 'SugarBelle', 'Beausiti', 'Noir', 'Chique Cosmetics', 'A La Carte' and 'Beautyra' with Malaysian products. This strong brand awareness could be attributed to the respondents' familiarity with the brands, contributing to their awareness of the origin of the products. This phenomenon was in line with Chen and Dermawan (2020) as they emphasise that the language used on products reflects their origin. Moreover, the findings indicated that most respondents were familiar with the language used on the products. This familiarity contributes to a high level of awareness of the language used in branding. This linguistic aspect is crucial for effective marketing as it captures consumers' attention.

Reported findings showed that the respondents commonly identified three languages used in the products: French, English and Malay. English is typically employed for listing ingredients due to its scientific nomenclature, while Malay is used for explanations to enhance consumer

comprehension. French, which is known for its "Wow" factor, is used to attract and captivate consumers. A similar finding was reported by Gubitosa et al. (2019), who noted the common use of French words for branding purposes. Additionally, the majority of respondents could correctly pronounce the brand names. This accurate pronunciation aids in word-of-mouth promotion and recognition. Consequently, this awareness serves to establish the products as the main choice for consumers. Despite the use of French words product branding, most of the respondents understood the meaning of the product names. This comprehension holds significance as it symbolises the value of products. Commonly, commonplace words are selected to ensure that respondents understand the meanings of the terms, thereby preventing any potential misunderstandings.

In terms of product usage, a majority of the respondents indicated that they are consumers of the products. These users make their selections based on their understanding of the benefits and functions of a product. Simultaneously, this choice was influenced by the appeal generated by product advertising. This trend was observed in Malaysia as well, where a significant number of respondents noted that the language used in the products is readily identifiable within the local market. This correlation was tied to consumers' strong awareness of the language employed in product labelling. Language awareness is defined as the conscious understanding of language, encompassing perception and sensitivity in language learning, teaching and usage. This concept was detailed in the work of Bilgin (2017), which was published by the Association for Language Awareness (ALA). It acts as a significant indicator to determine products based on the language used. This assertion is reinforced by the research of Chen and Dermawan (2020), which emphasises the pivotal role of language in cultivating awareness among consumers.

Kent and Allen (1994) suggested that consumers who are familiar with or possess prior knowledge of a brand are more likely to remember it. This assertion is further supported

by Mart-Parreo et al. (2017), who presented additional evidence in current studies, highlighting the significance of brand repetition for recognition. Given that many of the research respondents reported prior awareness or exposure to the brands before the study, these findings aligned with the results of this study. It is important to acknowledge that the language used in product branding can affect consumers' perceptions about the origin of certain products. Terpstra and Sarathy (1997) characterised language as the "mirror of culture", underscoring its pivotal role as a core element of culture (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1995). In the Malaysian context, it has been observed that local brand names are crucial for identifying the ethnic origin of culturally sensitive goods such as food products. When it comes to cosmetic items, brand names are diversified and encompass a range of languages. This includes not only English and other languages but also local brand names and even combinations of these linguistic elements.

5.2.1 The Perception of Malaysian Female Consumers on the Use of French Words in Product Branding

Regarding the perception of Malaysian female consumers on the use of French words in product branding, it was evident that respondents held a positive perception. Specifically, a majority of the respondents agreed that products such as 'Enchanteur', 'Laneige', 'Mamonde', 'Mis-en-scene', 'Etude House Beausiti', 'Beautyra', 'A la carte', 'Chique Cosmetic', 'Sugarbelle' and 'Noir Cosmetic' are presented in a foreign language. This indicates a connection to the origin of the product. The use of foreign language is often employed by product owners to attract consumer attention. For instance, local products like 'Beausiti' and 'Noir' utilise foreign language to capture consumer interest. This aligns with

the notion expressed by Verma et al. (2021) that language choice can influence consumer perception and serve as a strategy for effective product branding.

Besides that, respondents' responses indicate that the majority of the respondents agreed that they felt more confident when using products from foreign brands. This underscores the influence of brand names on consumer product selection. Southworth (2019) asserted that brand names have a positive influence on consumer perception, especially for established brands, which is driven by favourable reviews that motivate consumers to try these products. The findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents held neutral views, indicating that they are comfortable purchasing foreign brand name products due to their perception of containing expensive ingredients. It is important to note that consumers' decisions are not solely driven by expensive ingredients; suitability to their needs plays a crucial role as well. This is in line with Ngah et al. (2021), who highlighted that the intention to purchase is not solely determined by expensive ingredients.

In addition, the findings reported that majority of the respondents stated that the use of a foreign language in product branding enhances trustworthiness. This suggests a positive impact of foreign languages on consumer perception. Katsikeas et al. (2020) also supported this notion, noting that the use of foreign language in product branding enhances trustworthiness. Consumers tend to place higher trust in foreign languages, viewing them as practical and relevant compared to local languages. This aligned with the finding that respondents agreed that language used in brand names influences purchasing power. It is important for marketers to prioritise the language used as it highly influences purchasing power. This aligned with the findings reported by Karabulatova et al. (2020), which highlighted the influential role of language in shaping consumer purchasing power.

Furthermore, a significant number of respondents also agreed that incorporating of a foreign language like French into a brand name enhances its perception of being more expensive and luxurious. As a result, many marketers strategically use French words in their product names to capture interest and attraction among consumers. A similar finding was reported by Wang et al. (2021), revealing the usage of French words in brand names has a positive impact on consumer perception. When considering the use of foreign language on local products, it could be seen that majority of the respondents agreed that the language usage could products. Specifically, the understanding of French words such as 'Laneige' and 'Sugarbelle' ensure the marketability and competitiveness of products. The advantages of integrating a foreign language extend beyond the realm of product branding; they offer a range of other benefits.

Nowadays, people acquire additional languages for various reasons, ranging from personal enrichment to fulfilling job requirements that necessitate proficiency in foreign languages. This trend is especially pronounced in times of rapid economic and technological progress. Graduates who are equipped with foreign language skills are more sought-after in workplaces where seamless cross-cultural communication is increasingly important, leading to improved job opportunities and greater earning potential. According to Tar (2011), learning a foreign language allows individuals to broaden their viewpoint and gain a better understanding of various cultures.

5.2.2 The Understanding of the French Words Used in Product Branding

Regarding the understanding of the French words used in product branding, it could be seen clearly that the majority of the respondents possess a good understanding of these words

as they are familiar with the meanings of the associated, 'Beau', 'Chique' and 'Noir' is notable, indicating a substantial grasp of their meanings. However, the scenario differs for the term 'Mamonde', where a significant portion of respondents are not familiar with its meaning. These findings suggest that the understanding of certain foreign words is influenced by familiarity and pre-existing knowledge, which contributes positively to a great understanding of the respective word. This aligned with the findings reported by Faisal-E-Alam (2020), indicating that the understanding of foreign words is influenced by individual knowledge and external sources such as advertisements and media promotions.

Universiti Malaysia

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The findings of this study were presented in accordance with the research questions posed in Chapter One. This chapter is organised into three sections: limitations of the study, potential contributions of the study to both theory and practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is its concentration on items primarily designed for female consumers, thus leading to the constraint that only female consumers were chosen as participants. Despite the existence of various product categories that incorporate the French language, this study exclusively examined cosmetic products. This focus was attributed to time limitations and the limited access available to other product categories for examination. Furthermore, employing convenience sampling in this study implies a limitation in generalizability to a broader population, as the selected sample may not be fully representative of the overall population."

Besides that, the researcher only focused on a quantitative research approach by using a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. However, this approach imposes limitations on respondents' ability to express their opinions regarding the topic as they are restricted to responding solely to the predefined items within the questionnaire. The questionnaire items merely scratch the surface of the broader issues associated with the use of French words in product branding. It is evident that the use of questionnaires presents a constraint in effectively collecting detailed data from respondents on the specific aspects of the

topic.

Lastly, the data collection took place within a span of two months, resulting in a limited participation of only 102 women in the survey due to the constrained timeframe. Simultaneously, the researcher encountered challenges in spreading the Google Form link to a wider audience due to time limitations. Furthermore, securing cooperation from respondents proved to be challenging, with only a small fraction expressing willingness to provide responses to the distributed questionnaire.

6.3 Significance of the Study

The study contributes significantly to the emerging body of knowledge on the awareness and understanding of the French language used in product branding among Malaysian women. This study aids in enhancing the prevalence of the French language among Malaysian consumers raises its awareness within the country, despite its limited usage in Malaysia.

In order to assess respondents' awareness, perception and understanding of the French language, this study used a survey questionnaire approach. The findings of this study revealed a notable level of awareness and a moderate level of understanding of the French language. Interestingly, as respondents engaged with the questionnaire, they became more attuned to the language and gained a better understanding of it.

As respondents completed the questionnaire, they became more conscious of the linguistic tools and more aware of their level of understanding of certain words. This motivation led the respondents to search for definitions of these words and incorporate them into their conversations. It is noteworthy that some respondents even began using the language for recreational or learning purposes.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This study has identified several potential directions for future research. Firstly, this study indicates the need for further exploration in similar research domains. The current survey primarily captures insights from local Malaysian female consumers. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding, future research can be extended to encompass the perspective of business owners within the region. Delving into the perspective of business owners will facilitate a clearer comprehension of the reasons behind their decisions to brand products using languages other than French, such as Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and others.

Simultaneously, there is a recommendation to broaden the sample by including male consumers. Assessing their viewpoints regarding the use of French words in product branding holds significance. It is important to consider their opinions as they may also purchase products for their spouses, mothers, friends and siblings. Involving male consumers can help ascertain their level of awareness, perception and understanding of the use of French language in product branding. Interestingly, there are instances where male consumers possess considerable knowledge compared to their female consumers.

Utilising face-to-face interviews could enhance the research process, especially considering that the data was obtained from an online survey rather than in-person interviews. Face-to-face interactions enable the recognition and comprehension of interviewees' body language and facial expressions. These interviews offer a richer data collection experience and a more comprehensive understanding. In line with that, face-to-face interviews have the potential to yield superior results from respondents as they are not confined to the predetermined items in a questionnaire. This approach will allow researchers to solicit opinions directly from participants concerning the use of foreign language in product branding. The insights provided by respondents can then be shared with marketers, enhancing the

effectiveness of their marketing strategies and garnering exceptional support.

Moreover, the survey attracted fewer respondents than initially anticipated due to scheduling restrictions, which in turn reduced the number of respondents. Future research can potentially navigate these limitations and yield more precise results. In addition, it is advisable for the researcher to conduct data analysis using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to present the findings in a more systematic manner. Employing SPSS will facilitate the systematic tabulation of findings, streamlining the researcher's ability to discuss the results comprehensively. Utilizing SPSS for data analysis can also provide valuable statistical measures such as the mean and standard deviation. This information can be instrumental in elaborating on result trends in detail. Lastly, future research should extend its focus beyond beauty product marketing to encompass other product categories that incorporate foreign languages. This expansion could shed light on whether respondents are aware that foreign languages are frequently utilized in various product categories beyond beauty products.

6.5 Conclusions

From the aforementioned results, it could be inferred that respondents' awareness of language was greater than their comprehension of language use. Given that French is a foreign language and learning French is optional in Malaysia, it is reasonable to anticipate that the respondents would exhibit relatively lower knowledge and comprehension of the subject. However, drawing from the findings highlighted above, it could be concluded that language acquisition is not solely confined to formal educational settings like schools and universities. It extends to self-directed endeavours such as engaging with French-language movies, listening to French music, and leveraging modern technological advancements like online word searches when encountering unfamiliar terms.

In the 21st century, possessing proficiency in a foreign language is not only beneficial but often essential for achieving success in various life pursuits. As the global economy further integrates, diverse communities and cultures find themselves in more frequent and meaningful interactions. Learning a foreign language is not detrimental; on the contrary, it yields numerous benefits, including enhanced academic performance, improved cognitive development, and more positive attitudes towards diverse languages and cultures. In other words, acquiring language skills is indispensable for individuals to effectively compete in the contemporary global economy.

Regarding the study conducted, valuable insights are offered regarding the importance of employing foreign languages in product branding. This practice serves to attract attention and trust among consumers. Consequently, marketers are advised to leverage foreign languages in their product branding strategies, thereby granting products with a competitive advantage in the market. Building upon the findings of this study, the researcher encourages further investigation in the future to explore the implications of using foreign languages in product branding. Given the existence of these findings, they can be used to develop effective marketing strategies.

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