RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE MECHANISM OF BRAND ANTHROPOMORPHISM ON CONSUMER BRAND ATTACHMENT

Li Shanshan
He Mingming

Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok, Thailand

Paper enriches the theoretical research on brand personification, brand attachment, brand identity, and brand value consistency, provides marketing suggestions for brands on how to further stimulate consumers' brand attachment to the brand in specific practice. Conclusions that anthropomorphic brands can make consumers feel attached to the brand and practical recommendations on its implementation were offered based on the results of conducted survey.

Keywords: brand; branding; consumers feeling; customers behavior

Introduction

The rapid development of Internet shopping platforms in recent years has led to increasingly fierce competition among markets. As a result, businesses have used personification as a crucial tool throughout the entire process of product marketing, which is why merchants’ marketing strategies are constantly updating and changing. These brands use the anthropomorphic marketing model to increase the sales of their products. The main reason is that anthropomorphism can have many positive effects, but brand anthropomorphism also has certain boundary conditions.

This article starts from the perspective of brand personification, divides brand personification into two dimensions: impression clues and interactive clues, and explores whether brand personification has inherent differences in brand attachment from these two perspectives. At the same time, brand identity is introduced as a moderating variable, and

Li Shanshan
Researcher, International College, Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: marketing, branding, customers behavior
E-mail: 31302220@qq.com

He Mingming
Researcher, International College, Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok, Thailand
Research interests: marketing, branding, customers behavior
E-mail: 31302220@qq.com
citing brand value consistency as a moderating variable, we explore whether brand value consistency can play a moderating role in the influence of brand anthropomorphism on consumer brand attachment.

**Literature review**

Brand personification is the behavior of companies giving products or brands human thinking, emotion, mind, and behavioral characteristics. Customers perceive the attributes of the brand just like they perceive real people (Aggarwal & Mcgill, 2007).

Brand identity is a psychological reaction of consumers when facing a brand. When consumers have a good impression of the brand image or personality, they will actively participate in related activities related to the brand and be connected with the brand through their inner psychological emotions (Donavan, 2005).

Brand value consistency is defined as the consistency between individual values and the values they feel about a certain product. Trinke (1997) believes that brand attachment reflects a psychological feeling of consumers, indicating that they want to be close to an item and have a lasting feeling.

Thach & Olsen (2006) also define brand attachment as the emotional connection formed between consumers and the brand.

**Research hypotheses**

**Main effect hypothesis**

Brand personification refers to assigning human thinking, emotion, and behavioral characteristics to the brand (Aggarwal & Mcgill, 2007) so that the brand can communicate with consumers like a human being.

Generally speaking, the inherent essence of brand personification is that the company gives the brand certain human characteristics, so that there will be an interpersonal relationship between consumers and the brand.

Fournier (1998) pointed out in the brand relationship theory that there is a certain connection between consumers and brands. This relationship has seven aspects: interdependence, personal commitment, love and passion, self-connection, intimacy, and partnership.

Relationships and nostalgia actually mean viewing brand relationships as relationships between people, personifying brands, and treating brands as partners who can interact with each other. Consumers will treat brands like friends rather than in the traditional sense. Research shows that human beings are born with three psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The relatedness needs refer to the high-intensity and high-emotional connections established by humans in building social relationships with other individuals. The self-connection in brand relationship theory is also. It is the embodiment of this relationship.

H1: Brand personification has a positive impact on consumer brand attachment.

H1a: Brand anthropomorphic impression cues have a positive impact on consumer brand attachment.

H1b: Brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a positive impact on consumer brand attachment.
RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE MECHANISM

Mediating effect hypothesis
(1) The impact of brand personification on consumer brand identity
When customers face an anthropomorphic brand, the human characteristics presented by the anthropomorphic product will stimulate their anthropomorphic perception ability when they see or feel the anthropomorphic brand (Aaker, 1997).

The human-like characteristics of an anthropomorphic brand are consistent with the customer's anthropomorphic perception capabilities. The research of Tuskej et al. (2013) believes that brand identity is the customer's perception of the brand, which refers to the degree of consistency between the perceived brand image and self-image in the customer's mind. Brand personification creates an anthropomorphic form that is closely related to the inner personification of the consumer.

Therefore, consumers have brand identification with the anthropomorphized brand. To sum up, this paper puts forward the following hypothesis:
   H2: Brand personification has a positive impact on consumer brand identity.
   H2a: Brand anthropomorphic impression cues have a positive impact on consumers' personal brand identity.
   H2b: Brand anthropomorphic impression cues have a positive impact on consumers' social brand identity.
   H2c: Brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a positive impact on consumers' personal brand identification.
   H2d: Brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a positive impact on consumers' social brand identification.

(2) The impact of brand identity on brand attachment
Brand identity is a psychological reaction that consumers have when facing products (Donavan, 2005). From the analysis of internal factors, brand identity is a manifestation of the consistency between consumers' self-personality and brand personality.

Foreign scholar Carlson (2008) pointed out that brand identity refers to the consistency between the consumer's cognitive image and the brand's presentation image. Brand attachment is a strong emotional relationship between consumers and the brand. The inherent core of brand attachment is that the product is consistent with the consumer's self-concept (Ball & Tasaki, 1992).

When consumers identify with a brand, it actually means that the consumer is consistent with the brand's personality. When it is consistent with the brand's personality that is, when the consumer is consistent with the brand's self-concept (Aaker, 1990), brands create attachment emotions.

Hong & Zinkhan (1995) believe that when the self-concept consistency between the consumer and the brand is stronger, the consumer's enthusiasm for purchasing the brand will be higher. Therefore, this article proposes hypothesis H3:
   H3: Brand identification has a positive impact on consumer brand attachment.
   H3a: Personal brand identity has a positive impact on consumer brand attachment.
   H3b: Social brand identity has a positive impact on consumer brand attachment.

(3) The mediating role of brand identity in the relationship between brand personification and brand attachment
Brand identity is the psychological activity that occurs when consumers face a brand (Donavan, 2005). When consumers have a good impression of the external form and intrinsic value presented by the brand, they will consciously participate in brand-related activities. Connect yourself to your brand through emotion. Relevant research has proven that if companies want to gain consumers' recognition of the brand, they need to make products that can accurately express the brand's personality characteristics so that the brand's personality is consistent with the customer's personality. Personification uses this point.

The anthropomorphic form in the anthropomorphic brand triggers the anthropomorphic perception in the consumer's cognitive schema, so that the consumer's anthropomorphic perception is enhanced after seeing the anthropomorphic brand (Aaker, 1997).

Therefore, hypothesis H4 is proposed:

**H4:** Brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on brand attachment.

**H4a:** Personal brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on brand attachment.

**H4d:** Social brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand anthropomorphism on brand attachment.

**Moderating Effect Hypothesis**

As a unique individual, a consumer has his or her own different values, and the personality presented by the brand is also a manifestation of its values. Brand value consistency means that consumers’ values are consistent with the values presented by the brand. When brand values are consistent with consumer values, the anthropomorphic form of the anthropomorphic brand matches the social connection and interpersonal cognition in the consumer's self-concept. When the two are consistent, it can stimulate consumers' anthropomorphism.

Perception: the enhancement of anthropomorphic perception will stimulate consumers' perceptual fluency, thereby increasing consumers' pleasure and enhancing consumers' emotional investment in the brand (Hassanein & Head, 2006; Saren & Tzokas, 1998).

It shows that anthropomorphic products can provide consumers with a sense of companionship and help form an emotional bond between the product and the customer.

**H5:** Brand value consistency plays a positive moderating role in the impact of brand personification on brand attachment.

**H5a:** Brand value congruence plays a positive moderating role in the impact of brand anthropomorphic impression cues on brand attachment.

**H5b:** Brand value consistency plays a positive moderating role in the impact of brand anthropomorphic interactive cues on brand attachment.

**Research design**

**Questionnaire design**

There are four variables in this study: brand personification, brand identity, brand attachment, and brand value consistency. Brand identity is divided into two dimensions: impression clues and interactive clues. Brand identity is divided into two dimensions: personal brand identity and social brand identity.
These four variables were tested using a 7-level Likert scale. In order to study the issue of brand anthropomorphism, this study created a virtual anthropomorphic brand, "WRYONE," to avoid unnecessary brand associations among subjects, so virtual brands are chosen as the subject of brand anthropomorphism research.

**Variable measurement**

Brand personification is the two-dimensional theory of impression cues and interaction cues proposed by Aggarwal (2007). The measurement items in this article consist of two dimensions: personal brand identity and social brand identity. The measurement items for brand value consistency are proposed on the basis of self-concept consistency.

The human values scale proposed by Schwartz (2004) and brand attachment adopt the concept and dimensions of brand attachment proposed by Thomson (2006). The core of his brand attachment is an emotional connection between consumers and brands. This measure consists of 10 items.

**Data sources**

After preliminary research, it was found that the questionnaire had good reliability and validity. Next, formal data was collected. A total of 558 questionnaires were distributed in four regions this time.

**Data analysis**

**Reliability and validity analysis**

This study tested the reliability and validity of the formal scale, the two dimensions of brand personification, impression cues and interactive cues, the two dimensions of brand identity, personal brand identity and social brand identity, brand value consistency, and brand identity.

The Cronbach's $\alpha$ of attachment is all greater than 0.7, and the CITC value is greater than 0.4, so the variables have high reliability. The chi-square degree of freedom ratio is 2.817, which is less than 3, the RMSEA value is 0.065, which is less than 0.08, and the CFI and GFI are greater than 0.8, indicating that the entire model has a relatively appropriate fit. The two dimensions of brand personification are impression cues and interactive cues; the two dimensions of brand identity are personal brand identity and social brand identity; consistent brand values; and brand attachment. The CR is greater than 0.60, and the AVE is greater than 0.50. The combined reliability and convergence effect.

The degree has reached the statistical measurement standard. In addition, the factor loading value of each question on its corresponding variable is above 0.5, and $P$ is less than 0.001, which is statistically significant.

**Hypothesis testing**

This study constructed a total of three structural equation models. First, it constructed a structural equation model between brand personification and brand attachment to test the impact of brand personification on brand attachment, that is, Model 1. Secondly, it added brand identity to mainly construct the relationship between brand personification and brand attachment.
The impact of brand identity and the impact of brand identity on brand attachment, that is, model 2; finally, the impact of the two dimensions of brand personification on brand attachment, the impact of the two dimensions of brand identity on brand attachment, and the impact of the two dimensions of brand personification on brand are constructed. Identify the influence between the two dimensions, that is, model three.

The chi-square degree of freedom of model 1 is 3.579, which is an effective fitting index. The RMSEA value is 0.072. Less than 0.08 proves that the fit of the model is reasonable. The GFI is greater than 0.9, which means that the model path diagram has a suitable fit with the actual data. The chi-square degree of freedom of model 2 is 3.051, which is an effective fitting index. The RMSEA value is 0.064, which is less than 0.08, which proves that the model adaptation is reasonable. The GFI is greater than 0.857, which is basically close to 0.9, indicating that the model path diagram has a general fit with the actual data. The chi-square degree of freedom of model 3 is 2.519, which is a good fitting index. The RMSEA value is 0.055, which is less than 0.08, which proves that the model adaptation is reasonable. The GFI is greater than 0.889, which is basically close to 0.9, indicating that the model path diagram has a general fit with the actual data.

The path coefficient of brand personification on consumer brand attachment is 0.863, which is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, brand personification has a significant positive impact on consumer brand attachment.

Therefore, H1 is verified. The path coefficient of brand anthropomorphic impression cues on consumer brand attachment is 0.166, which is significant at the 0.05 level.

Therefore, brand anthropomorphic impression cues have a significant impact on consumer brand attachment; therefore, H1a is established; and brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a significant impact on consumption. The path coefficient of consumers' brand attachment is 0.219, which is significant at the 0.05 level. Brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a significant impact on consumers' brand attachment, so H1b is established.

The path coefficient of brand personification on brand identification is 0.932, reaching a significant level at the 0.05 level.

Therefore, brand personification has a significant positive impact on consumer brand identification, so H2 is verified; brand personification impression cues have a significant positive impact on personal brand identification paths.

The coefficient is 0.287, reaching a significant level at the 0.05 level, so brand anthropomorphic impression cues have a positive impact on consumers' personal brand identity, so H2a is verified; the path coefficient of brand anthropomorphic impression cues on social brand identity is 0.094, did not reach a significant level at the 0.05 level, so brand anthropomorphic impression cues have a positive impact on consumers' social brand identity, so H2b has not been verified; the path coefficient of brand anthropomorphic interactive cues on personal brand identity is 0.581.

It reaches a significant level at the 0.05 level, so brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a positive impact on consumers' personal brand identity, so H2c is verified; the path coefficient of brand anthropomorphic interactive cues on social brand identity is 0.56, at the 0.05 level. Reaching a significant level, brand anthropomorphic interactive cues have a positive impact on consumers' social brand identity, so H2D is verified.

The path coefficient of consumer brand identity to brand attachment is 0.826, reaching a significant level at the 0.05 level, so consumer brand identity has a positive impact on
brand attachment, so H3 is verified; the path coefficient of personal brand identity to brand attachment is 0.469, reaching a significant level at the 0.05 level, so personal brand identity has a positive impact on consumer brand attachment, so H3a is verified; the path coefficient of social brand identity to brand attachment is 0.092, reaching a significant level at the 0.05 level, so social brand identity. It has a positive impact on consumer brand attachment, so H3b is verified.

Table 1 - Structural equation model path analysis results 1
(results of co-authors survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>Standardized path coefficient</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Y/N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand attachment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>15.468</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attachment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.166</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>3.623</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attachment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>3.854</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand identity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>16.326</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal brand identity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>5.331</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social brand identity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>1.398</td>
<td>.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal brand identity</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>10.765</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attachment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>20.564</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attachment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>9.556</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand attachment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>2.144</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 504; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** P<0.001

When brand identity is the mediating variable, brand personification is the independent variable, and brand attachment is the dependent variable, the resulting mediation effect value is 0.319, the lower limit of Bootstrap 95% is 0.238, and the upper limit of Bootstrap 95% is 0.401. It does not include 0, and the p value is less than significant. The level is 0.05, so brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on brand attachment, so H4 is verified.

When personal brand identity is the mediating variable, brand personification is the independent variable, and brand attachment is the dependent variable, the resulting mediation effect value is 0.360, the lower limit of Bootstrap 95% is 0.256, and the upper limit of Bootstrap 95% is 0.467. It does not include 0, and the p value is less than significant. The level is 0.05, so personal brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on brand attachment, so H4a is verified.
When personal brand identity is the mediating variable, impression cues are the independent variables, and brand attachment is the dependent variable, the resulting mediating effect value is 0.367, the lower limit of Bootstrap 95% is 0.291, and the upper limit of Bootstrap 95% is 0.444. It does not include 0, and the p value is less than significant. The level is 0.05, so personal brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on brand attachment, so H4b is verified.

Table 2 - Mediation effect test results
(results of co-authors survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect value</th>
<th>standard error</th>
<th>CI lower limit</th>
<th>CI superior limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand personification - brand attachment</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personification - brand identity - brand attachment</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personification - brand attachment</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personification - personal brand identity - brand attachment</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personification - brand attachment</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand personification - social brand identity - brand attachment</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test of the moderating effect of brand value consistency

This section mainly tests the moderating effect of brand value consistency. Before conducting moderation analysis, we calculate and convert the collected data on brand values and consumer values.

First, according to Srigy’s absolute difference method, we compare brand values and consumption. The absolute value of the decrease in values is taken, and the absolute value is subtracted from the value 7 to reverse it, and then imported into SPSS 25.0 software for further analysis. The hypothesis part proposes the moderating effect of brand value consistency, namely H5: Brand value consistency plays a moderating role between brand personification and brand attachment; H5a: Brand value consistency plays a role in the influence of brand anthropomorphic impression cues on brand attachment. Positive moderating effect; H5b: Brand value consistency plays a positive moderating role in the influence of brand anthropomorphic interactive cues on brand attachment; the Bootstrap method in PROCESS is used to test the moderating effect of brand value consistency.

The Bootstrap method was used to further examine the moderating effect of brand value consistency. This test uses Model 1 in the PROCESS plug-in for testing.

According to Tab. 3 it can be seen that the effect value of brand personification is It plays a moderating role between culture and brand attachment, so H5 is verified.

The effect value of brand personification Brand attachment plays a moderating role, so H5a is confirmed. The effect value of brand personification is not true, so H5b is not true.
Table 3 - Bootstrap Moderation Effect Test 1
(results of co-authors survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Effect Value</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Ci Lower Limit</th>
<th>Ci Superior Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Be Reluctant To Leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Personification</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.623</td>
<td>.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brand Values Are Consistent</td>
<td>-.208</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>-.449</td>
<td>-.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Personification Of X</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Values Are Consistent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressive Clues</td>
<td>.562</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brand Values Are Consistent</td>
<td>-.233</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-.513</td>
<td>-.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression Clue X Has The Same Values</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Cues</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brand Values Are Consistent</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>-.342</td>
<td>-.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Personification Of X</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Values Are Consistent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and implications

Research conclusion

Through a literature review, scale design, and questionnaire collection on brand personification and brand attachment, this paper found that brand personification can have a significant positive impact on consumer brand attachment; brand personification impression cues and brand personification interact. Type cues can also have a significant positive impact on brand attachment.

This also proves the research question in this article. Anthropomorphic brands can make consumers feel attached to the brand. Whether this kind of anthropomorphic product is an external personification or an internal language communication, it can make consumers feel attached to it. Brand identity plays a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on consumer brand attachment. In general, the two dimensions of brand identity, personal brand identity and social brand identity also play a mediating role in the impact of brand personification on consumer brand attachment.

However, brand anthropomorphic impression cues have no positive impact on consumers' social identities. Specifically, the higher the degree of brand value consistency, the stronger the brand anthropomorphism's attachment to the consumer's brand.

The lower the degree of brand value consistency, the lower the anthropomorphic brand's attachment to the consumer's brand.

Research contributions and practical implications

This article not only enriches the theoretical research on brand personification, brand attachment, brand identity, and brand value consistency but also provides marketing suggestions for brands on how to further stimulate consumers' brand attachment to the brand in specific practice. Through the research conclusions of this article, it can be concluded that anthropomorphic brands can make consumers feel attached to the brand, which also provides a good idea for companies to do product marketing.
At present, product marketing strategies are becoming more and more diverse, and competition is becoming more and fiercer. If companies want to increase consumers' repurchase rates of the product, they need to enhance consumers' stickiness to the product. How to enhance consumers' repurchase rate of the product, emotion is a good bridge between consumers and brands, and the anthropomorphic form of anthropomorphic brands can stimulate consumers' interpersonal cognition of self-concept, enhance consumer perception fluency, and thus enhance consumers' emotions towards the brand.

When enterprises carry out brand marketing, they must fully realize the importance of building brand image and promote it from a strategic perspective. When building and promoting an anthropomorphic brand image, strategies must be divided into channels.

First, we must accurately identify the target customer group, measure the intrinsic values of the target customer group and, at the same time, and give the brand the same values as the target customer group so as to obtain the customer group. The sense of identification with the product further creates emotions for the product through identification with the product, which then creates attachment to the product.

Research limitations and suggestions for future research

This study reveals the impact of brand anthropomorphism on consumers' brand attachment, as well as the impact of different types of anthropomorphic brands on consumers' brand attachment.

However, there are still some limitations and shortcomings in the entire research process. In the independent variables In terms of dimension selection, this article divides anthropomorphic brands into two dimensions: impression cues and interactive cues.

Research has proven that both impression cues and interactive cues of brand anthropomorphism can have an impact on brand attachment, but in this study, there is no further proof of the impact of impression cues and interactive cues on brand attachment.

Which one is more capable of motivating consumers to develop brand attachment?

References:

RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE MECHANISM


*Paper submitted* 12 February 2024
*Paper accepted for publishing* 03 March 2024
*Paper revised* 11 March 2024
*Paper published online* 30 March 2024