You don’t get a second chance at a First Impression! - Assessing the impact of TV-spots on perceived Brand Personality

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Abstract

Due to sheer volume of advertising stimuli and increasingly sophisticated consumer demands it’s not sufficient enough for marketers to build up a unique image of their brand. Even more they have to create a character behind their brand – a brand personality. Although the concept of brand personality is quite popular for existing brands across cultures the aim of this study is to address the research gap creating a brand personality for a generally unknown brand by using emotional TV-spots of Carlton Draught and Steinlager. The results of our empirical study highlight that TV-spots are appropriate to create different brand personalities. Furthermore our data reveal cross-cultural differences concerning the impact of the TV-spots amongst participants in Germany and Spain.

Keywords: emotional, tv-spots, brand personality, consumers’ judgment, cross-cultural study
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Introduction

“As human beings, we have to get to know someone before we become attached to them. How can anyone get to “know” a brand if it does not have a “personality” to get to know?” (Siracuse, 1999, p. 12). This statement refers to the Theory of Animism, which proclaims a natural human need to inspire inanimate objects to enable a personal interaction and identification with non-material beings (Blythe, 2007; Guthrie, 1997; McDougall, 1974). Therefore consumers ascribe personal characteristics to brands for simplifying their interaction, identification and relation to them (Fournier, 1998). For example Coke is associated with the personality traits “cool”, “all-american” and “real”, in contrast Pepsi to “young”, “exciting” and “hip” (Plummer, 2000; Aaker, 1997). Thereby emotions play a major role in consumer-brand relations (Fournier, 1998; Ahuvia, 1993; 2005; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). Many studies support the idea that consumers can build strong connections and closeness to products and brands or even think of these things as parts of themselves and their personality in general (Ahuvia, 1993; Belk, 1988; Belk, 1992; Belk, 2004; Price, Arnould, and Curasi, 2000; Richins, 1994a; Richins, 1994b; Schulz, Kleine, and Kernan, 1989; Solomon, 1986; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). A well-established brand personality can lead to an increased preference and usage, strong emotional ties to the brand, trust and loyalty as well as enduring differentiation and sustainable competitive advantage (Diamantopoulos, Smith and Grime 2005; Freling and Forbes, 2005; Venable, Rose, Bush and Gilbert, 2005). “The concept of brand personality has also emerged as an important issue for academics as well as practitioners.” (Opoku, Abratt and Pitt, 2006, p.20). While the general influencing impact of ads on creating and forming a brand personality is unanimously agreed in marketing research (Madrigal and Boush, 2008; Blythe, 2007; Opoku Abratt Pitt, 2006; De Chernatony, 2001; Aaker, 1996) no study has investigated the impact of emotional TV-spots on perceived brand personality. Hence we examine in an experimental design (2x2) the influence of emotional TV-spots on shaping a brand personality for 2 unknown brands.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Brands, like human beings, can adopt personality traits (Grohmann, 2009; Freling and Forbes, 2005; Keller, 2003; Kapferer, 1997; Aaker, 1997; Biel, 1993). “When we speak of a brand’s personality, we mean the way in which a consumer perceives the brand on dimensions that typically capture a person’s personality – extended to the domain of brands.“ (Battra, Lehmann and Singh, 1993, p. 84), “; […] image of a brand that is not very different from the image that we have of other people.“ (Battra, Myers and Aaker, 1996, p. 321); „[…] the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.“ (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Drawing on the ‘big five’dimensions of human personality (that are: Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, e.g. Mulyanegara, Tsarenko and Anderson, 2009; Costa and McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1981; Tupes and Christal, 1961; Fiske, 1949; Cattell, 1943) Aaker (1997) employs a rigorous procedure to determine key dimensions of the construct and so presented a standard, universal way to measure brand personality. Aaker identifies five underlying dimensions of brand personality - Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. The underlying dimensions of brand personality and the validated measuring items vary across cultures and countries for separated items but the basic dimensions of brand personality are equal across cultures, e.g. across the USA, Spain, Korea and Japan (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera, 2001; Sung and Tinkham, 2005).
The development of a clearly defined brand personality of a specific brand is an important objective of brand management (e.g. Grohmann, 2009; Madrigal and Boush, 2008; Blythe 2007; Keller and Richey 2006; Keller, 2003). Lee and Rhee (2008, p. 465) state therefore: “Brand personality plays a cardinal role in understanding the symbolic attributes of a brand”. Due to its permanence as a result of a long-term building process, a brand personality can hardly be copied (Batra, Myers, and Aaker, 1996). A brand personality valued by the consumer therefore represents a strong competitive advantage that results in higher brand equity (Keller, 2003). By providing human identity traits, brand personality supports the identification of the consumer with the product (“my brand”) and increases the personal meaning of a product from consumers’ point of views (Mulyane gara, Tsarenko, and Anderson, 2009; Ambler 1997; Aaker 1997). Therefore consumers prefer brands with a personality which is similar to their own personality (Ferrandi and Valette-Florence, 2002; Levy, 1959; Gardner and Levy, 1955).

According to Batra, Lehman, and Singh (1993) advertising is the most important factor influencing a brand personality. In context of marketing communications the brand personality is a key facet of brand identity (Grohmann, 2009; Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003) and therefore empowers a company to present its brand in the desired way (De Chernatony, 2001; Opoku Abratt Pitt, 2006; Blythe, 2007). To build up the brand personality by advertising in the desired way (Yadin, 2002; Kapferer, 1992) the use of emotions plays an important role (Gob, 2001; Plummer, 2000; McEnally and Chernatony, 1999). Therefore emotions act as mediators of the consumer response to advertising (Holbrook and Batra, 1987). The use of emotions in advertising is often designed as a tool to influence the effectiveness and impact of advertising (Faseur and Geuens, 2006; Spears and Singh, 2004; Holbrook and Batra, 1987; Batra and Ray, 1986; Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1984). Brand personality traits are formed from such a consumer experience by the contact to an (emotional) advertising stimulus (e.g., J. Aaker, 1997; Berry, 2000; Keller, 1993, 1998; Plummer, 1985; Ellwood, 2000; Upshaw 1995).

According to Halliday (1996) the brand personality is the core method to distinguish a brand from its competitors. Companies use different advertising strategies and tactics (e.g. different spots) across cultures to activate different personal traits to build their desired brand personality (McCracken, 1986; Sung and Tinkham, 2005). Especially for the launch of new brands it’s important to create a culture orientated brand personality (Blythe 2007). Up to now, no study has investigated the impact of TV-spots on creating a brand personality in a cross-cultural way. Empirical results indicate brand sports sponsorship to be a valuable tool used to communicate symbolic brand associations as part of a process to build or change the personality of a brand (Speed and Thompson 2000, Cornwell, Roy and Steinard 2001, Cliffe and Motion 2005). Hence, the creation of a brand personality in a desired way helps to build up a strong consumer-brand relationship (Chang and Chieng, 2006). Empirical suggest an emotional fulfillment which may lead to image enhancement due to a strong and favorable brand personality (Venable et al. 2005, Chang and Chieng, 2006, Kressman et al. 2006).

As pointed up it’s possible to influence a personality of a brand with the help of marketing tools in general. Yet no study has addressed the possibility to build up different brand personalities for an unknown brand by using different emotional boosted TV-spots. Therefore, we will answer the main research question (1) of this study and verify the potential of different emotional TV-spots to build up a brand personality. Secondly (2), we will testify if cultural differences may occur for the perceived brand personality by presenting the same TV-spots in two different countries, Germany and Spain.
Study Design and Results

The aim of our study is to demonstrate that the perceived personality of a brand can be affected by the character of a TV-spot in which the brand is embedded. In consideration of the fact that test persons might already have a certain image of the brand, we used 2 in Germany and Spain generally unknown brands from “down under”, namely Steinlager Beer and Carlton Draught. In doing this way we can guarantee in a manipulation check that participants did not have any stored brand image of the questioned brand before. We assume that a calm ad will have other effects on the perceived brand personality in comparison to a lively spot on the other hand. In order to test this hypothesis we use in our study 4 different TV-ads. The clipboards of our 4 TV-spots are illustrated in figure 1.

![figure 1: Clipboard of Steinlager and Carlton Draught TV advertisement](image)

In order to test this hypothesis we use in our study 4 different TV ads (Steinlager Ad “1995”, calm; Steinlager Ad “Dance & Sing” lively; Carlton Draught “Horses”, calm; Carlton Draught “Big Ad”, lively). The clipboards of our 4 TV-spots are illustrated in figure 1.

Regarding the purpose of experimental research Perdue and Summers (1986, p. 317) postulate: “the identification of cause and effect relationships is the raison d’être of experimentation.” Thus, test-persons (N = 664) were acquired “online” out of total population; they participated without any incentives given to them and we did not mention the purpose of our study. Gender distribution is fairly equal (female = 45.6%, male = 54.4%). The average age of the subjects was 31.2 years.

Test persons were allocated to one of the experimental groups randomized. After showing them the TV spot all questions for measuring study’s constructs were asked. We used two online-panels in Germany and Spain to collect data (n=664, average age 31.5 years). All constructs were measured on 7-point Likert scales. We used two pre-tests to ensure consistency of the measurement instruments. Cronbach’s alpha was computed to guarantee reliability. To secure construct validity we analyzed the explained variance and the factor loadings using exploratory factor analysis. To test the hypothesized causal cause-and-effect relations we used analysis of variance. The multivariate tests of MANOVA procedure indicate high significant differences between the experimental and control groups.
The test statistics highlights differences in variances for the 4 different ads (calm and lively / Steinlager and Carlton Draught). Germany: Pillai-Spur (F = 13.944; p < .01), Wilk’s-Lambda (F = 15.643; p < .01), and Hotelling-Spur (F = 17.325; p < .01). Spain: Pillai-Spur (F = 8.9326; p < .01), Wilk’s-Lambda (F = 9.569; p < .01), and Hotelling-Spur (F = 10.981; p < .01).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean 1 (calm)</th>
<th>Mean 2 (lively)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Mean 3 (calm)</th>
<th>Mean 4 (lively)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAT</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>4.712</td>
<td>&lt; .03</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4.935</td>
<td>&lt; .03</td>
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<td>VERL</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>28.319</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>4.169</td>
<td>&lt; .04</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMP</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>12.059</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>33.525</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTR</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>24.537</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>4.143</td>
<td>&lt; .04</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAB</td>
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<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>&lt; .76</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>&lt; .97</td>
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Table 1: Results of Analysis of Variance within German participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean 1 (calm)</th>
<th>Mean 2 (lively)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Mean 3 (calm)</th>
<th>Mean 4 (lively)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>3.81</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>42.066</td>
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<td>4.55</td>
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<td>SIN</td>
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<td>3.61</td>
<td>8.867</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>9.235</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
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<td>SOF</td>
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<td>4.64</td>
<td>9.252</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>20.006</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRAN</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>10.591</td>
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<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.209</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>29.181</td>
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<td>3.18</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>31.532</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Results of Analysis of Variance within Spain participants

The results (cf. table 1 and 2; cf. figure 2 and 3) reveal that the calm TV-spots (“Horses” for Carlton Draught and “1995” for Steinlager) lead to moderate evaluation of the 5 dimensions of perceived brand personality, except for the dimension sincerity (NAT) and competence (VERL). In contrast the lively spots (“Big Ad” for Carlton Draught and “Sing & Dance” for Steinlager) highly affect the emotional dimensions of brand personality scale (temperament=TEMP, enthusiasm=ENT, and passion=PAS).
In summary our study illustrates that brand personality can be highly affected by TV advertisement. Furthermore our cross-cultural survey highlights that the perceived brand personality can differ from one country to another – even when similar TV ads come into operation. Hence marketers should bear in mind cultural differences when creating marketing communication strategies. In addition it is important to stick to the brands principles, which means, that TV-advertising should as regards content maintain continuity.

**Discussion**

The research we report had two aims. First we investigated the influence of emotional TV-spots on consumers’ perception of an unknown brand and its personality. Second, we demonstrate if cultural differences occur for the perceived brand personality by presenting the same TV-spots in two different countries. Our study adds to understanding of the role of feelings in influencing advertising effectiveness. All feelings influence both the cognitive and the affective mental system of consumers. But we have to note some limitations. Our study examined a specific product category: beer. It has to be questioned, whether emotions in TV-advertising have similar effect in other product categories, like jewellery, clothes, luxury goods, and so on. Thus, further research should draw a comparison between symbolic and functional product value. In addition it is a matter of interest how results vary if the advertised brand is already known. Therefore we want to encourage other researchers to conduct a comparative study.
References


