

Testing the concept of Brand Personality in Spontaneous Associations

A critique on the insights provided by brand personality
associations

Bárbara Inês Dias Almeida

Dissertation presented as partial requirement for obtaining
the Master's degree in Statistics and Information
Management

NOVA Information Management School
Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

TESTING THE CONCEPT OF BRAND PERSONALITY IN SPONTANEOUS ASSOCIATIONS

A critique on the insights provided by brand personality associations

by

Bárbara Almeida

Dissertation presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Information Management, with a specialization in Marketing Research & CRM

Advisor / Co Advisor: Diana Orghian, PhD

November 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my family, specially my parents and sister, who are always here to support me and always believe in me. I also want to thank my friends Ana Guerreiro, Luísa Pereira and Cristiana Correia, and partner, Cláudio Nunes, who have helped me throughout my studies and shared their own experiences with me. Lastly, I want to thank my advisor, who gave me the freedom to explore this topic, while providing useful and leading insights in my research.

ABSTRACT

The concept of Brand Personality has been explored considerably over the years. However, previous research seems to lack integration and, most importantly, practical applicability in Marketing. Our research explores the evolution of the concept, further extending the critique on the methodology of previous studies, and the integration and redundancy of brand personality in the studies of brand associations. In a free association study performed with fifteen brands from different categories, we successfully confirm that consumers rarely make personality associations spontaneously, while they tend to create a greater number of personality associations when conditioned to do so through projective methods.

KEYWORDS

Brands, Brand Associations, Brand Category, Brand Identity, Brand Image, Brand Personality, Brand Positioning, Free Association, Human Brand Associations, Marketing Strategy, Personality, Projective Methodology, Projective Techniques, Symbolic, Utilitarian.

INDEX

Introduction.....	1
Literature review	3
1.1. Brand personality – evolution of the term	3
1.2. Projective Techniques	5
1.3. The integration of the concept of Brand Personality in Brand studies and literature	7
1.3.1. Brand Associations.....	7
1.3.2. Human Brand Associations (HBAs)	9
1.3.3. Symbolic and Functional Positioning of Brands.....	9
Methodology	11
1.4. Procedure	11
1.5. Participants	14
1.6. Turning free association results into numeric values.....	14
Results and discussion.....	15
1.7. Condition Main Effect.....	15
1.8. Effects of Symbolic and Functional Positioning of Brands	16
1.9. Covariate Effects: Loyalty, Liking, Experiences.....	18
Conclusions.....	20
Limitations and recommendations for future works	22
REFERENCES	23
Appendix.....	27

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Comparing the factors of Brand identity (on the left) with Brand Personality Drivers (on the right).	8
Figure 2 - Spontaneous Condition, free association. The word "personality" is not referred.....	11
Figure 3 - Priming Condition, free association using projective measures. The word "personality" is referred.....	12
Figure 4 - Measuring brand attitudes (loyalty, liking, good experiences).....	13

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Comparing human personality and brand personality.....	4
Table 2 - Classification of words resulting from respondents' free word association task.....	14
Table 3 - Descriptive statistics for the 15 dependent variables (personality means)	15
Table 4 - Brand Positioning.....	16
Table 5 - Descriptive statistics for brand positioning as identified by respondents	17

INTRODUCTION

As objects of value for people, brands have proven to simplify the load in choices between alternatives, building relationships and trust with the consumer through repeated consumption (Bagozzi et al, 2020). Besides, brands and products serve as a representation of the self, our status, ideologies, lifestyle, and how we want to be perceived in general. How customers perceive brands, and specially the concept of brand personality, has an effect on their motivation to buy and engage with those brands, mainly when we talk about the belonging needs, esteem needs, or the self-actualization needs from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). There have been several studies stating that we learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are by our possessions, supporting that the driving force that motivates consumers to purchase goods and services is the need to express their own self, their own personality, through the use of a brand (Sirgy, 1986; Belk, 1988).

Personality traits can be associated with a brand in a direct way by the people that represent the brand, such as the brand's product endorsers, the company's employees or CEO, and the brand's user imagery. Therefore, it is expected that the personality traits of the people associated with the brand are transferred directly to the brand (McCracken, 1989).

Many researchers have explored the concept of how personality is related to consumption and to how consumers respond to brands, many times referring to terms such as brand awareness, brand associations, brand image, brand attitudes, brand attributes, or *brand personality*. The latter is formally defined by Aaker's pioneer study in 1997 as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand", which are expected to differentiate the brand from the competition, creating competitive advantage.

Aaker (1997) studied the dimensions of brand personality, suggesting that they operate in different ways than human personality dimensions, and developed a Brand Personality Framework (BPF) with 5 dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness.

Sincerity refers to brands that are down-to-earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful; excitement refers to brands as being daring, spirited, imaginative and up to date; competence refers to being reliable, intelligent and successful; sophistication comprises characteristics like being charming and upper-class; finally, ruggedness refers to a rugged and outdoorsy brand.

Over the years, Aaker's Brand Personality model has been used as a basis for brand personality studies, with some adaptations done by, for example, considering only the most relevant dimensions, using a reduced scale validated by other studies, using expert judgement to select some items from the scale, or by adding or adjusting items in order to create a better fit to the object of scrutiny, whether it is a specific store, geographical area, and others (Aaker et al., 2001; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007) – nonetheless, most studies prove the generalizability of Aaker's framework.

When thinking about the business applicability of the term, researchers of Brand Personality tend to describe the concept as important to help brand strategists gain insights on how consumers perceive brands, how they might use brands to express themselves, and ultimately, to whom should the brand's strategy and communication effort be directed for.

But what do most studies have in common? In all of them, projective techniques were applied, in which respondents were given a very specific stimulus to identify personality traits, whether it was a direct, open-ended question (e.g. Aaker, 1997: "[...] write down the personality traits that first come to mind when thinking about [...]" a brand; Ekinci & Hosany, 2006: "[...] think of the last tourism destination that you have been to as if it were a person.") mainly basing their methodology on Aaker's BPF, or were requested to classify on a scale how much they identified a brand with a number of given personality traits (e.g. Murphy et al., 2007: subjects were asked to indicate on a 1 to 5 scale how strongly they associated with the destination 5 brand dimensions and 15 corresponding brand facets).

Aaker's BPF does have a wide applicability, however, in the study of Oklevik, Supphellen, and Maehle (2020), research reveals that in a qualitative study of free associations, there is practically non-existence of personality traits ascribed to brands, describing the major problems that arise from brand personality research over the years.

Motivated by the research of Oklevik, et al. (2020), we question as to whether or not consumers ascribe humanlike traits to brands when they process information about the brand in a spontaneous way. If not, are these scales really helpful for brand strategists, or should there be a less redundant and easier way to gain insights on how customers perceive brands, whether we are talking about their human-like traits, or not.

In this study, we explore the evolution of brand personality studies and frameworks, the arguments of brand personality as a metaphor (Avis et al, 2012), and how, ultimately, the use of projective methods in most research regarding brand personality may lead to an inflated level of perceived human traits in most associations people do regarding brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. BRAND PERSONALITY – EVOLUTION OF THE TERM

Human personality has been studied by psychologists for years and, while there's no clear-cut definition, personality refers to those characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaving (Pervin, Cervone & John, 2005; Mayer, J. D., 2007a).

Aaker (1997) based the personality attributes of her scale on the traits used in the initial studies of personality attributes done by Tupes and Christal (1958), and Norman (1963), along with all the studies that followed, which refined the Five Factor Model of personality (also known as the Big 5): Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. This model is characterized as a universal scale, that has been tested in diverse populations, multiple methods and has survived over the years as a robust model (McCrae & Costa, Jr., 2008).

However, the definition of personality needs to be adapted when talking about brands, since there are some aspects of human personality that don't make sense applied to brands – in Table 1 there is a comparison between Human Personality and Brand Personality, also showing the compatibility between its dimensions.

The term *brand personality* has been used loosely over the years. Back in 1958 it already existed to refer the non-material dimensions that make a store special, defining what was called the *character of the store* (Martineau, 1958).

User and usage image attributes are also considered in the construction of brand personality. In 1985 (in a study that was later republished in 2000), Plummer was already referring to brand personality as one of the components of brand image, as the personality or character of the brand itself. These types of associations seem to arise most often as a result of inferences about the underlying user and usage situation (Keller, 1993), being purely the result of whether or not the consumer sees himself in that brand. Plummer (2000) further adds that the perceived character of the brand is a direct consequence of the brand's communication or advertising efforts, stating that there is rarely anything intrinsic to a brand that makes it have a personality on its own.

Finally, in a study that ended up being a reference on Brand Personality until the present time, Aaker (1997) referred that personality traits come to be directly associated with a brand by the people associated with the brand (user imagery, company's employees, product endorsers, etc.) and indirectly through the product-related attributes, product category, brand name, symbol or logo, price, arguing that brand personality could also further include demographic characteristics such as gender and class – this way formalizing the definition of brand personality as *the set of human characteristics associated with a brand*.

Thus far the only personality scales used were ad hoc scales (which were atheoretical in nature) or scales based in human personality alone. Aaker's main purpose with her research was to create a framework of brand personality that could be adapted and generalized for all types of brands, and to provide a valid scale to serve as a basis for theory building on the symbolic use of brands.

In a study lead by Capara et al. (2001), when consumers were asked to describe brands using the Five Factor Model of human personality defined by Costa and McCrae (1992), only two factors emerged, one of them corresponding to the Big 5's Agreeableness trait, compatible with Sincerity in Aaker's scale, and the other factor corresponding to the Conscientiousness/ Extraversion/ Openness traits, compatible with Excitement in Aaker's scale (Table 1), leaving Sophistication, Ruggedness and Conscientiousness as unique elements of her scale, tapping into possible consumers desires or product characteristics, and not necessarily personality traits.

Table 1 - Comparing human personality and brand personality

	Human personality	Brand Personality Framework (<i>Aaker, 1997</i>)
Definition	Characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feelings, thinking, and behaving. ¹	The set of human characteristics associated with a brand. ²
Dimensions	<pre> graph LR subgraph Human_Personality [Human personality] direction TB O[Openness] C[Conscientiousness] E[Extraversion] A[Agreeableness] N[Neuroticism] end subgraph Brand_Personality [Brand Personality Framework] direction TB Ex[Excitement] S[Sincerity] So[Sophistication] Co[Competence] Ru[Ruggedness] end O --> Ex C --> Ex C --> S E --> Ex A --> S N --> Ru </pre>	

1. Pervin, Cervone & John, 2005; Mayer, J. D., 2007a

2. Aaker, 1997

Upon studies testing the framework for specific contexts, cultures, products and services (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007), there was evidence that Aaker's brand personality scale couldn't fully represent the scope of personality traits associated with travel destinations portrayed as brands, and that many traits were associated with different dimensions from those of the original scale, arguably due to the same trait item having different meanings when associated with different objects. However, more recent studies (McInnis & Folkes, 2017; Davies et al., 2018) successfully illustrated that the majority of research across different brands and brand entity types, cultures, or approaches, from 1997 until 2016, always converges to most of the traits originally identified by Aaker in 1997, proving

their robustness over the years as a way of characterizing consumers' perceptions of brand personalities in a broad context.

Other theorists have suggested that the understanding of consumers' responses toward brands "could be further enriched by having warmth and competence reflected in their foundation", based on the premise that there's a difference between personality scales (what a person really is) and social perception (how a person seems) (Fiske et al., 2012) - but then again, when talking about brands, Fiske's premise is questionable. Despite being possible, as we've seen throughout previous literature, to characterize and perceive brands as people, either through metaphorical thinking or not, it has to be assumed that we're referring to how the brand is perceived by an individual, and not that the brand has both realms of what it really is and how it is actually perceived, since the brand is not a human being. Consequently, when talking about personality, or personality scales for this matter, we're always referring to customers' perceptions of brand personality.

The need for the creation of fewer evaluative criteria arose from the existence of many human-like personality traits, and classifying them into a few broad groups would offer a systematic and manageable way to identify similarities and differences across brands. Fiske and colleagues (e.g., Kervyn et al., 2012; Malone & Fiske, 2013) suggest that these two evaluative criteria – Warmth and Competence – loom large in people's categorizations, descriptions, and judgments of others and that, while not providing a detailed description of the actual attributes of brands, these criteria allow researchers to measure customers' perceptions of a larger number of social objects. And since Warmth and Competence are already factors comprised in Aaker's framework, as Sincerity and Competence, respectively, this new research comes to prove the redundancy and fragmentation revolving around personality scales and personality research as a whole.

Thus, our first hypothesis derives from two of Oklevik's et al. (2020) main points in the critique of brand personality research: the fundamental problem of anthropomorphism and how projective response may lead to poor construct validity.

1.2. PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

Levy (1985) has defined projective techniques as any question or stimulus proposed to a respondent that elicits behaviour, further acknowledging that the more specific the question, the narrower the range of information given by the respondent.

Research over the years has tried to disregard the scientific status of projective methods, arguing their failure to provide measurement norms, often exhibiting low reliability and validity, being however possible to state that projective research is effective to inform managers in the developmental phases of a marketing campaign, helping them broaden their customer understanding,

generating possibilities for new brand positionings and communications (Rook, 2006). But are these methods reliable enough to generate universal and generalizable brand personality scales or frameworks?

In 1990, Fazio introduced the MODE model, proposing that Motivation and Opportunity determine whether attitude guides behaviour in a spontaneous or deliberate process, defending that, for individuals to engage in some specific reasoning, they would need some sort of motivation. Fazio also gives the example of situations that require the respondent to make a behavioural response quickly, denying the respondent the opportunity to undertake some sort of reflection or reasoning. In these cases, respondents have no alternative to the theory-driven mode characterized by the spontaneous processing model.

When a survey provides poor opportunity and low motivation, the respondents answer can be interpreted as a convergence between the automatically activated attitude and the self-reported attitude. On the other hand, a condition of good opportunity and high motivation can lead to a divergence between the automatically and the self-reported attitude – respondents might self-report an attitude that is consistent with social norms (Bernreuter, 1933), but is not consistent with their automatically activated attitude (social desirability bias).

Hence, when referring to the term *personality* or *brand personality* in a questionnaire, respondents have more “clues”, or a better motivation, to see brands as people and to try and figure out what is expected of them, aligning their answers with what they think will be more useful, to what they think is the correct answer.

Most brand personality studies referred thus far have mainly relied on projection in their approach, asking respondents to *think of each brand as if it were a person*. Avis (2012) stated that if consumers are using the human metaphor as a way of expressing their perception of the brand, it is different than actually thinking of brands as humanlike entities. Therefore, if brands were perceived as humanlike entities, there would be no need for these types of projective methodologies, nor the use of metaphor – hence the anthropomorphism problem referred by Oklevik et al. (2020).

In 2018, Davies et al. investigated how thinking of a brand as an actual person would mean that consumers thought processes would be similar to those observed when asked to evaluate the personality of an actual human, showcasing Yoon’s et al. (2006) research that compared neural magnetic resonance imaging of respondents processing human personality and brand personality in different parts of the brain. This research showed that the way people think about brands and products is not similar to how they think of humans.

Oklevik et al. (2020) specified that the important question is whether or not consumers ascribe humanlike traits to brands when they process information about the brand in a spontaneous way, since it has been shown that Aaker’s methodology is at least able to ‘create’ personality in stimuli

which share no obvious antecedents to the formation of brand personality, such as rocks (Avis & Ferguson, 2014).

As an example, Aaker's procedure (1997, p.350) had the following instructions:

This may sound unusual, but think of the set of human characteristics associated with each brand. For example, you might think that the human characteristics associated with Pepto Bismal are kind, warm, caring, soothing, gentle, trustworthy and dependable (...). We're interested in finding out which personality traits or human characteristics come to mind when you think of a particular brand.

We can argue that this instruction may activate these traits in the respondent's mind, therefore influencing further responses. Moreover, if respondents weren't asked to describe a brand as if it were a person, would their first thoughts be about the brand as an individual entity with personality, or would they think of the personality of its users, the qualities of its products, their personal experiences while using the brand?

More recent studies about brand personality (Johar et al., 2005) also claim that, because brand personality is based on inferential/projective processes, consumers are merely projecting personality traits onto the brands, and not being sincere or excited about the brand itself.

Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: When using projective techniques, by directly asking people about a brand's personality, people will identify more personality traits than when the term is not mentioned.

1.3. THE INTEGRATION OF THE CONCEPT OF BRAND PERSONALITY IN BRAND STUDIES AND LITERATURE

Research on brands and their effects and meaning for consumers has grown, but it is highly fragmented and lacking in integration (Bagozzi et al., 2020).

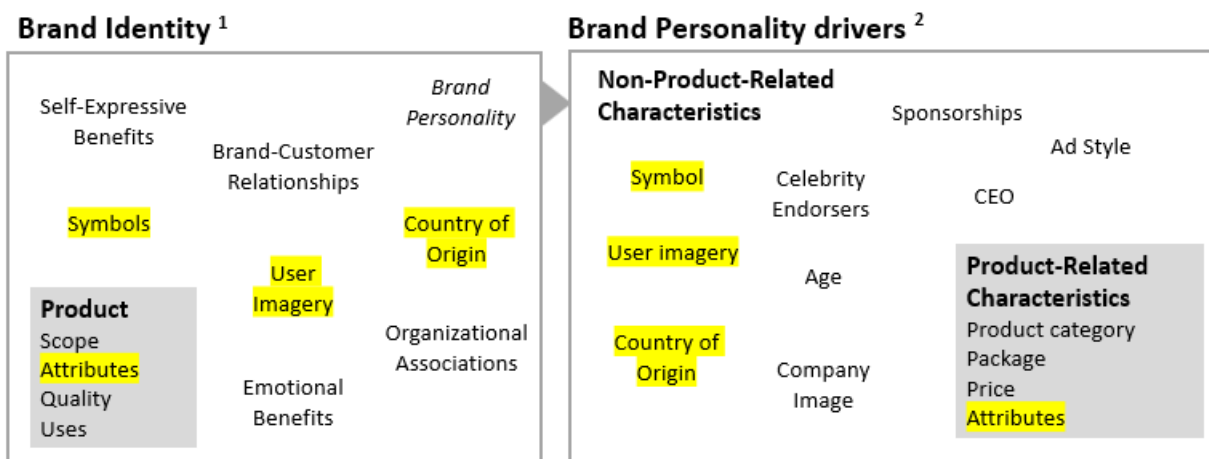
Aaker (1996) defines Brand Equity as the set of assets (or liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol, that can be divided into four categories: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand associations (which includes, among other things, product attributes, celebrity endorsers, symbols).

1.3.1. Brand Associations

Brand associations are driven by the brand identity, in which there are four perspectives that play a part: the brand as a product, the brand as an organization, the brand as a symbol and the brand as a person – the latter is where Aaker (1996) fits the concept of Brand Personality as a way to create

stronger and more interesting brands, not only as a channel to communicating self-expressive attributes, but also to communicate product attributes, contributing to a functional benefit.

In Figure 1, we can see that Aaker (1996) considers Brand Personality as one of the factors of Brand Identity (on the left), but then identifies most of the factors of Brand Identity as drivers of Brand Personality, adding to the redundancy of the concept, and to a repetitive analysis - repeated factors are highlighted in both sides of the figure.



1. Based on Aaker (1996), figure 5-3, p.146

2. Based on Aaker (1996), image 3-2, p.74

Figure 1 - Comparing the factors of Brand identity (on the left) with Brand Personality Drivers (on the right).

Hence, it is not that Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Framework doesn't make sense when we refer to its dimensions – as we've stated before, several studies have shown that the framework is robust, and McInnis and Folkes (2017) have a great display of its robustness – nevertheless, aside from the referred critiques to anthropomorphism and projective methods, the integration of Brand Personality in the concept of Brand Associations, along with the brands' user image, self-expressive benefits or emotional benefits, for example, can generate confusion, repetition and lead to research that doesn't have a practical applicability.

As Aaker (1997) herself referred, personality traits come to be directly associated with a brand by the people associated with the brand (user imagery, company's employees, product endorsers) not the brand intrinsically or as a human entity – a change in these factors may automatically change customers perceptions about the brand when measuring brand personality.

For example, Landwehr, McGill, and Herrmann (2011) have shown that, when comparing car brands and models, more specifically, car brands with a downturned or upturned grille, results showed that brands with an upturned grille are evaluated as friendlier. This means that something so simple as the

depiction of the grille of a car, coupled with a depiction of the shape and angle of the headlights, is enough to impact perceptions of the brand's aggressiveness.

Another example is the “Butterfinger Story” (Aaker, 1996), where the perception of the brand Butterfinger (which was perceived as being outdated) was immediately changed when Nestlé started using the irreverent character Bart Simpson as the new face of the brand, strengthening this candy bar brand’s relationship with its target market. The same change could occur when a brand adjusts the look and feel of their stores, the attire of their store workers, among other things. That said, Oklevik’s et al. (2020) suggestion of analysing Human Brand Associations (HBAs) would be much more applicable, and diminish the redundancy of any analysis made to brand identity factors.

1.3.2. Human Brand Associations (HBAs)

Olkevik et al. (2020) suggest a new approach, based on Associative Network Theory (ANT) (Anderson, 1983; Collins & Loftus, 1975) – this theory explains that brand associations vary according to the frequency with which any specific association is activated in internal and/or external thought processes.

Brand Personality associations, or humanlike characteristics associated to brands, may play a role when personal figures represent the brand. The more often these personal figures are exposed to consumers, the more their human characteristics become a part of their thought processes about the brand.

Oklevik et al. (2020) suggest that there are three main types of HBA: brand representatives, brand characters and stereotyped brand users. Despite needing further research regarding methodology, this approach leaves the assumption that consumers see brands as humans, rather assuming that consumers *associate brands with certain human figures, which in turn are associated with specific human characteristics*. There’s the example of Nespresso, being associated with George Clooney – maybe some consumers, in a free-word association, will associate the brand directly with the actor, while others may come up with personality traits that describe the actor, as a way of describing the brand (brand character). Another example is having a friend that is long time user of some specific brand – after a while, we would start associating that brand with that friend, thus associating their personality traits with the brand (stereotypical brand user).

1.3.3. Symbolic and Functional Positioning of Brands

Since the concept of Brand Personality also fits into the definition of brands as a passive object with utilitarian and symbolic meaning (Bagozzi et al., 2020), it is important to explore the Symbolic and

Functional positioning of brands and how does this positioning contribute to the perception of Brand Personality.

It is widely accepted that consumers go to extensive efforts to seek information not only depending on the type of involvement of the purchase decision, but also for purchases that may have an impact on the expression of their lifestyle and self-expression.

This results in two main dimensions that are considered in the purchasing process, those being the purchase-decision involvement and the think-feel purchase type. These dimensions form one of the most popular product-classification schemes in advertising and consumer research: the FCB grid.

The purchase-decision involvement is more related to how actively consumers seek information about the product and how they engage in brand or product comparisons (Houston and Rothschild, 1977).

For this study, we will focus mainly on the think-feel dimension of the FCB grid, in which the perception of brand personality has a higher influence, since one of the measurements used in this dimension is how much the decision to buy some type of product expresses one's personality and is related to consumers rational or emotional decisions. Previous studies show that consumers are more likely to make rational decisions based on the evaluations of utilitarian benefits offered by different brands when purchasing think products, and more likely to make emotional decisions based on evaluations of hedonic-affective (or symbolic) attributes of various brands when purchasing feel products (Cheong & Cheong, 2020).

Products' utilitarian benefits can include some form of functional or practical values – products bought for “utilitarian needs”, meaning the consumer cares more about functional performance – whereas symbolic attributes may include more sensory or experiential values – products bought for “symbolic needs”, when the purchase is driven by the consumer's gratification, social acceptance, or sensory stimulation (Ratchford, 1987; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000).

A consumer's buying process tends to include both utilitarian and symbolic considerations, because although the degrees of both forms of considerations may vary according to the product type, there's always some degree of symbolic consideration.

One of Aaker's criteria for what brands to include in her study was to include brands of the following categories: symbolic, utilitarian and both symbolic and utilitarian (as identified by Ratchford, 1987), and for the sake of a contrast evaluation between this and previous studies, we also used this criterion. The most likely scenario that we hypothesize is if a brand is perceived as a symbolic, or symbolic and utilitarian brand, it is more likely to be characterized with personality terms:

H2: If the brand is perceived as symbolic, or symbolic and utilitarian, it is more likely to be characterized with personality terms.

METHODOLOGY

1.4. PROCEDURE

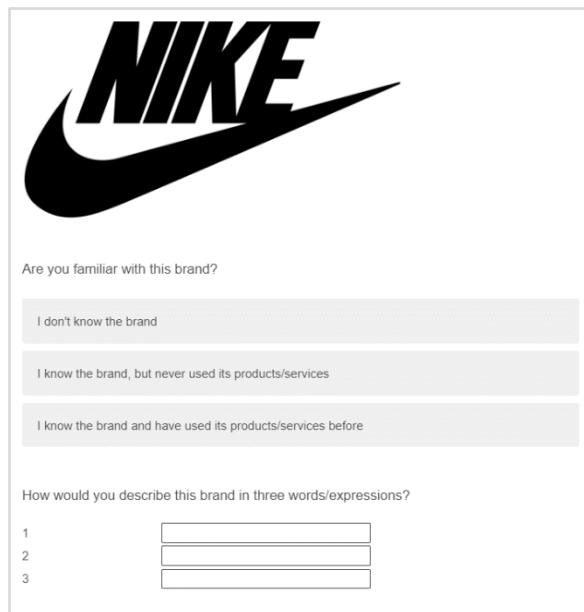
We conducted an experimental study with two randomly assigned conditions, for 15 brands.

The following instruction appeared on the beginning of the questionnaire, independently of the assigned condition:

*“Next, you’ll have questions regarding **15 brands**.*

*You don’t need to use a lot of time thinking about the following questions, **just try to answer with the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about each of these brands.**”*

Regarding each condition, one of them was our Spontaneous Condition – a free three-word association asking about 3 things that first come to mind when seeing the brand’s logo and name (in Figure 2 there’s an example of the Spontaneous Condition for the brand Nike). That was our control condition.



The image shows a questionnaire interface for the brand Nike. At the top is the Nike logo. Below it, the question "Are you familiar with this brand?" is followed by three radio button options: "I don't know the brand", "I know the brand, but never used its products/services", and "I know the brand and have used its products/services before". Below these options is the question "How would you describe this brand in three words/expressions?". This is followed by three numbered input fields (1, 2, 3) for providing the associations.

Figure 2 - Spontaneous Condition, free association. The word "personality" is not referred.

The other, our Priming Condition, was a free three-word association in which respondents were shown the term “personality” when asking about considerations or opinions about the brands (in Figure 3 there’s an example of the priming condition for the brand Nike).



Are you familiar with this brand?

☐ I don't know the brand

☐ I know the brand, but never used its products/services

☐ I know the brand and have used its products/services before

If this brand had a personality, how would you describe it in three words/expressions?

1

2

3

Figure 3 - Priming Condition, free association using projective measures. The word "personality" is referred.

There was a recommendation in the beginning of the questionnaire for respondents to change the displayed language to Portuguese if they were Portuguese, to make word association easier and more reliable in both conditions.

The objective of this questionnaire was to have the two conditions being as similar as possible, practically only differing on the use of the word "personality", as observed in figures 2 and 3.

This way we could understand if consumers do ascribe humanlike traits to brands when they process information about the brand in a spontaneous way, by associating brands with a similar number of personality traits independently of the condition, or if these traits are only referred given the specific question about the brand's personality.

Additionally, we tried to understand how consumers attitudes towards the brand might influence their behaviour/characterization. Using a 9-point Likert scale, we asked respondents to indicate how often they bought from the brand (which we called loyalty), if they liked the brand or had good experiences with the brand (question in figure 4) – those questions didn't change for each condition.

How often do you buy from NIKE?

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very often

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 Strongly agree	I don't know/ I have never used the brand
I like the brand NIKE	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have good past experiences using NIKE	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Figure 4 - Measuring brand attitudes (loyalty, liking, good experiences).

If respondents stated they didn't know the brand in the first question (in figures 2 and 3), they wouldn't be presented with the second question, regarding word association, nor the questions in Figure 4.

We also asked if the respondents worked on some of these brands, trying to validate if working in a company could increase the chances of someone seeing the brand as intrinsically having a personality, since they would have a closer relationship with the companies values and customer message – this question didn't get more than 2 positive responses, so it was ignored in our analysis.

Finally, we asked respondents to characterize each of the 15 brands as Symbolic, Utilitarian, or Utilitarian and Symbolic, further asking them to rate their understanding of the terms "Symbolic" and "Utilitarian".

The fifteen brands used on this questionnaire were chosen on a basis of popularity, especially for the Portuguese consumer, since it is the country where the study takes place. The objective was to study three brands of each of the three categories included in Aaker's study (1997): symbolic (*e.g., jeans, cosmetics, and fragrance*), utilitarian (*e.g., computers, electronics, and appliances*), and both symbolic and utilitarian (*e.g., automobiles, beverages, and athletic shoes*).

We chose 15 brands from a list of 95 brands, compiled from 3 different sources: Forbe's annual list of the world's most valuable brands for 2020 (Forbes, 2020), a study done by Havas Group, ranking the 50 most Meaningful Brands for Portugal (Havas Group, 2019), and the Brand Finance ranking of the most valued Portuguese Brands in 2019 (Brand Finance, 2019). We merged the three rankings, categorizing each brand as Symbolic, Utilitarian or both Symbolic & Utilitarian, and proceeded to choose 5 brands of each category, resulting in the following list of brands to be presented to respondents:

- Symbolic – Disney, Louis Vuitton, Marlboro, Nike and Superbock;
- Symbolic & Utilitarian: Apple, Coca-Cola, Mercedes-Benz, Starbucks and Zara;
- Utilitarian; Asus, Continente, Gillette, Ikea and Olá.

Our subjects were randomly assigned to either one of both conditions and, within each condition, the order of the questions regarding each brand (for all 15 brands) was also randomized.

You can find the model of the questionnaire for both conditions in the Appendix.

1.5. PARTICIPANTS

The questionnaire was published on social media (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn), and passed on individually to various communities and groups, for one month period.

The sample used in this study was originally 168 respondents, which ended up being reduced to 119, excluding very incomplete answers related to respondent fatigue – only answers that filled more than 50% of the 45 words (3 words per brand) required to complete the free word association for both conditions were considered.

The sample had nearly 48% female respondents, the average age of respondents was 28.62 years old (SD = 8.544), and more than 50% of the sample had a bachelor's degree or higher.

1.6. TURNING FREE ASSOCIATION RESULTS INTO NUMERIC VALUES

As a result of the sample's free word association for both conditions, there were about 4159 terms to analyse (an average of 40 terms per person). All 4159 words were labelled as either a personality term (PERS), or a non-personality term (NO_PERS), which were then turned into 1 and 0 (for PERS and NO_PERS, respectively), in order to calculate means, and other statistical estimates.

The requirements to consider each word as a personality term were the following: the term had to be an adjective, applicable to people or applicable to brands considering Aaker's (1997) scale items. All terms were classified independently of the condition or brand they were applying to, in order to minimize errors and possible bias – please bear in mind that, in a traditional investigation, there would be a specific team or even blind coders to perform this task and reduce classification error and bias, but for the context of this dissertation there was only one person performing the coding of all personality terms. Examples of the classification of the words can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 - Classification of words resulting from respondents' free word association task

Label	Example of terms provided by respondents
PERS (1)	<i>Amigável, Cool, inovador, inovadora, moderna, arrogante, comunicativa, jovem, original, sneaky, observadora, exigente, innovative, atraente, atrativa, snob, trendy, gananciosa, capitalista.</i>
NO_PERS (0)	<i>Diferenciada, qualidade, cara, pouco acessível, publicidade criativa, simples de conceito, durabilidade, rapidez, pouca originalidade, premium, funcional, eficácia, design, desonestidade, inovação</i>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.7. CONDITION MAIN EFFECT

When trying to understand if using projective techniques, by directly asking people about a brand's personality, would cause respondents to identify more personality traits than when the term was not mentioned, the analysis showed that the average of identified personality terms was higher for the priming condition, that showed the word "personality", than for the condition that didn't mention the word "personality" (spontaneous condition, see Table 3), considering PERS=1 and NO_PERS = 0. Our dependent variable is the mean of personality terms identified.

Table 3 - Descriptive statistics for the 15 dependent variables (personality means)

Brands	Spontaneous condition (M, SD)	Priming condition (M, SD)
Apple	M = 0.12, SD = 0.21	M = 0.48, SD = 0.34
Asus	M = 0.09, SD = 0.19	M = 0.37, SD = 0.34
Continente	M = 0.08, SD = 0.34	M = 0.34, SD = 0.39
Disney	M = 0.15, SD = 0.26	M = 0.49, SD = 0.41
Gillette	M = 0.12, SD = 0.23	M = 0.42, SD = 0.40
Ikea	M = 0.08, SD = 0.16	M = 0.36, SD = 0.37
LV	M = 0.19, SD = 0.25	M = 0.38, SD = 0.36
Marlboro	M = 0.21, SD = 0.24	M = 0.42, SD = 0.40
Mercedes	M = 0.14, SD = 0.20	M = 0.42, SD = 0.35
Nike	M = 0.19, SD = 0.25	M = 0.60, SD = 0.32
Olá	M = 0.13, SD = 0.23	M = 0.52, SD = 0.36
Starbucks	M = 0.16, SD = 0.23	M = 0.57, SD = 0.37
Superbock	M = 0.10, SD = 0.21	M = 0.48, SD = 0.43
Zara	M = 0.22, SD = 0.30	M = 0.47, SD = 0.38
Coca Cola	M = 0.18, SD = 0.28	M = 0.50, SD = 0.38

We performed a one-way between subject ANOVA to compare the effect of projective measures on the attribution of personality terms for the Spontaneous Condition, and Priming Condition.

There was a significant effect of projective measures on the attribution of personality terms at $p < .05$ for both conditions [$F_{\text{mean_pers}}(1,117) = 33.415, p < .001$], hence confirming H1.

From this, we can postulate that, when using projective techniques by directly asking people about a brand's personality, people will identify more personality traits than when the term is not mentioned.

These results confirm Avis and Ferguson theory (2014), showing that the projective methodologies used in most Brand Personality studies are able to “create” personality identification stimuli.

Also, we validate and further extend on Oklevik’s research (2020), being able to assert that consumers are less likely to identify personality traits in brands in a spontaneous way.

1.8. EFFECTS OF SYMBOLIC AND FUNCTIONAL POSITIONING OF BRANDS

Regarding the Symbolic and Functional positioning of brands, we had the original classification from which we selected the five brands as shown in Table 4 – A, and also the classification according to our respondents as show in Table 4 – B.

Table 4 - Brand Positioning

Symbolic	Symbolic & Utilitarian	Utilitarian
A. Original Classification used to choose the 15 brands		
Disney	Apple	Asus
Luis Vuitton	Coca-cola	Continente
Marlboro	Mercedes-Benz	Gillette
NIKE	Starbucks	Ikea
Superbock	Zara	Olá
B. Classification according to survey respondents (based on frequency tables)		
Disney	Apple	Asus
Luis Vuitton	Coca-cola	Continente
Marlboro	Mercedes-Benz	Gillette
<i>Starbucks</i>	<i>NIKE</i>	Ikea
		Olá
		<i>Superbock</i>
		<i>Zara</i>

When grouping the brands for these classifications, either attributed originally (Table 4-A) or by respondents (Table 4-B), we ran the one-way between subject ANOVA again, to compare the effect of projective measures on the attribution of personality terms for the Spontaneous Condition, and Priming Condition.

For each category of the original classification, there was a significant effect of projective measures on the attribution of personality terms at $p < .05$ for both conditions [$F_{\text{Symbolic_brands}}(1,107) = 36.713, p < .001$; $F_{\text{Utilitarian_brands}}(1,108) = 42.265, p < .001$; $F_{\text{Symb.\&Util._brands}}(1,108) = 39.879, p < .001$].

For the respondents’ classification there was also a significant effect of projective measures on the attribution of personality terms at $p < .05$ for both conditions [$F_{\text{CustomerSymbolic_brands}}(1,105) = 32.153, p < .001$; $F_{\text{CustomerUtilitarian_brands}}(1,108) = 37.263, p < .001$; $F_{\text{CustomerSymb.\&Util._brands}}(1,109) = 46.689, p < .001$].

Additionally, according to the descriptive statistics for the respondents’ classification, Symbolic and Symbolic & Utilitarian brands had a higher mean of personality term identification, while Utilitarian brands had a lower mean comparatively to other brand positionings in both scenarios (see Table 5).

Table 5 - Descriptive statistics for brand positioning as identified by respondents

Brands	Spontaneous condition (M, SD)	Priming condition (M, SD)
Customer_Symbolic	M = 0.18, SD = 0.19	M = 0.46, SD = 0.31
Customer_Symbolic&Utilitarian	M = 0.18, SD = 0.19	M = 0.48, SD = 0.27
Customer_Utilitarian	M = 0.12, SD = 0.14	M = 0.40, SD = 0.31

Hence confirming our expectations that, for Symbolic or Symbolic & Utilitarian brands, the probability of being characterized with more personality terms is higher than for Utilitarian brands.

To measure the statistical significance of the affirmation above, we started by performing a paired-samples t-test to compare the attribution of personality terms in the top 3 symbolic brands (the 3 brands with higher classifications as symbolic by respondents – Disney, Louis Vuitton, and Marlboro) and the top 3 utilitarian brands (the 3 brands with higher classifications as utilitarian by respondents – Asus, Contiente, Gillette).

There was a significant difference in the scores for the attributed personality terms for the top 3 symbolic brands (M = 0.30, SD = 0.30) and for the top 3 utilitarian brands (M = 0.23, SD = 0.29); $t(96) = 2.43$, $p = 0.017$.

We then measured the same effect, this time for all the brands that respondents characterized as either symbolic and symbolic & utilitarian (a total of 8 brands: Louis Vuitton, Disney, Marlboro, Starbucks, Mercedes, Apple, Coca-Cola, and Nike), or as utilitarian (a total of seven brands: Contiente, Asus, Gillette, Ikea, Olá, Zara and Superbock).

This time, the paired-samples t-test also resulted in a significant difference in the scores for the attributed personality terms for all symbolic and symbolic & utilitarian brands (M = 0.32, SD = 0.27) and for all utilitarian brands (M = 0.25, SD = 0.28); $t(107) = 3.60$, $p < 0.001$.

Hence, there's confirmation of H2 (if the brand is perceived as symbolic, or symbolic and utilitarian, it is more likely to be characterized with personality terms), and our analysis supports previous studies which suggest that personality is mostly associated with symbolic brands (Cheong & Cheong, 2020).

However, despite proving the significance of our hypothesis, and turning our attention to a more in-depth analysis of the descriptive measures from table 3, we want to try and explain why we had higher significance when analysing all brands, instead of the top 3, since the latter would be expected to have more significant values.

Primarily, we can see that the priming condition exacerbates the dispersion of data for some brands. For example, Louis Vuitton, one of the top 3 symbolic brands (which is classified as Symbolic by the majority of respondents), has one of the lowest attributions of personality terms, and Olá

(which is classified as Utilitarian by the majority of respondents), has one of the highest attributions of personality terms.

This dispersion can probably be explained through respondents' familiarity with the brand (knowing the brand and already having used its products, or knowing the brand but never having used its products).

Firstly, for Louis Vuitton, our analysis showed that the majority of respondents have never used the brand (more than 80% stated that they knew the brand, but had never used it); additionally, given its status as a luxury brand, it is not a brand that the average consumer sees advertised in common marketing channels, there's not too many stores and there are not a lot of people using the brand. Hence, it is a brand with very few associations regarding HBAs in consumers' minds.

Then we have the example of Olá, which can be considered as a staple brand in Portugal, that is very easily activated in consumers' minds (98% of respondents know and have used the brand). Hence, when asked to describe the personality of the brand, despite being utilitarian, consumers will find it easier to associate with any type of HBAs.

Thus, these exceptions can also help prove Okleviks' et al. (2020) HBA approach, that human *associate brands with certain human figures, which in turn are associated with specific human characteristics*, since this association is easier for brands from which consumers can easily identify human association cues (such as Olá, which is highly advertised and sold in many places).

1.9. COVARIATE EFFECTS: LOYALTY, LIKING, EXPERIENCES

Finally, the respondents were also questioned about their loyalty and experiences with each brand (figure 4), as a way of trying to understand if these variables could act as covariates in our model – if people bought the brand more often, would they identify more personality traits for that brand? The same question applies to liking the brand or having good past experiences with the brand.

A One-way ANCOVA was conducted to determine a statistically significant difference between the Priming Condition or Spontaneous Condition on the number of personality terms identified, controlling for the following variables:

- Loyalty (Likert-scale of 1 to 9: "How often do you buy from [*brand name*]?")
- Liking (Likert-scale of 1 to 9: "I like the brand [*brand name*].")
- Experiences (Likert-scale of 1 to 9: "I have good past experiences using the brand [*brand name*].")

After controlling for the three variables above, there was a confirmed significant difference in the mean of attribution of personality terms for each condition [$F(1,112) = 36.441; p < .001$].

The majority of available research tries to understand the potential roles of brand personality, mainly exploring on the role of individual attachment style (Swaminathan et al., 2009) and implicit self-theories (Park and John, 2010; Bagozzi et al., 2020), but few try to understand if, besides the projective nature of the research, there are any other variables that might affect the perception of brand personality, usually treating brand personality as an independent variable and intrinsic to the brand.

Hence, if explored more thoroughly on a different study, these results could also add to the theory that brand personality depends more on brand experience cues, instead of being a holistic vision and characterization of the brand.

CONCLUSIONS

Previous research has shown concerns about the validity of brand personality scales, and how they seem to lack integration with other research on the concept of brand personality or other brand associations. The use of projective techniques has also been questioned as a valid basis to develop general frameworks.

In this study, we've tried to understand if people identify brands with human personality traits in a spontaneous way, by analysing free associations for fifteen different brands in different categories (symbolic, utilitarian and both), either referring to the brand as having personality, or without mentioning personality at all.

In our spontaneous condition, so when not seeing reference to brand personality anywhere, only 14% of associations performed by respondents corresponded to personality traits, and on the priming condition where personality was referred, there were still 52% of associations that were not considered as personality traits.

Therefore, additionally to observing that there's a statistically significant difference on the attribution of personality terms when manipulating respondents to think about brands as humans, we can also assume that consumers find it hard to attribute personality traits to every brand, and are more likely to reference attribute-based descriptors.

Moreover, given that the respondents who were shown the spontaneous condition also had a higher response and completion rate, we can conclude that, in general, it is hard for consumers to think about brands as if they were humans.

Regarding brand categorization, we could also observe that Symbolic and Symbolic & Utilitarian brands do have higher means of attribution of personality traits, contrary to Utilitarian brands, for both conditions, in agreement with previous research. Furthermore, variables such as buying the brand often, linking the brand and having good past experiences with the brand (which, to simplify, we refer to as the overall experience with the brand) also appeared to have an effect on the attribution of personality traits.

Hence, we can conclude that it doesn't seem to be very helpful for marketers to engage in brand personality studies with projective measures, since the measure of attribution of personality terms proves to be influenced not only by the type of methodology used, but also by the brand category and customers' overall experiences.

Throughout our literature review, we also observed that the traditional personality frameworks don't really find their place in the marketing strategy.

Firstly, because they seem to only be used in *ad-hoc* research for brands to understand how they are perceived. Knowing that a brand is perceived as Sincere, Rugged, or any other factor of Aaker's

framework, is at most useful to assess if consumers are aligned or understand the brand's values, and maybe to understand the type of consumers that identifies most with the brand. The construct doesn't provide brands with proactive insights to engage with the market.

Secondly, the construct can't even fully grasp consumers' perceptions, since brand personality research is mainly based on projections, disregarding the natural associations consumers make about brands (as we've shown for the polarized examples of Louis Vuitton and Olá, human brand associations might have an important effect on the consumers' perceptions of brands).

Lastly, we've also seen that some measures of brand identity seem to be often characterized as brand personality drivers, possibly leading to repetition and confusion of terms in marketing analysis and literature.

Hence, to eliminate redundancy in overall marketing strategy, we agree with Oklevik's et al. (2020) proposal of measuring the human aspects associated with brand images by focusing on the actual characteristics of personal figures associated with the brand: Human Brand Associations – defined by the characteristics associated with brand representatives, brand characters and brand users.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKS

One limitation of this study was the type of questionnaire – free associations studies prove to be very difficult for people to complete willingly without any type of reward, especially studies of this size, in which every participant was shown all fifteen brands and asked to describe them with three words each.

Additionally, in a traditional investigation, there would be a specific team, or blind coders, to perform the task of classifying the terms identified by respondents as personality terms or non-personality terms. When performed by only one individual, this task is subject to classification error and bias, but for the context of this dissertation there was only one person performing the coding of all personality terms. The way the questionnaire was constructed also made the analysis somewhat complex.

Future research could include improvements to collecting, measuring, and characterizing free association results, which are of better interest for marketers. For example, the creation of AI tools for these tasks, based on the extensive Human and Brand Personality previous literature, where the frameworks referenced throughout our study would have a valid and more insightful purpose than in *ad-hoc* marketing research.

Also, additional research on how Human Brand Associations (Oklevik, et al., 2020) are present in the consumer's brand association and perception networks is welcomed. It could be particularly interesting to try and understand which type of HBA has more influence on the whole perception of the human characteristics of brands (if it's the brand CEO or other representatives, endorsers, peer users or user stereotypes, brand characters, or others) and if it depends on the category of the brand.

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (1996). *Building strong brands*. New York: Free Press.
- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356
- Aaker, J.L., Benet-Martinez, V. & Garolera, J. (2001). Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: a study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(3), 492-508
- Abraham H. Maslow (1943). A theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological review*, 50, 370-396
- Ackermann, C. & Mathieu, J. (2015). Implicit attitudes and their measurement: Theoretical foundations and use in consumer behavior research. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 30(2), 55-77.
- Anderson, J. R. (1983). The architecture of cognition. *Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press*.
- Avis, M., & Aitken, R. (2015). Intertwined: Brand personification, brand personality and brand relationships in historical perspective. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 7(2), 208–331.
- Avis, M., Aitken, R. & Ferguson, S. (2012). Brand relationship and personality theory: metaphor or consumer perceptual reality? *Marketing Theory*, 12(3), 311-331
- Avis, M., Forbes, S. & Ferguson, S. (2014). The brand personality of rocks: A critical evaluation of a brand personality scale. *Marketing Theory*, 14(4), 451-475
- Azoulay, A. & Kapferer, J (2003) Do brand personality scales really measure brand personality? *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(2), 143-155
- Bagozzi, R., Romani, S., Grappi, S. & Zaratonello, L. (2020). Psychological Underpinnings of Brands. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 72(1), 585-607
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139 – 168
- Bernreuter RG (1933) Validity of the personality inventory. *Personnel Journal*, 11, 383–386.
- Brand Finance (2019). *Portugal 50 2019*. Retrieved from URL: <https://brandirectory.com/rankings/portugal/2019>
- Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., & Guido, G. (2001). Brand personality: How to make the metaphor fit? *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 22(3), 377–395
- Cheong, H. J., & Cheong, Y. (2020). Updating the Foote, Cone & Belding Grid. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 61, 12-29
- Claeys, C., Swinnem, A. & Abeele, P.V. (1995). Consumers' means-end chains for "think" and "feel" products. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 12(3), 193-208

- Claeys, C., Swinnem, A. & Abeele, P.V. (1995). Consumers' means-end chains for "think" and "feel" products. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 12(3), 193-208
- Collins, A. M., & Loftus, E. F. (1975). A spreading-activation theory of semantic processing. *Psychological Review*, 82, 407–428.
- Connelly, B.L., Certo, S.T., Ireland, D.R. & Reutzel, C.R. (2011). Signaling theory: a review and assessment. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 39-67.
- Costa Jr, P. & McCrae, R. (1992). Four Ways Five Factors are Basic. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 13(6), 653-665
- Davies, G., Rojas-Méndez, J., Whelan, S., Mete, M. & Loo, T. (2018). Brand Personality: Theory and Dimensionality. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 27(2), 115-127
- Ekinci, Y. & Hosany, S. (2006). Destination personality: an application of brand personality to tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(2), 127-139.
- Fazio, R. (1990). Multiple processes by which guide behavior: The Mode model as an integrative framework. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 23, 75-109
- Forbes (2021). *The World's Most Valuable Brands*. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.forbes.com/the-worlds-most-valuable-brands/#1f815a09119c>
- Greenwald, A. & Banaji, M. (1995). Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes. *Psychological Review*, 102(1), 4-27
- Havas Group (2019). *Meaningful Brands*. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.briefing.pt/marketing/45238-marcas-relevantes-nove-s%C3%A3o-portuguesas.html>
- Houston, M. J., & M. L. Rothschild (1977). A Paradigm for Research on Consumer Involvement. *Unpublished manuscript, Graduate School of Business, University of Wisconsin—Madison*
- Johar G.V., Sengupta J., & Aaker J.L. (2005). Two Roads to Updating Brand Personality Impressions: Trait versus Evaluative Inferencing. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 42(4), 458-469.
- Keller, Kevin L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Kervyn, N., Fiske, S. T., & Malone, C. (2012). Brands as intentional agents' framework: How perceived intentions and ability can map brand perception. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 166–176
- Landwehr, J.R., McGill, A. L., & Herrmann, A. (2011) It's Got the Look: The Effect of Friendly and Aggressive "Facial" Expressions on Product Liking and Sales. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(3), 132-146
- Levy, S. (1985). Dreams, Fairytales, Animals and Cars. *Psychology & Marketing*, 2(2), 67-81

- MacInnis, D. J., & Folkes V. S. (2017). Humanizing brands: when brands seem to be like me, part of me, and in a relationship with me. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(3), 355–374
- Malone, C., and Fiske, S. T. (2013). The human brand: How we relate to people, products and companies. *New York, NY: Jossey-Bass*.
- Martineau, P. (1958). The personality of a retail store. *Harvard Business Review*, 36(1), 47-55
- Mayer, J. D. (2007). Asserting the definition of personality. *The Online Newsletter for Personality Science*, 1, 1–4
- McCracken, G. (1989). Who Is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 310-321.
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T., Jr. (2008). The five-factor theory of personality. In O. P. John, R. W. Robins, & L. A. Pervin (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (159–181). The Guilford Press.
- Murphy, L., Moscardo, G. & Benckendorff, P. (2007). Using brand personality to differentiate regional tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(1), 5-14
- Norman, W. T. (1963). Toward an Adequate Taxonomy of Personality Attribute: Replicated Factor Structure in Peer Nomination Personality Ratings. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 66(6), 574-583.
- Oklevik, O., Supphellen, M. & Maehle, N. (2020). Time to retire the concept of brand personality? Extending the critique and introducing a new framework. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 19(3), 211-218
- Park, J. K., & John, D. R. (2010). Got to Get You into My Life: Do Brand Personalities Rub Off on Consumers? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(4), 655–669.
- Pervin, L. A., Cervone, D., & John, O. P. (2005). *Personality: Theory and Research* (9th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons
- Plummer, J. T. (2000). How Personality Makes a Difference. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40(6), 79–83.
- Ratchford, Brian (1987). New Insights About the FCB Grid. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 27(4), 24-26.
- Rook, D. W. (2006). Let's pretend: projective methods reconsidered. In Belk, R. W. (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing* (143-155). Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Sirgy M. J. (1986). *Self-congruity: toward a theory of personality and cybernetics*. Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Swaminathan, V., Stilley, K. M., & Ahluwalia, R. (2009). When Brand Personality Matters: The Moderating Role of Attachment Styles. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(6), 985–1002.

- Tupes, E. C. & Christal, R. E. (1958). Stability of Personality Trait Rating Factors Obtained Under Diverse Conditions. *USAF WADS Technical Report No. 58-61. Lackland Air Force Base, TX: U.S. Air Force.*
- von Wallpach, S., Voyer, B., Kastanakis, M. & Mühlbacher, H. (2017). Co-creating stakeholder and brand identities: introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 395-398.
- Voyer, B., Kastanakis, M. & Rhode, A. (2017). Co-creating stakeholder and brand identities: a cross-cultural consumer perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 399-410
- Yoon, C., Gutches, A.H., Feinberg, F. & Polk, T.A. (2006). A functional magnetic resonance imaging study of neural dissociations between brand and person judgments. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(1), 31-40.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire – Spontaneous Condition (example for Gillette) and Priming Condition (example for Superbock)

Dear participant,

The aim of this study is to understand how people form impressions about brands.

ENG: If you are Portuguese, chose the language option "Português" in the drop-down list above.

PT: Se é português/a, escolha a opção "Português" na lista acima.

There is no risk involved in answering any of the following questions.

Remember that your participation in this survey is voluntary, which means that you are free to participate or not, as well as give up at any time, without penalty. Your responses are anonymous, confidential, and will be used only for academic purposes.

This study targets people with 18 or over 18 years old and should not take more than 15 minutes.

I agree to participate in this survey

I do not agree to participate in this survey

Next, you'll have questions regarding **15 brands**.

You don't need to use a lot of time thinking about the following questions, **just try to answer with the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about each of these brands.**

Spontaneous Condition



Are you familiar with this brand?

I don't know the brand

I know the brand, but never used its products/services

I know the brand and have used its products/services before

How would you describe this brand in three words/expressions?

1

2

3

Priming Condition



Are you familiar with this brand?

I don't know the brand

I know the brand, but never used its products/services

I know the brand and have used its products/services before

If this brand had a personality, how would you describe it in three words/expressions?

1

2

3

How often do you buy from Gillette?

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very often

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	1. Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9. Strongly agree	I don't know/ I have never used the brand
I like the brand Gillette	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have good past experiences using Gillette	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you work in any of the companies that own any of the brands previously presented?

Yes

No

Which one?

Apple

Asus

Continente

Walt Disney

Gillette

IKEA

Louis Vuitton

Marlboro

Mercedes-Benz

NIKE

Olá

Starbucks

Super Bock

ZARA

Coca-cola

Prefer not to say

Next we will present the brands you just saw again. Your task is to categorize them in either **utilitarian** or **symbolic**, or **both**.

Utilitarian needs are related to specific and practical consumption problems. Those are needs related with a practical function of solving a specific problem of your daily life.

Symbolic needs are related to the meaning (as opposed to the practical use) something has for you - the way you see yourself - to being part of a group, and to the way you present yourself to others.

Please classify each brand into one of these categories: utilitarian, symbolic, or both symbolic and utilitarian.

	Utilitarian	Symbolic	Utilitarian & Symbolic	I don't know the brand
Apple	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asus	☐	☐	☐	☐
Continente	☐	☐	☐	☐
Walt Disney	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gillette	☐	☐	☐	☐
IKEA	☐	☐	☐	☐
Louis Vuitton	☐	☐	☐	☐
Marlboro	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mercedes-Benz	☐	☐	☐	☐
NIKE	☐	☐	☐	☐
Olá	☐	☐	☐	☐
Starbucks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Super Bock	☐	☐	☐	☐
ZARA	☐	☐	☐	☐
Coca-cola	☐	☐	☐	☐

How clear are these terms for you?

	1. Extremely unclear	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9. Extremely clear
Utilitarian	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Symbolic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Gender

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Age

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Choose your age



Highest educational degree

No school degree completed

High school

Bachelor's degree

Master or postgraduate degree

Doctorate degree

