

Intervention and adaptation options for measuring brand trust in the context of its dimensionality with an emphasis on the generational context

Opciones de intervención y adaptación para medir la confianza en la marca en el contexto de su dimensionalidad, con énfasis en el contexto generacional

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Abstract

Objective: This article aims to analyse the model of perception of trust in the selected brand (Subway) with the help of the modified tool “Perceived Brand Trust”, and to investigate the difference in generational perception of trust in the investigated brand.

Methodology: In this article, we use statistical methods such as elements of descriptive statistics and inductive statistics with an emphasis on confirmatory factor analysis, reliability estimation methods, and one-way ANOVA.

Results: The result is a modification of the three-dimensional brand trust perception model and a demonstration of its use in practice.

Limitations: Limitations can be observed in self-collection and the use of respondents’ personal reflection in the context of brand trust.

Practical implications: The article has academic, theoretical and practical benefits. The practical benefit can be seen in the creation and verification of a model for measuring brand trust perception, which can be applied to any brand.

Keywords: brand trust; perceived brand trust model; brand management; branding; strategy branding

JEL Codes: M31; D91; C30

Resumen

Objetivo: El objetivo del artículo presentado es el análisis del modelo de percepción de confianza en la marca seleccionada (Subway) con la ayuda de la herramienta modificada “Perceived Brand Trust”, así como la investigación de la diferencia en la percepción generacional de confianza en la marca investigada.

Metodología: En el artículo utilizamos elementos de estadística descriptiva, estadística inductiva con énfasis en análisis factorial confirmatorio, métodos de estimación de confiabilidad y ANOVA unidireccional.

Resultados: El resultado es una modificación del modelo tridimensional de percepción de confianza en la marca, así como una demostración de su uso en la práctica.

Limitaciones: Se pueden observar limitaciones en la muestra seleccionada, así como en el uso de la reflexión personal de los encuestados en el contexto de la confianza en la marca.

Implicaciones prácticas: El artículo tiene implicaciones académicas, teóricas y prácticas. Las implicaciones prácticas se observan en la creación y verificación de un modelo para medir la percepción de confianza en la marca, que se puede extender a otras marcas.

Palabras clave: confianza en la marca; modelo de confianza percibida en la marca; gestión de la marca; marca; estrategia de marca

Códigos JEL: M31; D91; C30

1. Introduction

The concept of branding has been known since ancient times. It has served the purpose of identifying producers and confirming quality. This has remained so up to the present time. Today, when moving from product management to brand

management and even to strategic brand building and management (Čvirik, 2022), it is crucial to identify brand building, brand loyalty and the related brand trust. It can therefore be stated that the brand concept is intricate not only because of the multidimensional nature of the components of a brand name but also because there are several different brand concepts.

There are at least five different types of brands (Winer & Dhar, 2011): corporate brands (Heineken, Subway), distinct product brands (Crest is not marketed under the Procter & Gamble name), sub-brands (Sony's PlayStation, McDonald's Big Mac, etc.), co-brands (Mattel & Caterpillar) and ingredient brands (DuPont's Gore-Tex). Anholt (2010) states that in commercial branding logos, slogans and design are very important to help consumers recognise different brands.

According to Govers (2013), visual identity is usually linked to a specific product or service and the pool of associations that consumers have in their minds is quite limited. The brand is a product feature as any other, from which customer perceptions can be drawn (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). The issue of brand trust has several perspectives. However, there is potential to explore the possibilities of measuring brand trust and identifying generational influence.

It is important to note that the model works as such only if a particular selected brand is mentioned. One cannot generalise the statements to the extent of assessing brand trust without the chosen brand. In our work, we investigated the Subway brand. The Subway brand represents a network of American companies offering fast food. This industry is marked by many scandals and stereotypes of consumers, which can only support the need to measure brand trust in this area. The Subway brand has been the subject of several brand- and marketing-oriented scientific studies (e.g. Joe et al., 2020; Harrington et al., 2017; Perrigot et al., 2011; Ganatra et al., 2021) and the fact that it operates in more than a hundred countries around the world offers a possible international comparison of research results.

This article aims to analyse the model of perception of trust in the selected brand (Subway) with the help of the modified tool "Perceived Brand Trust", and to investigate the difference in generational perception of trust in the investigated brand.

2. Literature review

Brand trust has been identified as a major determinant of brand loyalty, which in turn positively impacts brand performance, such as brand equity, market share and relative price (e.g. Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). These aspects have created a strong brand equity base, which is a set of assets (and liabilities) attached to a brand name and symbol that adds to the value provided by a product or service to the firm or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991). According to Panchal et al. (2012), Sean Hyun and Kim (2011), and Singh and Pattanayak (2016), brand equity is a set of assets and liabilities attached to a brand that includes brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and associations. Authors Khudri and Farjana (2017) claim that of all the

dimensions brand loyalty most explains the variation in brand equity, followed by brand image. Chahal and Bala (2010) suggest that brand loyalty of the customer base is often the core of brand equity. Loyal customers are important for all firms (Chen et al., 2016; Glendah et al., 2019) because they are easier to serve than disloyal customers and provide higher profitability (Singh, 2012). Based on the findings of Umashankar et al. (2017) and Singh (2012), as consumers become loyal to a brand, they become less sensitive to a price increase. According to He (2016), brand commitment is a consumer's emotional and psychological reliance on a brand and the desire to maintain a long-term interaction relationship with that brand. For example, Yan (2019) mentions that for customers the brand is in line with its closely linked value and is the core factor of customer loyalty formation; for brands, customers are the basis of brand survival and development, while, at the same time, customer perceived value is the direct experience in the consumption process, which has a deep impact on consumers' evaluation of the brand. The key to maintaining customer loyalty is sustained brand satisfaction (Hadi et al., 2019). Brands provide decreased information search costs, reduced risk, expectations of quality and prestige, as well as emotional needs (Ischer et al., 2010). The value a brand brings to customers involves not only the physical properties of its products but also the psychological effects (Lee et al., 2016). In brand competition, customer perceived value is at the heart of competition (Liu & Sun, 2015), and a distinctive or unique offering, along with the get-up of a brand, is the key to not dying prematurely among the competition. Attitudinal loyalty reflects a favourable brand evaluation that is maintained with sufficient strength and stability to sustain a long-term relationship (Chahal & Bala, 2010), while behavioural loyalty represents a consumer's willingness to repurchase a brand and their preference towards a particular brand (Tam et al., 2009). Based on quantitative research in Spain, Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005) found that brand trust is closely linked to perceived value, creates a positive relationship with customers and contributes to brand loyalty. Brand trust, like brand personality, represents a multidimensional concept that needs to be explored in the context of consumer perception (Sung & Kim, 2010). Lantieri and Chiagouris (2009) point to micro and macro trends in brand trust development, thereby indicating the need to investigate them over time. Brand trust can represent an element of brand uniqueness, ethics and reliability (Portal et al., 2019), which can ultimately represent competitive advantage and, in some cases, negative effects caused by fake news (Borges-Tiago et al., 2020) and the effect of social media influencers (Ata et al., 2022). Akoglu and Özbek (2022) consider brand trust as an element that favours the relationship with a brand. The results of the study (Atulkar, 2020) reveal that brand loyalty is not only directly or indirectly influenced by emotional attachment antecedents such as perceived quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and perceived differentiation but is also directly influenced by brand trust. Brand trust is a cornerstone of consumer relationships, satisfaction and loyalty, built on a foundation of reliability, honesty, and altruism (Munuera-Alemán et al., 2003; Čvirik et al., 2023). These three components form the bedrock upon which consumers evaluate and establish connections with brands. Consumers trust that the products or services

offered will consistently meet their expectations (Kim et al., 2021). When a brand consistently delivers on its promises, it fosters a sense of reliability, and this in turn reinforces trust (Portal et al., 2019). Honesty in branding entails transparency and integrity in communication and business practices. Brands that are forthright about their offerings, pricing and policies are more likely to gain consumer trust, which creates a relationship between the brand and the consumer, which is the basis for trust (Villagra et al., 2021). Honesty builds credibility and establishes a sense of authenticity, which resonates with consumers on a deeper level (Kim et al., 2020). Altruism is a brand's commitment to the greater good that extends beyond its immediate financial objectives (Panda et al., 2020). Brands that show real concern for social or environmental issues and actively contribute to positive change attract consumers who share those beliefs. Altruistic behaviours might range from donating to charities to implementing environmentally friendly corporate practices. When customers believe that a brand is sincerely committed to making a positive difference, their trust and loyalty increase (Stoica & Hickman, 2022). Generational affiliation can be important in the context of brand trust, while the non-generational context can be expected to be based on perceived value. Baby Boomers will understand brand trust in the sense of reliability and brand heritage; Generation X values authenticity and transparency; Generation Y is more oriented to value social responsibility and personalised experiences; and Generation Z will demand authenticity and relevance, particularly on digital platforms (Budiman, 2021; Fahira & Djamaludin, 2023; Hazari & Sethna, 2023; Husain et al., 2022; Joshi & Garg, 2021; Kamalasena & Sirisena, 2021; Whalen et al., 2023). It should be noted that although brand trust has been investigated across generations, studies tend to focus on a single generation.

3. Objective and methodology of the research

This article aims to analyse the model of perception of trust in the selected brand (Subway) with the help of the modified tool "Perceived Brand Trust", and to investigate the difference in generational perception of trust in the investigated brand.

As the objective is relatively broad, it is deemed appropriate to formulate research questions to achieve its fulfilment. Thus, we created two research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of trust in the selected brand?

RQ2: How can the influence of generational belonging on the measure of brand trust be characterised?

3.1. Primary survey design

As part of the investigation of trust in the brand, we used a tool by Hess (1995) called "Perceived Brand Trust". This tool contains 11 statements, each of which the respondent answers using a five-point Likert scale. The generic idea of the tool is based on the assumption that consumers perceive and evaluate brand credibility

in three dimensions: altruistic, reliable and honest. This three-factor model demonstrated a high degree of reliability and validity, but its application was limited to the credibility of selected car brands. Čvirik et al. (2023) modified the model to increase its adaptability to any brand (see Table 1).

The results in Table 1 indicate that the tool is highly reliable in both applications (overall Cronbach's alpha = 0.863; overall Cronbach's alpha = 0.845). At the same time, the authors indicate the need to investigate the factors and conduct a deeper examination of the tool. It can be expected that the three factors included in the instrument are correlated (Hess, 1995; Čvirik et al., 2023).

As it is an external tool, it is advisable to verify its properties. At the same time, it is necessary to state that the modified Perceived Brand Trust tool does not yet have the properties that a quality tool should contain, i.e. reliability and validity. In the first step, we proceeded to examine reliability. In this case, we used the statistical method of estimating the degree of reliability using McDonald's omega coefficient. The McDonald's ω score for the instrument indicates an acceptable measure of the instrument's reliability estimate (McDonald's $\omega = 0.877$; 95% CI = <0.861-0.893>). Subsequently, it is appropriate to examine the reliability of individual statements in the context of the instrument. The results show that statement 7 "I think that some of Subway's claims about its products are puffed up to make them seem better than they really are" should be removed to increase the level of reliability (McDonald's $\omega = 0.885$). Due to the effort of comparison with other studies, we will leave it for now in the analysis as the increase in reliability is within the CI range.

Table 1. Perceived Brand Trust model - Universal version

Statements	Code**
1. The Brand is interested in more than just selling me a product and making a profit.	B_1
2. I believe that the Brand would respond respectfully and, in my favour, when a problem arises.	B_2
3. The Brand is genuinely committed to my satisfaction.	B_3
4. The Brand will do whatever it takes to make me happy.	B_4
5. When I see the Brand advertisement, I believe the information in it is accurate.	B_5
6. Most of what the Brand says about its products is true.	B_6
7. I think that some of the Brand claims about its products are puffed up to make them seem better than they really are.*	B_7
8. If the Brand makes a claim or promise about its product, it's probably true.	B_8
9. The Brand has quality products.	B_9
10. I feel like I know what to expect from the Brand .	B_10
11. The Brand always offers perfect products.	B_11

* Negative/opposite evaluation. ** Recommended coding of individual items.

Source: Čvirik et al. (2023).

Table 2. Profile of generations in the sample

Generation	Time interval of birth of members*	Valid percent (Frequency in sample)
Boomers	1946 – 1964	2.18
Generation X	1965 – 1979	6.95
Generation Y	1980 – 1994	15.08
Generation Z	1995 – 2009	75.79

* Classification based on McCrindle (2011).

Source: Own processing.

3.2. Sample

This study is based on a primary survey. The research was carried out using electronic and paper questionnaires. The base population was defined as Slovak consumers over the age of 15. The reason for this age limit is ethical and at the same time a simple analogy, as consumers over the age of 15 develop their shopping habits and already have their own money. For a sample of 504 respondents, the maximum statistical error (with a 95% confidence probability) is approximately 4.36%. The basis of our survey was 504 respondents, of whom 272 (54%) were women and 232 (46%) were men. For data collection, we used classical methods of data acquisition oriented towards quantitative research (CAPI and PAPI) to obtain as many respondents as possible from the defined population. This population closely reflects the proportion of women and men in Slovakia, which consists of approximately 53% women and 47% men. We set the age structure according to generational affiliation (see Table 2).

As we can see (Table 2), most respondents belonged to Generation Z. Overall, it can be assumed that this distribution corresponds to the number of visitors to the selected gastronomy brands.

3.3. Research methods

In the context of the main and partial objectives, it was necessary to determine the appropriate methods to achieve them comprehensively. Throughout the work, we use generic scientific research methods complemented by mathematical and statistical methods. For this paper, we use methodological procedures that are typical of working with professional scientific texts and data analytics. We also use elements of descriptive statistics and inductive statistics, which are briefly described here. Regarding descriptive statistics, we use basic descriptive tools that help us determine the state of the subject of investigation in the sample. From the tools of descriptive statistics, we mainly use the determination of central values (average, median, mode),

but also measures of variability (standard deviation) (Čvirik & Ölveczká, 2023). As for inductive statistics, we use it to generalise to the population. In this context, it is necessary to mention the use of the one-way ANOVA test, which examines differences in average values for more than two groups. In modelling, we use tools to measure reliability, namely McDonald's omega, which, unlike other coefficients, has advantages and can be called recommended (Feiřt et al., 2019; MichÁlková et al., 2023), while it is recommended to achieve the target values of the model, as well as its dimensions, at least at the level of 0.700 (Kita et al., 2023). To investigate the proposed model, we use confirmatory factor analysis (hereinafter referred to as CFA) and apply it based on recommendations from various scientific and professional sources (Cole, 1987; DiStefano & Hess, 2005; Gatignon, 2014; Hox, 2021; Hoyle, 2000; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Soukup, 2022), as well as application studies (Atulkar, 2020; Kollerová et al., 2018; Shrestha et al., 2023). In terms of CFA, the key is the examination of certain model quality indicators (additional fit measures), while, among the basic ones, the comparative fit index (hereinafter referred to as CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) can be mentioned. Recommended values for model acceptance are above 0.9, while ideal values are above 0.95. It is also worth investigating other measures of fit that focus on the model error rate, such as RMSEA and SRMR. Values below 0.05 are recommended for RMSEA and SRMR. When comparing two models, it is advisable to use the information criterion, whereas the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), which are relative in nature and can only be used for the comparison of two models using the same source base, are recommended in the professional literature. Visual aids are also used in our work to facilitate the understanding of the text. The software R version 4.0.4 and its extension RStudio (ver. 2023.06.2) were used for this work.

The results in Table 3 show that the model explains the individual items well in the context of the investigated factors. It can also be concluded that the factors reach an acceptable level of reliability. The model can be considered adequate. A graphical representation of the model can be seen in Figure 1.

The results in Figure 1 point to the structure of the model and links within the model, although links within factors can also be observed, which is confirmed by other studies (Hess, 1995; Čvirik et al., 2023). It can be concluded that there is a strong positive correlation between the dimensions. Figure 1 also shows that, as part of the methodology, we fixed the first statement, which represents a standard procedure for anchoring the scale. It is also important to examine the residuals, which we performed on the basis of the misfit plot (Figure 2).

The results in Figure 2 indicate that our model faithfully depicts reality and thus achieves low deviations from reality (up to 0.1). We will use the presented and verified model in further research.

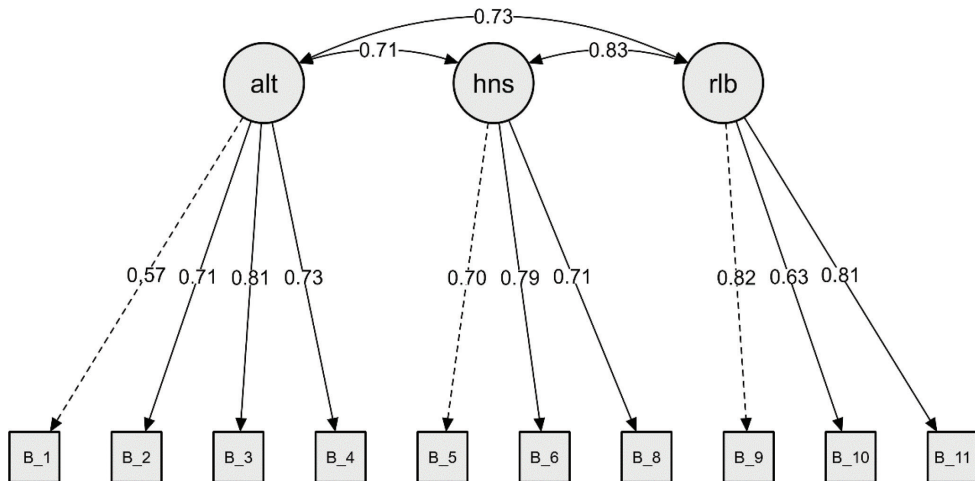
RQ1: What is the level of trust in the selected brand?

Subsequently, we examined the current level of trust in the selected brand. Within the brand concept, it is not possible to speak in general terms and the choice of brand

Table 3. Generic CFA parameters and dimensional reliability

Factor	Indicator	Symbol	Std. Est.	R ²	Coefficient ω
altruism	B_1	λ_{1_1}	0.569	0.324	0.788
	B_2	λ_{1_2}	0.706	0.498	
	B_3	λ_{1_3}	0.809	0.654	
	B_4	λ_{1_4}	0.733	0.538	
honesty	B_5	λ_{2_1}	0.701	0.492	0.780
	B_6	λ_{2_2}	0.794	0.630	
	B_8	λ_{2_3}	0.705	0.498	
reliability	B_9	λ_{3_1}	0.822	0.676	0.809
	B_10	λ_{3_2}	0.635	0.403	
	B_11	λ_{3_3}	0.811	0.658	
Model					0.905

Source: Own processing.

Figure 1. Model plot

Source: Own processing in R.

is essential. In our case, we chose Subway. The Subway brand has been the subject of several brand- and marketing-oriented scientific studies (e.g. Joe et al., 2020; Harrington et al., 2017; Perrigot et al., 2011; Ganatra et al., 2021) and the fact that it operates in more than a hundred countries around the world offers a possible

Figure 2. Misfit plot

	B_1	B_2	B_3	B_4	B_5	B_6	B_8	B_9	B_10	B_11
B_1	0									
B_2	.09	0								
B_3	.04	.02	0							
B_4	0	.02	.02	0						
B_5	.02	0	.01	.01	0					
B_6	.04	.02	.01	.01	.02	0				
B_8	0	.01	.01	.01	.04	0	0			
B_9	.01	.01	0	.04	0	.03	.03	0		
B_10	.08	.05	.02	.01	.02	.01	.06	0	0	
B_11	.01	.04	.04	0	.02	.02	0	.01	.01	0

Source: Own processing in R.

international comparison of the research results. We recorded the basic results for the individual statements in Table 4.

In the context of the individual statements, it can be seen that the brand scores best on average for statement no. 10 “I feel like I know what to expect from Subway”, which indicates the contrast between the expected and actual state. In contrast, we recorded the lowest average score for statement no. 1 “Subway is interested in more than just selling me a product and making a profit”, which indicates that Subway should improve relations with consumers. The standard deviation for the individual statements ranges from 0.8 to 1, which can be interpreted as a high consistency in respondents’ answers and, at the same time, an acceptable range of deviation from the mean value. Of course, it is appropriate to comment on the situation of the brand trust level in the context of the entire model and its dimensions. To measure the perception of brand trust, we employed a modified scale that comprised ten statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree). For a simple interpretation and characterisation of the level of the dimensions, we start

Table 4. Basic descriptive statistics for individual statements

Statements*	Code	Median	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. Subway is interested in more than just selling me a product and making a profit.	B_1	3	3.16	0.996
2. I believe that Subway would respond respectfully and in my favour when a problem arises.	B_2	4	3.47	0.864
3. Subway is genuinely committed to my satisfaction.	B_3	4	3.49	0.858
4. Subway will do whatever it takes to make me happy.	B_4	3	3.29	0.896
5. When I see a Subway advertisement, I believe the information in it is accurate.	B_5	3	3.24	0.961
6. Most of what Subway says about its products is true.	B_6	3	3.38	0.890
8. If Subway makes a claim or promise about its product, it's probably true.	B_8	3	3.39	0.802
9. Subway has quality products.	B_9	4	3.46	0.939
10. I feel like I know what to expect from Subway.	B_10	4	3.70	0.872
11. Subway always offers perfect products.	B_11	3	3.20	0.935

* Used 5-degree Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement; 5 = strong agreement).

Source: Own calculation.

from the cumulative sum of the individual statements, without the context of the lambda coefficients. Of course, this causes a certain error rate, but it is sufficient for orientation in the context of the influence of the investigated factor. The altruism dimension consists of four statements, which indicates that scores will be between 4 and 20 points. We measured Subway's level of altruism at an average of 13.42 points, representing roughly 58.88%. The median was at the level of 13 and the mode was at the level of 12 points. In other words, the level of altruism is average to slightly above average within the dimension. The honesty dimension consists of three statements, which indicates that scores will be between 3 and 15 points. We measured Subway's level of honesty at an average of 10 points, representing roughly 58.33%. The median was at the level of 10 and the mode was at the level of 9. In other words, the level of honesty is average to slightly above average within the dimension. The reliability dimension consists of three statements, indicating that the results will be between 3 and 15 points. We measured Subway's level of reliability at an average of 10.36 points, representing roughly 61.33%. The median was at the level of 10 and the mode was at the level of 9. In other words, it is at an above-average level within the dimension. The overall model and thus the perceived brand trust score consists of 10 statements, which indicates that the results will be between 10 and 50 points. We measured Subway's perceived brand trust at an average level of 36.49 points, representing roughly 66.23%. The median was at the level of 36

and the mode was at the level of 33 points. In other words, perceived brand trust is at an above-average level. The results indicate that the Subway brand has consumer trust. As regards the investigated dimensions, it can be concluded that existing and potential customers of this brand know what they can expect from it; they consider it to be honest, but in the context of moral principles in the sense of selflessness, they have learned doubts. It would therefore be appropriate to propose to the brand to improve its position in this area, e.g. with the help of marketing campaigns, thereby improving the overall brand trust.

RQ2: How can the influence of generational belonging on the measure of brand trust be characterised?

In the last part, we focus on an intergenerational comparison of the degree of perceived trust in the chosen brand. First, we examine the average values for individual dimensions in the context of the generations. We recorded the results of the descriptive statistics in Table 5.

The results (Table 5) indicate some (small) differences in perception in terms of individual dimensions, but it is questionable whether the differences are significant. For direct testing of the hypothesis, which can be formulated as “There is a significant difference in the pleasant perception of the studied brand trust dimension within at least two generations”, we used a one-way ANOVA test.

When examining the dimensions, we concluded that altruism ($\alpha = 0.05$; $p\text{-value} = 0.055$), honesty ($\alpha = 0.05$; $p\text{-value} = 0.283$) and even reliability

Table 5. Results of descriptive statistics in a generational context

Factor	Generation	Mode	Median	Mean	Std. Deviation
altruism	Boomers	12	12	12.364	2.693
	Generation X	12	12	13.057	3.029
	Generation Y	12	13	12.776	2.564
	Generation Z	12	14	13.605	2.871
honesty	Boomers	9	9	9.636	2.335
	Generation X	9	10	9.914	2.344
	Generation Y	9	9	9.592	2.18
	Generation Z	9	10	10.105	2.19
reliability	Boomers	9	9	9.636	1.629
	Generation X	9	11	10.686	2.553
	Generation Y	12	10.5	10.211	2.087
	Generation Z	9	11	10.374	2.354

Source: Own processing.

($\alpha = 0.05$; $p\text{-value} = 0.554$) allow us to assume that there is no significant inter-generational difference. It can therefore be concluded that the dimensions appear to be generationally universal in the context of the investigated brand. It may be the case that the selected brand does not focus primarily on a particular segment in terms of generation. Generational differences also manifested themselves to a minimal extent, which may be associated with the fact that these brands have a relatively young history in Slovakia. A different situation might be expected in the US context, where these brands have a significantly longer history. The Subway brand was founded in the US in 1965 and arrived in Slovakia 15 years ago.

4. Conclusions

This article aimed to analyse the model of perception of trust in the selected brand (Subway) with the help of the modified tool “Perceived Brand Trust”, and to investigate the difference in generational perception of trust in the investigated brand. In this context, we formulated three partial objectives, which have been answered, so the main objective can be considered to be fully met.

The article is based on a primary survey, the basis of which were 504 respondents. The results can be systematised into three areas according to the formulated partial goals. The first objective focused on the analysis of the chosen instrument, its reliability, validity and dimensionality. The results confirm the validity and reliability of the research instrument and its three-component structure. Considering the results of this and other studies, we recommend reducing the model from 11 statements to 10, which will increase the model’s reliability and validity and reflect reality more accurately. In the second part, we address the practical interpretation of the results for the chosen brand, Subway. The results indicate the above-average credibility of the brand. Based on three dimensions, it is possible to recommend an improvement in the area of altruism, which can be achieved, for example, by 1) marketing campaigns oriented towards the concept of moral and social marketing, or 2) in the context of the interconnectedness of the dimensions, the level of altruism can also be increased through the dimensions of honesty and reliability with the help of strategic brand building. In the sense of searching for an ideal generation, we were looking, on the one hand, for the generation with the highest degree of perceived trust towards the brand to indicate a consolidated position in the given generation, and, on the other hand, for a generational cohort in which the degree of perceived brand trust is low to determine a possible competitive disadvantage or the potential to improve the position. The results show that all generational cohorts studied perceived trust in the Subway brand at approximately the same (average) level, which points to a certain generational universality of trust in this brand.

The article makes both an academic and methodological contribution, as well as a contribution to practice. In the context of the academic and methodological contributions, we can mention the verification of the reliability, validity and

dimensionality of the research tool with the help of statistical methods. Since it is not possible to investigate brand trust without identifying a particular brand, we chose the Subway brand. The results specify the current situation of trust in the selected brand and the perception of trust in the brand in a generational context.

This paper also has its limitations. One of them is the choice of the research design, which may distort the results to some extent, as it is about self-perception (Čvirik, 2023). Of course, examining only one brand is an important limitation, so the results can only be attributed to the selected brand. However, from the point of view of academic research, this is an examination of the concept of brand trust and the possibilities of its measurement. As our results suggest, the instrument contains three dimensions. In terms of academic research, there are various types of scientific work, and, in this context, the contribution can be seen in the sense of exploration, expansion of the knowledge base, and confirmation of theoretical knowledge in the current situation. Our research focuses on the generational context, although other significant demographic factors may affect the level of brand trust. It would be worthwhile to explore further potential factors in future research. In the article, we work with a sample that presents certain shortcomings, which we partially minimise with the help of selected methodological procedures. It is worth noting that the sample comes from a single country, so, in the future, it would be appropriate to investigate several countries not only to understand better other factors such as culture and selective perception in the national context but also to allow international comparison. Similarly, our work concentrates on a single brand, but, in the future, it would be appropriate, for example, to examine competitors and their credibility. The potential use of the model therefore represents an element of brand analysis in the context of brand trust, as well as potential within the framework of competition analysis, customer analysis or public brand analysis and strategic brand building, as well as strategic brand situation analysis.

Brand trust research can help academics and strategists understand consumer behaviour, market dynamics and effective brand management strategies. This research helps develop theoretical frameworks, practical tools and best practices that managers can use to build and maintain the trust of their target audience. Furthermore, understanding the causes and consequences of brand trust can help in strategic decision-making, marketing campaigns and long-term brand building.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest in this study.

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