

Revisiting Brand Personality Attributes: Mediating Role of Brand Attitude

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine the influence of different brand personalities on buyers' purchase intention and examines the role of buyers' brand attitude. Data were collected through questionnaire survey. Analysis of 317 valid responses was carried out using AMOS 20. Five brand personality attributes such as responsibility, activity, emotionality, ruggedness, and competence were found to be prime brand personalities to predict buyer's brand purchase intention. Effects of these personalities except emotionality were found to influence buyers' brand purchase intention through the mediating effects of buyers' brand attitude. The findings will help the organizations in designing and redesigning their product differentiation to position the brand in the market to enhance the conversion rate of potential customers. This study identifies five brand personality attributes those are more decisive in inducing buyers' purchase intention in Indian context than other brand personality attributes those are commonly thought to be associated with cell phones*

Keywords: Brand Personality, Branding, Buyers' Brand Attitude, Buyers' Brand Purchase Intention, Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or combination of them. The essence of brand lies in its ability to attract buyers or potential buyers towards it as it differentiates the goods and services of one organization from its competitors (Kotler, 1991). Like human personality, brands can be perceived to have personality attributes associated with it. Different brand personalities as perceived by the potential customers have the ability to induce varied extent of buyers' purchase intention towards a particular brand in different context. Opting a brand with the right attribute enables the consumer to germinate a circumpolar and a specific representation of him/her (Austin et al., 2003). Brand personality could be an effective marketing instrument for distinguishing brands from rivals, and subsequently, for developing marketing plan of action for sustainable competitive vantage (Keller, 2008; Kang, Bennett & Peachey, 2016). For successful brand management, it is important to know how different brand personalities of a product are related to buyers' brand purchase intention. Even though the choice for different organizations to move in the increasing global market is instinctively rational, global brands recurrently nose dive to attain their projected goals (Ross et al., 2008; Haig, 2003) in Indian market because of the lack of considerate of the cultural differences of Indian customers. The paucity of research regarding customer – brand relationship in Indian market is a cause in this type of failure (Brady et al., 2008; Dant et al., 2008). In contemporary situations, the varied facets of socio - cultural aspects are deeply rooted in Indians and form their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors (Gochhayat et al., 2017). Competing values in Indian society, a rapidly expanding income group with rapidly changing value set make it difficult to predict which set of brand personality attributes play vital role in inducing buyer's brand purchase intention. Accordingly, this study examines which brand personality, is more significant than the other in influencing consumers' purchase intention in Indian context. The next section critically reviews the substantive literature, derives the objectives and states the conceptual model. Subsequent sections deal with the

method, results and discussion. Limitations and conclusion are drawn in the final section.

2. Review of Literature

Brand is one of the motivating factors for the customers and the channel partners to go for the product and/ or service. Though a product or service is the end part for the customers and consumers, brand name substantiates the customers' satisfaction. The relationship between the consumer and brand depends on consumer's brand perception and acceptance. Organizations create brand image in such a manner that, the brand image would lead to high congruence (Ataman, 2003) among buyers' preferred personality dimensions expected from the brand and the personality dimensions reflected by the brand. The preferred personality dimensions expected out of a brand is strongly influenced by socio - cultural context (Shivani et al., 2006), which makes it important for the organizations to attract customers in Indian context

India is a collectivistic society with a high score in Masculinity. In a collectivistic society, the actions of the individuals are influenced by various concepts such as the opinion of one's family, extended family, neighbours, work group and other such wider social networks that one has some affiliation with ("Country Comparison", 2018) People search security, prestige, approval and acceptance within the confines of the near and dear. Recognition and social acceptability carries higher value than individual achievement (Banerjee, 2008). For a collectivist, to be rejected by or to be thought lowly of by in - groups, is of immense concern as such situation leaves him or her with a sense of intense emptiness ("Country Comparison", 2018). Indian society is driven by competition, achievement, visual display of success and power. Individuals prefer activities, actions, products, and services which are appreciated by their in - groups; even when they don't personally appreciate it. Individuals many often prefer brands of repute to be accepted by their peers, in - groups, and even out - groups. Furthermore Indian society is medium to low on avoiding uncertainty. Though changes are accepted, but incremental

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change is preferred showing their moderate attitude towards excitement and uncertainty. Indians take calculated risks in terms of investment, expenditure and advancement (Pande, 1990), whereas their tolerance and adaptability for the unexpected is high. Their acceptance of imperfection, adaptability and tolerance make them determined. In such a society with competing values such as adaptability and risk aversion, acceptance and competition, an exploration of prominent brand personality preferences will help the marketers

Brand personality (BP) can be defined as the set of human characteristics or personality dimensions associated with the brand (Aaker, 1997). BP is a protuberant construct for envisaging consumer inclinations and selections (Eisend & Stokburger - Sauer, 2013; Gordon et al., 2016; Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2013; Hultman et al., 2015; Molinillo, Japutra, Nguyen, and Chen, 2017). Three traits such as strength association, favourability association, and uniqueness association (Keller, 2013) can gauge consumer's perception regarding personality attached with a brand. Accordingly, BP is reflected through the consumer's perception regarding products, and can be any personality dimension attached, or perceived to be attached with a particular brand. However researchers have identified few prominent BP attributes referred by customers and practitioners in the field (Aker, 1997; Geuens et al., 2009). Aaker (1997) has identified brand personalities such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and Geuens et al. (2009) have identified brand personality such as responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality. However, the applicability of these brand personality attributes differs from context to context and have many often been criticized.

Authors (Davies et al., 2018) have identified that different number of dimensions from the original five dimensions of Aaker's scale were relevant in different contexts such as in Japan (sincerity, excitement, competence, and sophistication), Spain (sincerity, excitement, and sophistication),

France (Ferrandi et al., 2000), Netherlands (Smit et al., 2003) and China (Chu & Sung, 2011). Similarly new brand personality dimensions have been identified as crucial in different context which were not part of the Aaker's original brand personality dimensions (peacefulness in Japan, passion and peacefulness in Spain). This indicates that dimensions identified by Aaker (1997)

Geuens et al. (2009) are not universal and may be found insignificant in many different contexts. This suggests that brand personality represents values and beliefs of a culture. Therefore, the cultural difference among countries can result in culture specific differences in brand personality dimensions

(Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2017). These findings are supported by authors such as Sung and Tinkham (2005), Muniz and Marchetti (2012), Ekinici and Hosany (2006), Murphy et al. (2007) and Rojas - Méndez et al. (2013a, 2013b). Accordingly, scales have been developed specifically for country/nation brand personality (d'Astous and Boujbel,

2007; Rojas - Méndez and Papadopoulos, 2012; Rojas - Méndez et al., 2013a) and city brand personality (Kaplan et al., 2010). In line with this arguments, Davies et. al. (2018) have identified that Brand personality scales have also been developed within a number of other specific contexts such as for retailers (d'Astous & Levesque, 2003), not - for - profit organisations (Venable et al., 2005) and universities (Rauschnabel et al., 2016). Accordingly, with the increase in number of published scales, number of brand personality dimensions significant in specific context have also increased and is still increasing.

A study conducted by Davies et al. (2018) identified the brand personality dimensions in 21 studies published between 1997 and 2016 in various contexts of respondent type; branded entity type; and country/culture. It was found that the brand personality dimensions by Aaker (1997) and Geuens et al. (2009) cover many of the brand personality dimensions identified in those 21 studies conducted in various contexts. Though many other dimensions were found to be different from the dimensions of Aaker (1997), and Geuens et al. (2009), those dimensions have convergence over less number of studies, implying that these dimensions are too specific in particular context and may not be applicable in other contexts. Accordingly, brand personality dimensions by Aaker (1997), and Geuens et al. (2009) were taken to be tested for their prominence to predict buyers' buyer purchase intention in Indian context.

BP is one of the prime factors that influence consumer preference, usage & purchase intention towards a particular brand. A brand that reflects a particular personality attribute or is perceived to have the personality will induce BPI, if the attributes coincide with buyer's preferred personality attributes in the product category. Accordingly, in Indian context, while purchasing toothpaste, authenticity, and responsibility may induce BPI, and BP attributes such as ruggedness, excitement and aggressiveness may look attractive while purchasing a sports bike. While a brand that portrays ordinary and simplicity may create belief among buyers, sentimental brands are more likely to create emotion and feelings in consumers. Accordingly, buyers having coherent disposition will more likely to possess more favourable BPI towards the brand and may try to associate with the brands. Furthermore, in the same product category, different brand personalities reflected by different brands may induce varied BPI for different brands. Hence, this study tries to find the BP attributes that predict BPI toward cell phone brands in Indian context. These brand personalities get reflected through the features, specification and communication such as advertisement and promotion of the brand. Advertisers incorporate various attributes through the advertising message to let the consumers perceive personality of the brand (Tellis, 2003). While, congruity of brand-related communication increases the favourability, strength, and uniqueness of the brand (Keller 1993) resulting in favourable brand perception (Martinez & Pina, 2003), incompatibility and incongruence of brand message and brand personality may result in lower favourability of the brand (Labroo & Lee, 2006; Zhou, Poon & Wong, 2014, Allman, Fenik, Hewett, and Morgan, 2016). However, if consumers have favourable attitude towards a brand, it will

help in creating a higher preference for the brand, minimizing the negativities around it.

Buyer's brand attitude (BA) can be referred to the consistent evaluation of a brand, feeling towards a brand and tendency towards a brand of a buyer (Armstrong & Kotler, 2000; Wu S, 2003). Attitude is the synopsis of all emotions, expectations, opinions, values, and beliefs of a buyer (Bagozzi, 1994, Malhotra, 2005) towards a product/service. Various factors such as personal experience, learning, information, news, media & direct/indirect experience of life (Wu S, 2003) can influence buyers' attitude towards a particular brand. Tripartite model of attitude (Blackwell et al., 2001; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004) suggests that, attitude consists of the beliefs of the buyer, his feelings, emotions, and behavioural intention. Accordingly, buyers' overall attitude towards a brand can be derived by assessing the buyers' beliefs, feelings, and emotions towards the specific brand.

Objectives

Based on the above discussion, there are two objectives of the study. The first objective is to examine which brand personality, is more significant than the other in influencing consumers' brand purchase intention in Indian context. The second objective is to examine the role of buyers' brand attitude in the context of brand personality and buyers' brand purchase intention.

3. Methodology

Sample Data were collected through questionnaire survey using snowball sampling. Questionnaires were sent to individuals working in a university after taking their permission in a Google form. They were requested to provide responses to the questionnaire and provide email IDs of potential respondents. These potential respondents were again sent the Google form taking their prior consent with a request to provide responses to the questionnaire and link to other potential respondents. The respondents were from different parts of India representing varied demographic background. The questionnaire was sent through email to 1127 individuals. Out of 1127 questionnaires sent, 317 responses which were complete in all respect were obtained. The sample comprised of 205 men (64.67%) and 112 women (35.33%). Fifty respondents were from rural areas, 68 from semi urban areas and 199 were from urban areas. Age of the respondents ranges from 18 years to 72 years. However, 94.3% of respondents are of below 50 years of age. Respondents are variedly educated. Twenty individuals are having a bachelors degree, 155 are having Masters Degree, where as 120 respondents are with PhDs and 22 respondents are with PDFs.

4. Measures

Brand Personality

Brand personalities of different brands were measured in terms of 10 personality dimensions. Five personality dimensions were taken from Aaker (1997) brand personality scale (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness), and five personality dimensions were taken from Geuens et al. (2009) brand personality scale

(responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality). All the dimensions had 2 to 4 items. The responses ranged from 'Strongly Disagree (1)' to 'Strongly Agree (7)'. Due to the low number of items on some of the dimensions, all the dimensions were taken as observed variable for analysis. The internal consistencies (α) of the dimensions are: for sincerity = 0.85, excitement = 0.87, competence = 0.92, sophistication = 0.84, ruggedness = 0.68, responsibility = 0.81, activity = 0.90, aggressiveness = 0.65, simplicity = 0.55, emotionality = 0.77.

Buyers' Brand Attitude

Nine items were developed to measure buyer's brand attitude towards a particular brand. The sample items include, 'brand name is familiar', and 'product quality is satisfactory'. The responses to the items ranged from 'strongly disagree (1)' to 'Strongly Agree (7)'. When responses to 9 items were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis, all items loaded significantly on one factor (standardized loading range = 0.68 ($p < 0.001$) to 0.90). The average variance extracted was 0.64. The one - factor model had acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.94$, CFI = 0.98, GFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.07). It has high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.94$). Buyers' Brand Purchase Intention Three items were developed to measure buyers' brand purchase Intention towards a particular brand. The sample items include: 'the likely hood that I will pay for my current cell phone brand is high'. The responses to the items ranged from 'strongly disagree (1)' to 'Strongly Agree (7)'. When responses to 3 items were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis, all items loaded significantly on one factor (standardized loading range = 0.68 ($p < 0.001$) to 0.90). The average variance extracted was 0.064. The one - factor model had acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 0$, CFI = 1, GFI = 1, NFI = 1, RMSEA = 0). It has high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.84$)

5. Results

To explore the association of various brand personality attributes with buyers' brand purchase intention, and buyers' brand attitude, Person correlations of the dimensions were examined. The descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations of the dimensions of the studied variables are reported in Table 1. All brand personality attributes except simplicity related positively with BA and BPI. Similarly all brand personality attributes are correlated with each other except simplicity. Simplicity though was found to be positively related with aggressiveness, emotionality, responsibility, sincerity, and ruggedness; it was not related to activity, excitement, competence and sophistication. The BA was found to be associated with BPI. Because correlations did not reveal the antecedent-consequent relationships, a path analysis was carried out using AMOS 20. BPI and BA were the endogenous latent variables, and other brand personality attributes were exogenous observed variables. The path analysis will predict the influence of the Brand personality dimensions on BPI and will examine the mediating effects of BA in the relationships of BP and BPI. The results are reported in Table 2. In the first model, when all ten BP attributes were tested for their influence on BPI, it was found that only five BP attributes such as responsibility, activity, emotionality, competence, and ruggedness were

found to predict BPI. Accordingly, these five BP attributes were considered for the revised model deleting the insignificant predictors. The second model has improved model fit (GFI= 0.80, CFI= 0.77, NFI= 0.76) indicating that these five attributes are accounting for most part of the variance in BPI. Results suggest that all five BP attributes such as sincerity, responsibility, activity, emotionality and ruggedness positively predicted BPI. Competence, activity and ruggedness were found to be better predictors of BPI, while responsibility and emotionality explained comparatively lower extent of variance in BPI. The third, fourth and the fifth model are tested to verify the mediating role of BA in the relationship of BP and BPI (Table 2). However, the fifth model shows the contextual reality of the BP attributes predicting BPI through BA in Indian context. Results from the third model indicate that four BP attributes except emotionality predicted BA. Emotionality though positively predicted BPI, could not predict BA. Similarly,

fourth model suggests that BA strongly predicts BPI. In the full model (Figure 1), when all these five brand personality attributes were explanatory variables, with BA as mediator, and BPI as outcome, emotionality failed to predict BA. However, sincerity, responsibility, activity, and ruggedness predicted BA. Furthermore, BA strongly predicted BPI. The impact of all these four attributes on BPI decreased in comparison to step 2. Therefore, though BA failed to mediate the effect of emotionality on BPI, it can be concluded that BA mediated the relationship of brand personalities with BPI. The mediating effect of BA was found to be 169.4%, 41.25%, 102.66%, and 68.11% in the relationship of responsibility - BPI, activity - BPI, competence - BPI, and ruggedness BPI respectively. BA is fully mediating the effects of responsibility and competence on BP, though mediating effects of BA for activity - BPI and ruggedness - BPI can be called as partial mediation.

Table 1: Correlation among BP dimensions, BA, and BPI

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1		0.615	0.002	0.338	0.755	0.710	0.733	0.852	0.758	0.646	0.710	0.696
2		1	0.134	0.323	0.486	0.490	0.602	0.526	0.552	0.492	0.446	0.509
3			1	0.355	0.209	0.229	0.062	0.034	0.002	0.119	0.081	0.084
4				1	0.317	0.549	0.552	0.387	0.460	0.478	0.370	0.417
5					1	0.790	0.627	0.706	0.632	0.539	0.673	0.603
6						1	0.769	0.689	0.660	0.572	0.650	0.597
7							1	0.784	0.792	0.688	0.650	0.659
8								1	0.816	0.698	0.673	0.713
9									1	0.774	0.750	0.676
10										1	0.650	0.664
11											1	0.788
12												1
M	5.46	4.75	4.03	4.34	5.25	5.04	5.04	5.52	5.21	4.94	5.48	5.13

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 - tailed)

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 - tailed).

However, as all the mediating effects were found to be in effect simultaneously in the full model, it can be concluded that BA fully mediated the effects of BP dimensions on BPI. The findings derived from the structural regression model had acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 5.82$, GFI = 0.85, CFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.87, RMSEA = 0.12).

6. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

In understanding the relationship between BP, BA & BPI in Indian context, this study provides an understanding of different BP attributes & an empirical evidence of their influence on BPI through the mediating effect of BA. The findings will help the marketers to redefine the marketing strategy. Organisations may focus on appropriate communication so as to capture the fantasy of their target consumers. The organizations can redesign their product differentiation to position the brand in market to enhance the conversion rate of potential customers. The marketers must be acquainted with the culture in shaping Indian consumer's acuity of brands so that their purchase activities can be better predicted. Brands can be harmonized with disposition and then pointed to customers whose traits equivalents the persona of the brand. It is imperative for brand managers to comprehend how consumers pick out the brand. At present, Aaker's five brand personality dimensions are widely used to measure the consumer's perception of the personality of a

brand. This study provides a more detailed insight into the relevance of these dimensions in Indian context. Brand personality enables marketers to efficiently converse with their customers about the brands and to build sturdy associations (Diamantopoulos et al., 2005). In addition, brand personality could assist brand managers to recognize how their consumers make out and distinguish their brands as well as their contenders' brands (Das et al., 2012). Brand marketers and managers in cell phone industry could use the information of their brands' personality to build up and uphold marketing strategies to efficiently draw consumers or supporters

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