

Brand Personality, Consumer Satisfaction and Loyalty: A Perspective from Denim Jeans

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Introduction

Brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997), which enables consumers to identify themselves with a brand and to express their own personality through the brand. Aaker (1997) introduced the most widely used 42-item scale brand personality framework, which reveals five distinct and robust personality dimensions. Although many studies have been conducted on brand personality, and existing brand personality dimensions and scales are well-established, most research is mainly based on a set of brands across product categories. However, studies have suggested that personality perceptions may vary by product category and that specific brand personality dimensions are associated with particular product categories (Arora & Stoner, 2009). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that numerous benefits may accrue to brands with strong, positive brand personalities. A favorable brand personality is thought to increase consumer preference and usage, increase emotions in consumers, increase levels of trust and loyalty, and provide a basis for product differentiation (Arora & Stoner, 2009).

Considering few studies have been done on the personalities of denim jeans brands and the consequences of brand personality, this study fills a gap in literature by focusing on the relationships between brand personality, consumer satisfaction and loyalty in the context of denim jeans brands. Specifically, we examined two key questions that pertained to the denim jeans brand personality: (1) Are denim jeans brands perceived to possess personalities? If so, what are the underlying personality dimensions? and (2) What are the relationships between denim jeans brand personality, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty?

Research Design and Methodology

Guided by Aaker's (1997) brand personality study, our selection and identification of denim jeans brand personality attributes follows the following process. The study uses a sample of college students, because they are denim jeans primary consumers. In the first step free-association task, we conducted interviews with 70 college students to describe their experiences with denim jeans and participants were asked to write down the personality attributes that first came to mind when thinking about jeans brands. A total of 138 unique traits were generated in this process. In the second step, we incorporated the 42 original personality traits proposed by Aaker (1997) into our inventory. In the third step, from the set of personality attributes gathered in the previous two steps, attributes that are redundant, ambiguous, or irrelevant to the construct were eliminated, resulting in a final set of 61 traits for examining denim jeans brand personality. Measures of consumer satisfaction and loyalty were adopted from well-established previous theories and studies (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009).

A total of 510 U.S. college students were recruited to take part in the study. A set of 26 popular denim jeans brands was listed at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants were

asked to rate the extent to which the final set of personality traits described their most familiar denim jeans brands along a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all descriptive) to 5 (extremely descriptive). Participants also rated their feelings of satisfaction and loyalty toward the brands they chose. Finally, 474 valid responses were used in the data analysis. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 35. Sixty-five percent of respondents were females. The most prevalent ethnic group was Caucasian (79%), followed by African-American (14%), and Hispanic (2%).

Data Analysis and Results

To determine the underlying personality dimensions of denim jeans brands, we randomly split the data set into two equal samples: an estimation sample and a validation sample. For the first half of the dataset, an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was *first* carried out on the 61 traits of denim jeans brand personality. Six factors were extracted. Confirmatory factor analysis was *next* used to check validity and reliability of the brand personality scale for denim jeans brands, using the second half of the dataset. The results of this study suggest that the personality of denim jeans brands can be described in six dimensions: *Attractive, Practical, Rugged, Flexible, Friendly, and Honest*. Last, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the structural relationships among brand personality of denim jeans brands, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty using Amos 19.0 software. In the SEM model, brand personality was measured as a reflective second-order factor with six sub-dimensions mentioned above, standing for a general evaluation of the anthropomorphic inferences that consumers develop toward the jeans brand (*Figure 1*). The statistical results indicate that brand personality has a significant effect on both consumer satisfaction (*standardized path coefficient* = .12, *t* = 2.45) and consumer loyalty (*standardized path coefficient* = .64, *t* = 12.71), and consumer satisfaction has a significant impact on consumer loyalty (*standardized path coefficient* = .77, *t* = 14.05). The results confirm that consumers do associate particular brand personality dimensions with specific brand categories (such as denim jeans) and brand personality has a significant impact on consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

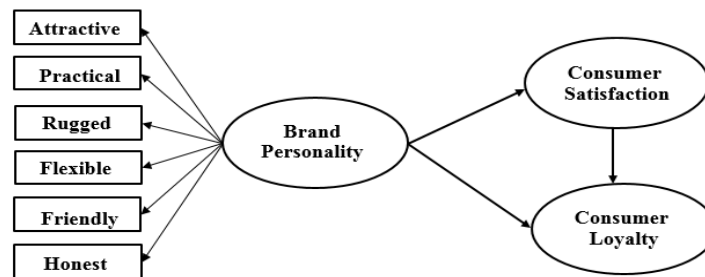


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for this study

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