THE IMPACT OF THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN BRAND PERSONALITY AND SELF-IMAGE ON CONSUMERS' BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract
Companies have recognized that people buy or consume products not only for their functional value but also to enhance their self-concept through the symbolic meaning embedded in these products, customers seek brands with a personality identical with their own personality.
In this research we will present a literature review of the impact of the congruence between brand personality and self-image on the four dependent variables considered in this research: satisfaction, attitude, preference and behavioral intentions. In the first part we will present the transposition of the human personality to brand personality. In the second part, we will define the concept of brand personality. In the third part, we will examine the concept of self-image. In the fourth part, we will analyze the congruence between brand personality and self-image. In the fifth part, we will expose the hypotheses of research that we will use in our next empirical study, and we will also elaborate the conceptual model of this research. In the sixth and final part, we will present the managerial implications.

Keywords: *brand personality; brand loyalty; congruence; satisfaction; self-concept.*

JEL Classification: *M31*

I. INTRODUCTION

To help managers to target the most interesting segments of consumers for the company, so as to fix their marketing communication strategies on this basis, marketing theorists and practitioners turned to the study of a concept that has proved to be scientifically efficient, despite its metaphorical nature. It is the concept of brand personality, defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with the brand" (Aaker 1997). This concept resulted from the theory of animism (Glimore, 1919) which legitimizes the humanization of objects. According to this theory, the brand goes beyond the status of a symbolic object to act as an active partner in the brand-consumer relationship and can even be considered as a full person.

In order to improve the positioning of their brands and to better differentiate themselves from their competitors, marketers became well aware of the importance of building a "clear and distinct brand personality", which would allow them to attract customers who are sensitive to the features of this personality (Maehle and Shnoer, 2010).

It is by relying on the theory of self-congruence (Levy, 1959; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al, 1997; Sirgy and Su,2000) that the study of compatibility between consumer personality and brand personality has recently given birth to a new paradigm called "the congruence of brand personality" (Parker,2009). This was highlighted by different communication campaigns using themes like "My own brand", "A brand like me" or "A brand that says what I am" (Vernette, 2008). It consists in linking brand personality to consumer personality by relying on the concept of self (Aaker, 1999; Maehle & Shnoer, 2010; Wee et al, 2005; Govers et al, 2005), For example, Sekhon *et al.* (2015) use content analysis to explore how consumers use brand mentions for self-presentation, drawing on twitter data to investigate braggart behavior. This choice stems from the fact that the concept of self is only a subjective representative of the personality of the consumer (Darpy and Zouaghi, 2003).

It is simpler to measure the concept of self than to measure personality itself, because the consumer cannot be aware of his entire personality, while he can express the image he has of himself.

Therefore, this study examines the processes by which congruence between brand personality and self-image influences brand loyalty through such mediating variables as consumer-brand relationship and consumer satisfaction.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. From the human personality to the brand personality

Brands have become more and more personalized (Plummer 1985, Levy 1985, Durgree 1998, Berry 1988). The scales of measurement developed in the human personality psychology were transferred to the brands. This transfer is not based on an explicit theoretical referent, but on a metaphor that the brand is considered as a person and is thus assigned a number of attributes that are usually given to individuals (Viot, 2006).

In human personality research a widespread way of measuring personality is using the 'Five Factor Structure' or 'Big Five' factor structure (Goldberg 1990; McCrae & Costa 1992), which reduces the vast number of traits that can be used to describe people's personality to five dimensions. Big Five personality scales have been constructed through factor analysis of items describing the self and others. The dimensions that emerged are called extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience (also called intellect) and neuroticism (also called emotional stability).

Aaker (1997) proposed a specific brand personality framework, using five personality dimensions, just like human personalities. Brand personality was defined as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand". A brand personality scale was constructed, identifying 42 traits and 5 dimensions (excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness). The same hierarchical approach was used as that of McCrae and Costa (1992) who developed the NEO-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R), measuring the Big Five factors of human personality. The factor structure of brand personality, however, was not the same as that of human personality, according to Aaker because "a brand personality is formed in a completely different way than human personality" (Aaker 1997).

2.2. Brand personality

Brand personality is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347), and is an important aspect of advertising (Plummer, 1984). Consumers think of brands in terms of human personality traits. Use of advertising strategies that utilize this fact, such as anthropomorphization, personification, and creation of user imagery, can give the brand a personality that, like human personalities, is distinct and lasting (Aaker, 1997). A brand's personality is affected by its user imagery, the "set of human characteristics associated with the typical user of a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 348). User imagery is the image transferred to a brand from the individuals considered to be the typical users of the brand. This is where brand and human personality formation differ. Human personality traits are based on a person's behavior, physical attributes, attitudes, beliefs, and demographic characteristics (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality traits form through communication of any kind between the brand and the consumer. There is usually nothing intrinsic to a brand that makes it, for example, young, exciting, or traditional; instead these qualities are formed through the direct or indirect contact a consumer has with a brand, including the product-user image (Aaker, 1997; Plummer, 1985).

A distinction to note is the difference between brand personality and product personality. Product personality refers to the image of a specific product within a brand, and is defined as "the set of human personality characteristics used to describe a specific product variant" (Govers & Mugge, 2004). This distinction was important to Govers and Mugge's (2004) study on product attachment. Product attachment is "the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a product" (Mugge, Schifferstein, & Schoormans, 2008, p. 325). Govers and Mugge (2004) iterated there is an emotional tie between products and their owners, and the product is meaningful to the owner in a deep and important way. When a consumer becomes attached to a product, the product provides additional benefits to him or her that go beyond those of other products in the same product category (Govers & Mugge, 2004).

One reason consumers become attached to their products is self-expression (Govers & Mugge, 2004). When products are seen as self-congruent (i.e., having a similar personality to the consumers self-image), their consumption serves the symbolic function of self-expression. Govers and Mugge (2004) contributed to self-congruity research by showing consumers become more attached to their products the greater the congruence they experience with them. Higher congruence increases the product's symbolic meaning to the owner, and the owner consequentially becomes more attached to the product (Govers & Mugge, 2004).

In addition to brand and product personality, consumers can also experience congruity with store personality (Willems & Swinnen, 2011; d'Astous & Levesque, 2003; Martineau, 1958).

Store personality is the way the shopper sees the store in his or her mind, an image that considers the store's functional qualities as well as its psychological attributes (Willems & Swinnen, 2011). Consumers are able to hold distinct images of stores and the products they carry (Rocereto & Mosca, 2012). In other words, a store's personality is not automatically derived from the products on its shelves, and marketers of the store must therefore take care to actively position the store to appeal to its target market (Rocereto & Mosca, 2012).

Consumers use store, product, and brand personality to simplify buying decisions. People use symbolic images to "summarize a vast complexity of values and meanings" (Lindquist, 1974-1975, p. 29), which enables

individuals to easily comprehend and interact with the object at hand, much like he or she would another person. In situations of uncertainty, these symbolic representations serve as decision heuristics (Stern, Zinkhan, & Jaju, 2001).

2.3. Self-image

Self-image is the way people describe themselves based on the roles they play and the personal attributes they think they possess (Banahene, 2017).

Previous studies in the field of self-concept have conceptualized the self-image as a multidimensional construct (Hamm and Cundiff, 1969; Hughes and Guerrero, 1971; Guttman, 1973) which allowed the consumers to evaluate themselves in different social situations (Sirgy, 1980).

In the research of self-image, the underlying premise was that brand associations are developed according to the individual's self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Symbolically, the brand personality has been considered as an instrument facilitating the personal expression of consumers (Asker, 1997, Escalas and Bettman, 2005, Johar et al., 2005). The human traits confered to the brands, enable them to play an important role in the consumer's life and to maintain their relationship with the brand (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). Brands enable consumers to redefine their image and their personality allows the consumer to perceive how much the brand's image reflects the consumer's self-image (Aamin, 1999, Swaminathan et al., 2007, Swaminathan et al., 2008) . Burris and Rempel (2004) in their self-theory stated that possessions can become part of the social image that consumers want to portry in society.

Self-image refers to self-perception (Grubb and Grathwhohl, 1967, Graeff, 1996) and gives us with self-esteem and the way how we, as individuals, feel about ourselves. This is the opinion that people make of themselves (Runyan, 1988). Research now recognizes that consumers in different situations have different self-images, not just the "actual self", but what the consumer aspires to be, which is classified as "ideal self" (Gould, 1991; , 1996, Sirgy, 1982, 1986, Sutherland et al., 2004, Parker, 2009).

There is a classification of self-image based on the 'social self' and the 'ideal social self'. Self-concept can be represented as a multi-dimensional concept (Blackwell et al. 2001). The brands' personality improves the self-image of the individual. It implies that it is not a concept or theory, but is based on consumers of the brand (Upshaw, 1995). Research, conducted by Freling and Forbes (2005), has discussed the importance of strong brand and how this brand influencing consumer purchase decisions.

2.4. The congruence between brand personality and self-image

The studies on the congruence between consumers' self-concept and brand image try to explain consumer choice such as brand preference, purchase intention or usage and loyalty (Birdwell 1968; Bellenger, Steinberg, and Stanton 1976; Dolich 1969; Health and Scott 1998; Hughes and Guerrero 1971; Munson 1973; Sirgy 1980; Stern, Bush, and Hair 1977).

Sirgy (1982) suggests congruity theory and he argues that product cues involving images usually activate a self-schema involving the same images. Also, Sirgy (1982, 1986) outlines the importance of self-concept theory in consumer behavior research by explaining that consumers who perceive the product image to be consistent with their actual self-concept are likely to feel motivated to purchase and consume that product. Therefore, congruence between self-image and product image may have a greater influence on consumers' preference, purchase intention, ownership, usage and loyalty to products and brands.

Graeff (1996) analyzes the influence of the congruence between brand-image and self-image on brand evaluation relating to promotion message. It suggests that under the promotion message that reminds consumers of their own self-image, consumers give more positive evaluations of brands congruent with their own self-image. In one of his other studies that employed beer product brands, he suggests that positive brand attitude and purchase intention increase as the congruence between self-image and brand-image increases (Graeff 1997).

Recently, several studies have been conducted about the congruence between self-image and brand personality. Brand personality refers to human characteristics associated with a brand. Keller (1993) regards brand personality as the category of brand-image made by brand user and usage imagery attributes. Plummer (1985) asserts that one component of brand-image is the personality or character of the brand itself. He summarizes his research demonstrating that brands can be characterized by personality descriptions such as "youthful," "colorful," and "gentle." Aaker (1991, 1996) connects brand-image to brand personality as a component of brand equity, and defines brand personality as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. According to Aaker (1997), brand personality consists of five dimensions: competence, sincerity, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness.

Consumers use products/brands as a symbol and they prefer brands with images or personalities that are congruent with their self-image or brand personality. Aaker (1999) suggests when self-schema is congruent with brand personality, the brand attitude of a low self-monitor is more favorable, and when the situation is congruent with self-schema, the brand attitude of a high self-monitor is more favorable. According to Chang, Park, and Choi (2001), consumers exhibit a favorable feeling toward a brand when the brand personality is congruent with their own self-image. In particular, the congruence between brand personality and self-image increases the

positive attitude of consumers who have a high hedonistic attitude and emphasize symbolic values. Yi and La (2002) suggest that brand personality influences brand identification, and then brand identification has a direct impact on brand loyalty, as well as an indirect impact via brand relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it can be inferred that the congruence between brand personality and self-image has a positive effect on consumer satisfaction, and brand loyalty.

Several researchers have illustrated the importance of self-image in consumer behavior and congruence with a consumer's self-image and the personality of a particular brand. This relationship plays a very important role in brand loyalty, customer brand satisfaction, brand preference and choice (Jenasha Tooray, guess Oodith, 2017).

The table n° 1 presents a portrait of empirical studies focusing on the relation of congruence between the consumers' personality and that of the brand, and presents the main results obtained.

Table 1 Summary of selected studies on consumer-brand relationship

Authors and types of congruence	Congruence of the relationship	Principle results
Dolich (1969) Congruence between self-image and brand image	Yes	- Consumers choose brands whose image corresponds to their self-image. - The self-image is defined by the concept of real and ideal self. - Congruence depending on the type of the product and the type of self (self-real and ideal self) - The congruence between the ideal self and the brand personality is greater than the congruence between the real self and brand personality
Sirgy, 1982; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy *et al*., 2000; Sirgy and Su, 2000 Congruence between self-image and brand image	Yes	- The image of the product or brand is defined as the stereotyped image of its user. - The consumer associates the brand image with the self-image (current self, ideal, social and social ideal). - Direct measures of self-congruency
Chang (2001) Congruence between consumer personality and the perceived image of the advertising message	Yes	- Strong congruence between consumer personality and the advertising message. - The consumer tends to avoid emotional discomfort and look for messages that project images corresponding to their personality (introverted, extroverted) and that would provoke emotions of comfort. - The more consumers attribute the advertising message to their own lives (as corresponding to their personality), the more they tend to have a positive response to the message. - The congruence depends on the self-image (ideal or real)
Phau et Lau (2001) Congruence between brand and consumer personality	Yes	Congruence is stronger in individualistic cultures than in collectivist cultures.
Freling et Forbes (2005) Congruence between brand and consumer personality	Yes	- Consumers prefer brands with a strong personality. - There is an effect of congruence on brand valuation.
Morschett et al (2008) Congruence between the self-image brand personality	Yes	- Loyalty to the store is positively influenced by the self-congruence. However, when the other two predictive factors are integrated, the influence has become weak. The dimensions of the brand's personality can influence brand loyalty. The predictive power of the brand's self-personality congruence is overestimated.
Maehle et Shneor (2010) Congruence between brand and consumer personality	Yes	-The consumers are looking for brands that match their personality. Consumers with an interpersonal and social outlook personality show preference for brands that are characterized by traits of sincerity in their personality. - Brands that have a dimension of excitement (as defined in the Aaker scale) are preferred by consumers who are oriented towards task fulfillment and overall success.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

3.1. The influence of the brand personality on the loyalty of consumers to this brand

Several authors have suggested that brand personality is an important antecedent of consumer loyalty to the brand (Fournier 1994, Aaker 1997, Ouwersloot and Tudorica 2001, Yi and La 2002). Magin et al. (2003) emphasizes that the creation of a clear and distinct brand personality can help companies retain their consumers.

In the works of Seimiene and Kamarauskaite (2014), brand personality is important to achieve brand loyalty, formation of favourable attitudes towards a particular brand, and effort to enlarge brand equity. These authors found that, brand personality are mostly impacted by design of bottle and label, design colours, and advertisement.

Sung et al. (2005) and Morschett et al. (2007) showed a significant positive relationship between brand personality and consumer loyalty to the studied brand. In addition, the significant positive influence of brand personality (or brand personality traits) on consumer attitudes towards this brand (Supphellen and Gronhaug 2003, Helgeson and Supphellen 2004, Ben Sliman et al. 2005, Ambroise et al., 2005) and their intentions for future behavior (Ambroise, 2006, Morschett et al., 2007) have already been highlighted.

Many researchers have commented on the positive influence of brand personality on consumer preference for this brand (Sirgy, 1982, Biel, 1993, Triplett, 1994, Aaker, 1997, Wee, 2004, Ambroise, 2006). However, to our knowledge, no research has empirically validated this link. In contrast, Govers and Schoormans (2005) and Wee (2004) have shown that the congruence between brand personality and human personality has a significant positive influence on consumer preferences towards this brand. In other words, if a consumer perceives his personality as congruent with the brand personality, he will prefer it (Phau and Lau, 2001).

Considering these different works, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: There is a causal link between the brand personality and the consumers' attitude towards this brand.
H1b: There is a causal link between brand personality and the consumers' preference towards this brand.
H1c: There is a causal link between the brand personality and the consumers' intentions for future behavior towards this brand.

3.2. The impact of the congruence between brand personality and self-image on satisfaction

The definition of satisfaction that seems to be the most widely accepted in the literature is that which retains consumer satisfaction as an overall assessment made after a choice regarding a specific purchase decision (Day, 1984, Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). This assessment varies along a continuum from dissatisfied to satisfied.

Several authors have supposed that the consumer is looking for congruence between the traits of a brand and his own personality traits. Such congruence can have a positive impact on the purchaser's evaluation, preference, satisfaction, attitude, or behavioral intention towards the brand (Achouri, Bouslama, 2010).
According to Ouwersloot and Tudorica (2001), brand personality should be seen by companies as a tool to achieve their goal of consumer satisfaction.

Yi and La (2002) suggested that brand personality would have an indirect impact on consumer loyalty through the level of satisfaction with that brand.

Park and Lee (2005) have demonstrated a significant positive influence of the congruence between brand personality and (real) human personality on the level of consumer satisfaction towards the brand studied.

At this point, we will make the following hypothesis:

H2: The congruence between brand personality and self-image increases consumer satisfaction

3.3. The impact of congruence between brand personality and self-image on loyalty to this brand

Beyond the existence of congruence between brand personality and the consumer's self-image, some researchers suggest the predictive nature of this congruence on consumer behavior. Thus, Ericksen (1996) showed that there is a relationship between the congruence self-image/brand personality and purchase intention.

Moreover, according to Petroff (1995), the theory of congruence suggests "a certain stability of behavior" in the prospect that the individual must struggle constantly to maintain and improve his self-image.

Helgeson and SUPP Hellen (2004) have highlighted the positive influence of congruence between real and ideal self-concepts on the attitude towards the brand.

We propose the following hypotheses (Achouri, Bouslama, 2010):

H3a: The congruence between brand personality and the consumers' self-image has a positive impact on their attitude towards this brand.

H3b: The congruence between brand personality and the consumers' self-image has a positive effect on their level of preference for this brand.

H3c: The congruence between brand personality and the consumers' self-image has a positive impact on their intention of future behavior towards this brand.

3.4. The impact of the consumers' satisfaction towards a brand on loyalty to this brand

The consumers' satisfaction towards a brand has a significant positive influence on their level of loyalty to this brand (Anderson et Sullivan, 1993; Bloomer *et al.* 1990; Magin *et al.* 2003). Thus, loyalty is a consequence of consumer satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). Many empirical studies have revealed a significant positive link between consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Oliver and Linda, 1981; Woodside et al. 1989; Rust and Zahiri, 1993; Taylor and Baker, 1994; Anderson et al., 1994; Rust et al., 1995; Hallowell, 1996).

The attitudinal component of loyalty will allow to distinguish inertia (the regular purchase of the same brand without having a favorable attitude towards this brand) of true fidelity (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Tinquecoste, 1996).

Loyalty is explained by the favorable attitudes of consumers towards brands and is expressed by consumer behavior (Trinquecoste, 1996). This attitudinal component was generally measured by attitude scales and by future behavioral intentions (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Duffer and Moulins, 1989).

In this research, to measure consumer loyalty, we presuppose a significant positive relationship between consumer satisfaction and the consumers' attitude, their level of preference, and their intentions of future behavior towards this brand.

We propose the following hypotheses:

H4a: There is a causal link between the consumers' satisfaction towards a brand and their attitude to this brand.

H4b: There is a causal link between the consumers' satisfaction towards a brand and their level of preference to this brand.

H4c: There is a causal link between the consumers' satisfaction towards a brand and their intentions for future behavior to this brand.

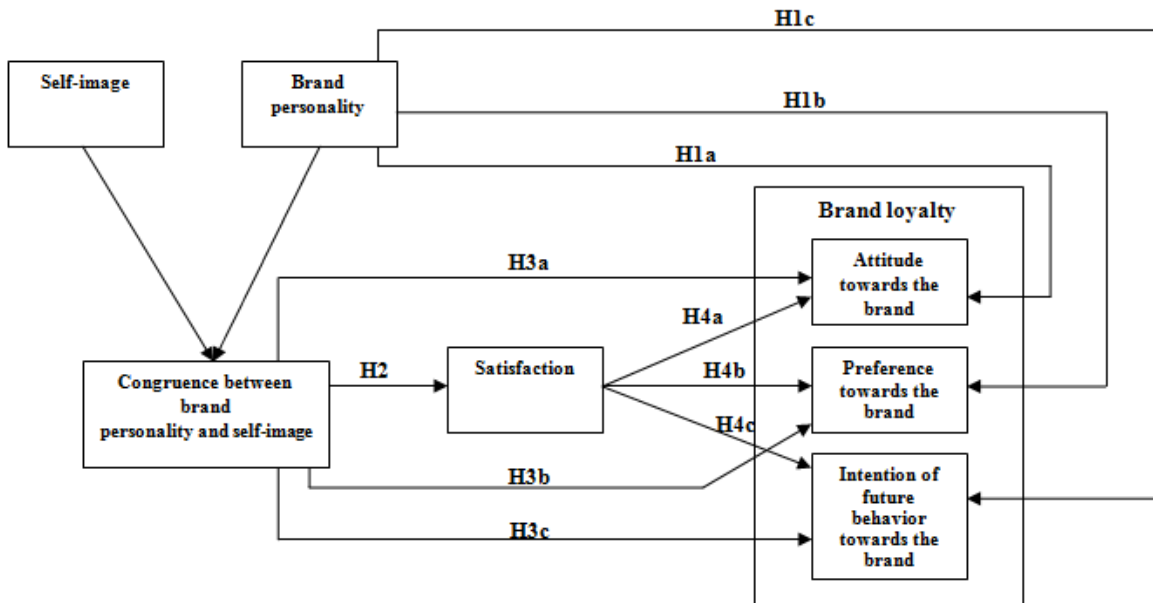Our conceptual model is graphically shown in Figure 1 :

Figure 1: Conceptual model

IV. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The existence of a link between the personality traits of the consumer and those of the brand he is interested in gives marketing managers the opportunity to have a strategic tool to improve and strengthen their brand positioning. This would attract consumers who are sensitive to the manifested personality traits.

Marketers should identify the self-concept of their target consumers and build a brand personality to match the self-concept of their consumers; they should also consider brand relationship quality as an important predictor of brand loyalty. Therefore, they should strive to create positive customer–brand interactions in order to establish a strong emotional bond between the consumer and the brand which in turn contributes to brand loyalty.

This research is only a literature review, we will strengthen it with an empirical study to show and prove the impact of the congruence between brand personality and self-image on the consumers' behavior.

V. CONCLUSION

Brand personalities play a crucial role in shaping purchase behavior of consumers. The influence of brand personality on the purchase intention of consumers can be understood in the following three ways (Ahmad and Thyagaraj, 2015):

1) Brand personality communicates the functional benefits of a brand thereby effectively indicating product-related utilitarian benefits and brand attributes;

2) Brand personality serves as a vehicle to express the personality of the consumer, thereby brand function is regarded as a reflective symbol of the self of the consumer;

3) Brand personality helps a consumer to extend their own personality by establishing a relationship with a brand, thereby consumers can benefit from the brand's characteristics even if they do not wish to become like a certain brand personality;

The congruence between brand personality and self-image increase not only consumer satisfaction but also consumer-brand relationship. That is when consumers perceive brand personality is congruent with their self-image, their satisfaction increases and consumer brand relationship quality develops.

As future research tracks, we suggest to work on other product categories and to set a typology of facets of congruence according to product categories. Also, we propose to study other aspects of the self, namely the social ideal self and, why not, measure the overall self by incorporating all its components (real, ideal, social and ideal social).we propose also in this area to identify the antecedents of brand personalty this in order to develop or increase some relevant personality traits. We also propose to study the antecedents of the self-image and also the factors that determine the importance of congruence as: gender (man / woman), income, education, culture.

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