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Exciting on Facebook or competent in the newspaper? Media effects on consumers' perceptions of brands in the fashion category

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Abstract

Media investments are continuously shifting from traditional media like newspapers to digital alternatives like websites and social media. This study investigated if and how media choice between the two rival channels can influence consumers' perceptions of a novel brand. 504 Swedish retail fashion customers participated in an experiment to evaluate the identical advertisement placed either in a national newspaper or on Facebook. The results revealed that advertising in a newspaper can have a positive effect on brand equity facets and purchase intention through brand personality perceptions of being competent, while advertising on Facebook have similar effects but through perceptions of being exciting. Besides some evidence that choice between traditional and new media affects brand personality this study is one of the first attempts to incorporate media channel choice into the broader customer-based brand equity framework. The results from this particular study suggest that media channel choice should be considered from a brand equity building perspective at least in the fashion category. This study shows that different media channels could complement each other strategically, as traditional media channels still can have valuable and unique contributions to brand building through brand personality perceptions, especially for brands striving to be perceived as competent.

Keywords: Advertising, brand equity, brand image, brand personality, digital marketing, social media

Author notes:

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Introduction

Consumers are increasingly spending more time online (e.g., websites and social media) than traditional media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, and radio), and digital advertising is on the rise with more than 50% growth in 2016 in the US (Slefo 2016). According to the McKinsey Global Media Report (McKinsey 2015), it is specifically newspaper advertising within traditional media that has dropped the most. In global advertising, total spending increased between 2009 and 2014, but advertising spending in the traditional newspapers had a decrease of 2.8%, while there has been a global growth of 16.1 % for digital advertising during the same period (McKinsey, 2015). One of the toughest competitor to the newspaper media is social media where the same type of ads as well as much more (videos, GIFs, live events, etc.) can be posted. To illustrate, Facebook alone reported \$18 billion in advertising revenues in 2015 (Facebook 2015), which ranked it the number one social media platform for digital advertising (Bloomberg 2016). These developments can even have societal implications for civic education, politics, and democracy (Kahne, Hodgins, and Eidman-Aadahl 2016), as well as for business and marketing.

The Internet and social media have upended how consumers engage with brands. While traditionally the media channel was the first step in a long buying process that ended in the physical store, today the online media channel is only a few clicks away from the purchase, representing a revolution in marketing and branding (Edelman 2010). Unlike traditional media, digital channels enable exposure to consumers worldwide and allow consumers to interact with each other as well as create their own content (Schivinski and Dabrowski 2016; Doren, Fechner, and Green-Adelsberger 2000; Kitchen 2016). Furthermore, digital advertising is cheaper and tracking consumer engagement is easier compared with traditional media. Given the opportunities presented by the digital media and changes in media consumption and media spending, should traditional media be ruled out or is there still a position for traditional media in the future of brand building?

The focus in this paper is the link between media types (e.g., social media channels and traditional newspapers) and brand building. Previous studies (e.g., Draganska, Hartmann, and Stanglein 2014; Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer 2012; Keller 2009; Müller and Chandon 2004; Kim and Ko 2012) have found communication channels to be a major source of brand building and brand equity creation; hence the choice of media appears to be an influential building block for one of the most valuable assets of any firm – the brand. Just as prior advertising research, there is limited existing branding research related to this topic, which focused mainly on isolated outcomes such as media channel impact on brand awareness, attitudes, and recall measures, or hedonic versus functional images associations (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer 2012; Draganska, Hartmann, and Stanglein 2014; Müller and Chandon 2004). An exception is the research by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016), which examined the effect of user versus firm generated social media communication on brand equity, but did not compare with traditional media. Thus, little is known as to how media choice influences the building blocks of brand equity (in between awareness and purchase) or brand equity as a whole.

This paper focuses on all phases, from media channel choice to customer purchase response, and highlights one of the most important non-product related types of brand associations, that is, *brand personality*, or the human-like characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker 1997; Keller 1993). Brand personality is important and relevant in this context because earlier studies have found that communication channels themselves possess personalities. Brand personality has been described as one of the main building blocks in brand equity as well as

brand positioning (Kotler and Keller 2016). In relation to Aaker's (1997) framework, Batra et al. (2006) found traditional magazines to have distinct personalities, whereas Walsh et al. (2013) and Ham and Lee (2015) found social media to have an influence on different brand personality perceptions. Hence, it would be important to investigate whether such personalities related to the media channel can affect brand personality and customers' other perceptions of the brand. The aim of this study is to examine the extent to which different media types (traditional vs. social) influence brand personality perceptions and how these perceptions in turn affect generic and more global brand equity facets and brand response. The overall conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

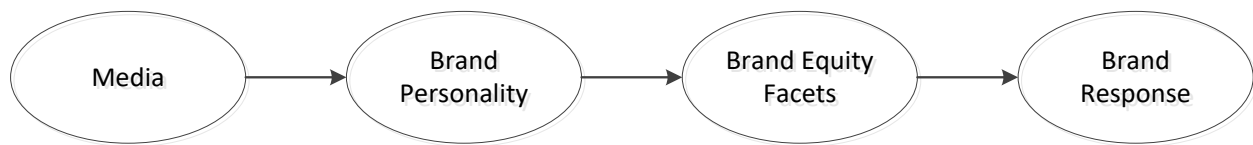


Figure 1: The overall conceptual model in the study.

Hypotheses development

Media type and brand personality

Brand personality, which can be defined as “the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands” (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003, 151), has been a popular construct in marketing research since Aaker (1997) presented a comprehensive brand personality scale. Analogous to the five-factor human personality structure (e.g., Goldberg 1990), the scale consists of five brand personality dimensions, namely, *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication*, and *ruggedness*. To date, researchers adopted brand personality dimensions to study diverse topics such as brand extensions (Diamantopoulos, Smith, and Grime 2005), destination branding (Demirbag et al. 2010), celebrity endorsements (Malodia et al. 2017), employer branding (Rampl and Kenning 2014), brand trust (Sung and Kim 2010), and consumers' product evaluations (Freling and Forbes 2005).

As with other non-product related brand attributes like user and usage imagery (Keller 1993), an important question for marketers pertains to how brand personality perceptions are formed. The prior research examined sources of brand personality and identified factors such as employees, CEOs, endorsers, and company values (Maehle and Supphellen 2011), as well as packaging, design colors, and advertising messages (Seimiene and Kamarauskaite 2014) that drive brand personality perceptions. These studies, however, overlooked the potential influence of different marketing communication channels.

How can different types of media lead to the development of different personality perceptions? Brand associations are often formed by leveraging secondary sources, that is, already established associations of secondary sources (e.g., corporate identity, other brands, places, people, and events) can be transferred to a brand by pairing the brand with this source (Keller 1993). Accordingly, we postulate that different communication channels (e.g., traditional newspaper or social media) can act as a secondary source, and the personality associations of these channels can be transferred to a brand. For instance, Batra et al. (2006) found that traditional media categories like magazines possess a personality of being related to “competence” and at the same time not being perceived as “rugged”. In a similar study of

different Internet media channels, Ham and Lee (2015) found five main personality dimensions, and the two most significant that factors explained 68% of the variation were “intelligent” (resembling “competence”) and “amusing” (resembling “excitement”; Aaker 1997). Moreover, the authors reported that Facebook performed much better on amusing than intelligent. In another study, Walsh et al. (2013) found that Facebook users perceived sports brands to be more exciting than the non-users did. Although the authors did not examine if the effect was directly linked to the personality of the media channel, the findings suggested that social media channels might have a positive effect on brand image.

In this paper, we focus on two types of media: traditional media (newspaper) and social media (Facebook). We first posit that, in accord with Batra et al. (2006), a traditional newspaper possesses a “competent” personality, and when advertised in a newspaper, a brand will be perceived to be “competent”. In the same vein, given social media channels’ associations with being young, contemporary, and trendy (Ham and Lee 2015; Walsh et al. 2013), we posit that advertising on social media like Facebook possesses an “exciting” personality, and when advertised on Facebook, a brand will be perceived to be “exciting”. Given the relevance of “excitement” and “competence” dimensions to the media types in the study, we chose to focus on these two dimensions rather than the entire brand personality scale. It should also be noted that while some brand personality dimensions tend to be culture-specific, the dimensions of “competence” and “excitement” are rather stable as they emerged in distinct cultural contexts such as USA, Japan, and Spain (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera 2001), as well as China (Chua and Sung 2011). We thus present the following hypothesis:

H1a and H1b: Media type has an influence on brand personality, such that (a) when advertised in a traditional newspaper (vs. Facebook), a brand will be rated higher on the “competence” dimension, and (b) when advertised on Facebook (vs. traditional newspaper), a brand will be rated higher on the “excitement” dimension.

Brand personality and core facets of brand equity

Brand equity, or more specifically *customer-based brand equity*, can be defined as the differential impact of brand knowledge on consumer responses (Keller 1993). Put simply, brand equity can be understood as the enhanced favorable consumer responses to a product when associated with a brand. Given that marketers would like their brands to have positive connotations and add value to their products, brand equity became one of the most popular constructs in the marketing communications literature (Eagle and Kitchen 2000). This focus on brand equity often pays off, as the effects of the added value provided by brand equity are reflected in tangible outcomes such as an increase in shareholder value (Bick 2009).

To date, several frameworks have been proposed to conceptualize and measure brand equity. In the two most widely adopted frameworks, Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) suggested that brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are the four main dimensions of brand equity, which were later operationalized and validated by Yoo and Donthu (2001). More recently, building on Aaker (1996; 1991) and Keller (1993), Netemeyer et al. (2004) validated four global dimensions (i.e., perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium), which were referred to as the core or primary facets of brand equity. As with Aaker’s (1991) framework, it is the “primary” brand associations of perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and the willingness to pay a price premium that

are the strongest predictors of purchase intent and purchase behavior in Keller's (1993) framework.

How do brand personality dimensions influence brand equity? Imbuing a brand with positive personality characteristics not only differentiates the brand from its competitors but also allows consumers to use the brand for self-expressive purposes. In other words, when consumers perceive a congruity between their personality and the brand's personality, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes and even select that brand among its competitors (Dolich 1969; Sirgy 1982; Aaker 1997). Favorable brand personality associations are, therefore, consequential for developing strong brands.

In accord with this view, several studies found a positive association between brand personality and brand equity, notably in diverse domains such as sales promotions (Valette-Florence, Guizani, and Merunka 2011), tourist revisit intentions (Salehzadeh, Khazaei Pool, and Soleimani 2016), and service industry brands (Loureiro et al. 2014). These studies, however, rely mostly on the mainstream brand equity dimensions such as brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand associations. To examine the effect of brand personality on brand equity, this study focuses on the core facets of brand equity that were developed and validated by Netemeyer et al. (2004): perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium. In this framework, perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness were conceptualized as the parallel predictors of willingness to pay a price premium. To sum, our second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: Brand personality dimensions (excitement and competence) have a positive effect on the core brand equity facets (perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium).

Brand equity facets and brand response

As discussed above, brand equity pertains to the differential effects on consumer responses, and studies confirmed the influence of brand equity on response variables such as brand choice and purchase intentions (Erdem et al. 1999; Chang and Liu 2009; Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu 1995). Of particular relevance to the present study, Netemeyer et al. (2004) maintained that purchase intent variables are appropriate to examine brand equity, and found significant positive effects of core brand equity facets on purchase intentions. As with Netemeyer et al. (2004), we focus on purchase intentions and, with our third hypothesis, we anticipate that the same effects will replicate in this study.

H3: Brand equity facets (perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium) have a positive effect on brand response (purchase intentions).

Indirect relationships between media type, brand personality, brand equity facets, and brand response

As seen in Figure 1, our conceptual model also implies indirect relationships between the variables. First, if media type (traditional vs. social media) influences brand personality as hypothesized above, and brand personality has an effect on brand equity dimensions as reported in the literature, then the media type should have an indirect effect on brand equity and brand response through brand personality. Previous studies reported associations between media types (traditional and social media) and brand equity (Kim and Ko 2012; Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and

Schäfer 2012; Draganska, Hartmann, and Stanglein 2014), but did not examine the mediating role of brand personality. Similarly, our model also implies an indirect effect of brand personality on brand response through brand equity. Previous literature found effects of brand personality on purchase intentions (Wang, Yang, and Liu 2009; Freling and Forbes 2005), and we anticipate that brand equity facets mediate these effects. We accordingly hypothesized the following:

H4a and H4b: Media type (Facebook vs. newspaper) has an indirect effect on brand equity facets (perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium) and brand response (purchase intentions), such that (a) Facebook advertising will lead to higher perceptions of “excitement”, which will in turn influence brand equity facets and brand response, and (b) newspaper advertising will lead to higher perceptions of “competence”, which will in turn influence brand equity facets and brand response.

H5: Brand personality dimensions (excitement and competence) have an indirect effect on brand response (purchase intentions) through brand equity facets (perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium).

To sum, our central postulation in this study is that media type has an influence on brand personality perceptions, which in turn affects brand equity and brand response. As explicated in the preceding sections, these general constructs are further operationalized with subdimensions that were adopted from the relevant literature. Figure 2 presents the detailed conceptual model with operational dimensions.

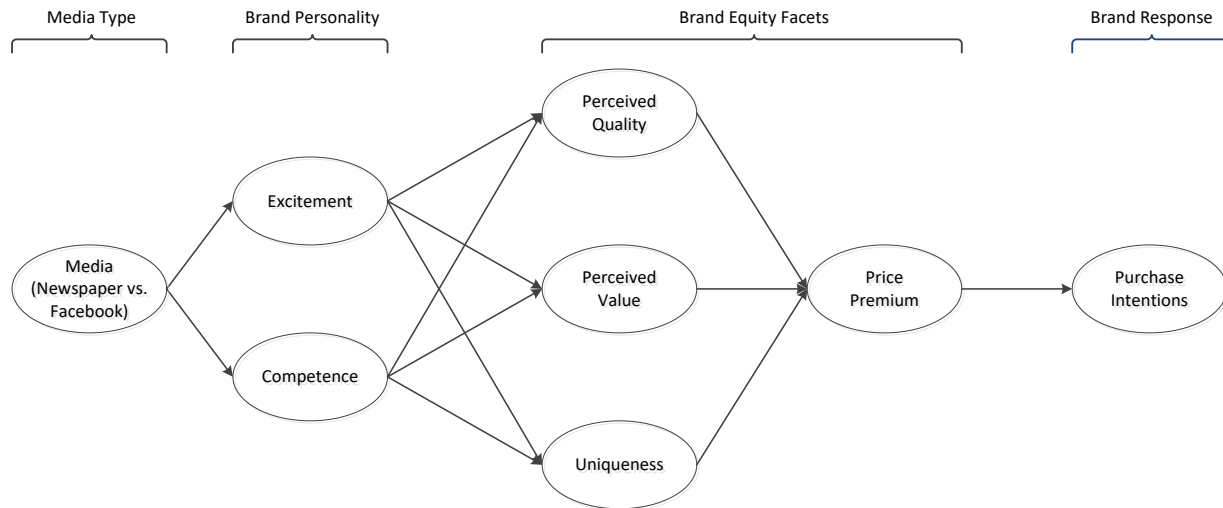


Figure 2: The conceptual model with operational dimensions.

Method

Sample

The data is based on an online survey of 504 Swedish respondents between 25 to 65 years of age ($M = 44.77$, $SD = 11.95$) who were randomly selected from a web-based consumer panel provided by Norstat Inc, one of Europe's leading data collection companies. The panel is based on 93,000 respondents who are representative of Sweden as a whole in terms of gender, age, and geographical region. The sample frame in this study aims to represent the population of citizens living in urban areas in Sweden.

Design and procedure

The study was based on an experimental design with two between-subjects conditions. In one condition, 251 respondents viewed the advertisement for a novel, fictitious fashion brand on Facebook, and in the other condition, 253 respondents viewed the identical advertisement presented in a traditional newspaper (paper version as a digital image). The experimental stimuli are presented in Appendix 1. We examined a fictitious brand instead of an established brand to better isolate the effects of media. The brand could be purchased online as well as in a physical store. The fashion industry was chosen because brand personality is particularly relevant for symbolic, conspicuous consumption than utilitarian consumption (Aaker 1997). The selected newspaper was "Dagens Nyheter", one of the biggest and most renowned traditional morning papers in Sweden, and selected social media channel was Facebook, one of the world's largest social networks. Respondents could see the advertisement while responding to the survey questions.

Measures

To measure brand personality, the dimensions of "excitement" (11 items) and "competence" (9 items) from Aaker's (1997) framework were included in the survey. Brand equity was measured through the dimensions of "perceived quality" (3 items), "perceived value for the cost" (3 items), "uniqueness" (3 items), and "willingness to pay a price premium" (2 items), which were developed and validated by Netemeyer et al. (2004). Finally, the "purchase intentions" dimension (2 items; Lehmann, Keller, and Farley 2008) was included in the study to gauge brand responses. Respondents also answered questions related to the frequency of their Facebook and traditional newspaper use, as well as their liking for the advertisement (single items). All items were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Cross-validation

When sample size is sufficiently large, researchers are recommended to cross-validate the findings by splitting the sample into two or more subsamples (Cudeck and Browne 1983; Byrne 2016). Accordingly, the sample was randomly split into two: a calibration sample to examine the measurement model, and a validation sample to examine the study hypotheses (Byrne 2016). A 60-40 split was applied, whereby the calibration sample consisted of about 40% of the sample ($n = 185$), and the validation sample consisted of about 60% of the sample ($n = 319$) to ensure adequate statistical power to test the study hypotheses. The following analyses were also conducted with the full sample ($n = 504$) and the results were identical.

Results

Measurement model validation

The measurement model was examined with the calibration sample using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS 23 software. Because the χ^2 test tends to be sensitive to sample size and model complexity (Kline 2005), model fit was evaluated with the following measures of fit and cut-off values proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999): RMSEA $\leq$ 0.06, CFI $\geq$ 0.95, and SRMR $\leq$ 0.08.

Items	Dimensions						
	Excitement	Competence	Perceived Quality	Perceived Value	Uniqueness	Price Premium	Purchase Intentions
- Exciting	0.847						
- Trendy	0.854						
- Bold	0.834						
- Young	0.793						
- Daring	0.898						
- Spirited	0.837						
- Imaginative	0.803						
- Up-to-date	0.855						
- Hard working		0.788					
- Secure		0.792					
- Intelligent		0.870					
- Corporate		0.655					
- Leader		0.876					
- Compared to other brands in the same category, I think this brand is of very high quality.			0.810				
- This brand is the best brand in its product class.			0.928				
- This brand is better than all other brands in the same product category.			0.917				
- What I get from this brand is worth the cost.				0.826			
- All things considered (price, time, and effort) this brand is a good buy.				0.898			
- Compared to other brands in the same category, this brand is a good value for the money.				0.929			
- This brand is distinct from other brands with similar products.					0.863		
- This brand really stands out from other brands in the same category.					0.941		
- This brand is unique from other brands in the same category.					0.912		
- I am willing to pay a higher price for this brand than for other brands in the same category.						0.961	
- I am willing to pay a lot more for this brand than other brands in the same category.						0.917	
- I plan to purchase from this brand in the future.							0.948
- If I purchase this kind of products, it is likely that I will purchase from this brand.							0.822
AVE	71%	64%	79%	78%	82%	88%	79%
CR	0.95	0.90	0.92	0.92	0.93	0.94	0.88

Table 1: Summary of the confirmatory factor analysis. Standardized factor loadings were significant for all items in the measurement model ($p < .001$).

The initial measurement model had a mediocre fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1018.02$, $df = 474$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.06). Modification indices pointed to some cross-loading personality items, which were removed from the model to ensure convergent and discriminant validity of the dimensions (3 items from “excitement” and 4 items from “competence”). The revised measurement model had a satisfactory fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 486.37$, $df = 278$, $p < .001$, CFI=0.96, RMSEA=0.06, SRMR=0.05). The CFA results for the measurement model and the final list of items in the study are presented in Table 1.

Convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model was assessed following Fornell and Larcker (1981). As seen in Table 1, all average variance extracted (AVE) values were above 50%, and all composite reliability (CR) values were above .70, providing evidence of convergent validity of the factors. Discriminant validity of the factors was assessed by comparing the shared variance (squared correlations) between each pair of variables against the AVEs for these variables (Fornell and Larcker 1981). In this test, the squared correlations between a pair of latent variables should be smaller than the AVE of each variable. As seen in Table 2, the variables in the study had adequate levels of discriminant validity. Following the validity analyses, composite scales were created for all multi-item variables.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	AVE
(1) Excitement	-	.45	.29	.36	.32	.18	.20	71%
(2) Competence	.67	-	.26	.32	.20	.23	.26	64%
(3) Perceived Quality	.54	.51	-	.64	.53	.53	.44	79%
(4) Perceived Value	.60	.57	.80	-	.49	.44	.38	78%
(5) Uniqueness	.57	.45	.73	.70	-	.42	.40	82%
(6) Price Premium	.43	.48	.73	.66	.65	-	.58	88%
(7) Purchase Intentions	.45	.51	.66	.62	.63	.76	-	79%

Table 2: First-order correlation values and discriminant validity analysis.

Notes. Values below the diagonal are the correlation coefficients and values above the diagonal (in bold) are shared variances (squared correlations). All correlation coefficients are significant ($p < .001$).

Common method bias

Because the scores were obtained from a cross-sectional survey, controlling for common method bias was necessary. We examined common method bias by connecting all observed items in the measurement model to a common latent factor (Podsakoff et al. 2003; Williams, Cote, and Buckley 1989). If the addition of the method factor (i.e., the common latent factor) improves the model fit substantially, common method bias is likely to be present (Williams, Cote, and Buckley 1989).

Given the sensitivity of the χ^2 test to sample size (Kline, 2005), we compared the RMSEA values between the models as suggested by Nye *et al.*, (2008). In this test, the RMSEA of the common latent factor model should be within the 90% confidence interval for the RMSEA of the measurement model to ascertain that the common method is not a problem in the study. The RMSEA value for the measurement model (see above) was 0.064 with a 90%CI [0.054, 0.073]. The analyses showed that the fit for the model with a common latent factor ($\chi^2 = 441.43$, $df = 259$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.062 90%CI [0.052, 0.072], SRMR = 0.05) was not substantively better than the overall measurement model fit, as the RMSEA value remained

within the 90% confidence interval. To conclude, common method bias did not pose a considerable threat to the validity of the measurement model.

Main analyses

The main analyses were conducted using the validation sample ($n = 319$). First, initial analyses showed that the measurement model had a good fit to the data in the validation sample ($\chi^2 = 615.62$, $df = 278$, $p < .001$, CFI=0.96, RMSEA=0.06, SRMR=0.04), and the respondents did not differ across conditions with respect to the frequency of their Facebook use ($M_{\text{newspaper condition}} = 4.67$, $SD = 0.73$; $M_{\text{facebook condition}} = 4.67$, $SD = 0.84$, $t(317) = 0.46$, $p = .648$) and newspaper use ($M_{\text{newspaper condition}} = 4.08$, $SD = 1.12$; $M_{\text{facebook condition}} = 4.22$, $SD = 0.84$, $t(317) = 0.46$, $p = .648$), as well as their liking for the advertisement ($M_{\text{newspaper condition}} = 2.29$, $SD = 1.03$; $M_{\text{facebook condition}} = 2.40$, $SD = 0.98$, $t(317) = 0.97$, $p = .335$).

Second, as seen in Table 3, independent samples t -test results showed that respondents perceived the fashion brand to be more exciting when advertised on Facebook, but more competent when advertised in the traditional newspaper. These results lend support to H1a and H1b. On the other hand, brand equity and purchase intentions measures were not significantly different between the media conditions (see Table 3). The absence of such direct effects, however, does not provide evidence for the absence of indirect effects (Hayes 2013).

Variables	Newspaper ($n = 157$)	Facebook ($n = 162$)	$t(317)$	p	Cohen's d
	$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$			
Excitement	2.59 (0.95)	2.83 (0.99)	-2.22	.027	-0.25
Competence	2.45 (0.88)	2.25 (0.79)	2.10	.037	0.24
Perceived Quality	1.94 (0.99)	1.92 (0.85)	0.19	.847	0.02
Perceived Value	2.14 (0.92)	2.10 (0.91)	0.40	.686	0.05
Uniqueness	1.96 (1.02)	1.87 (0.91)	0.79	.432	0.09
Price Premium	1.56 (0.88)	1.49 (0.79)	0.81	.419	0.09
Purchase Intentions	1.62 (0.85)	1.54 (0.79)	0.91	.362	0.10

Table 3: Independent samples t -test results across media type conditions.

Next, we examined the relationships in our overall model using structural equation modeling in AMOS 22. The indirect paths in the model were estimated and evaluated with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals of 5000 bootstrap samples. Initially, the structural model had a mediocre fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1077.49$, $df = 313$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.09, SRMR = 0.22). We accordingly examined the modification indices, which did not indicate model fit improvement via path adjustments, but via correlating the error terms of parallel exogenous (independent) variables (i.e., excitement and competence; perceived quality, perceived value, and uniqueness). Because these constructs belong to the same underlying theoretical concepts (brand personality and brand equity, respectively), we applied this modification to the model. The revised model had a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 708.81$, $df = 309$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05). The results for the overall structural model with the direct effects are presented in Figure 3, and the indirect effects in the model are presented in Table 4.

As seen in Figure 3 and Table 4, brand personality dimensions (excitement and competence) had significant positive effects on brand equity facets (perceived quality, perceived

value, uniqueness, and price premium), thereby supporting H2, and brand equity facets had significant positive effects on brand response (purchase intentions), thereby supporting H3.

Table 4 presents further evidence of indirect effects in the model. In support of H4a, Facebook advertising had significant indirect effects on the brand equity facets and purchase intentions through the “excitement” dimension, whereas in support of H4b, newspaper advertising had similar indirect effects through the “competence” dimension. These results show the mediating role of personality dimensions in the relationships between media types, brand equity facets, and brand response.

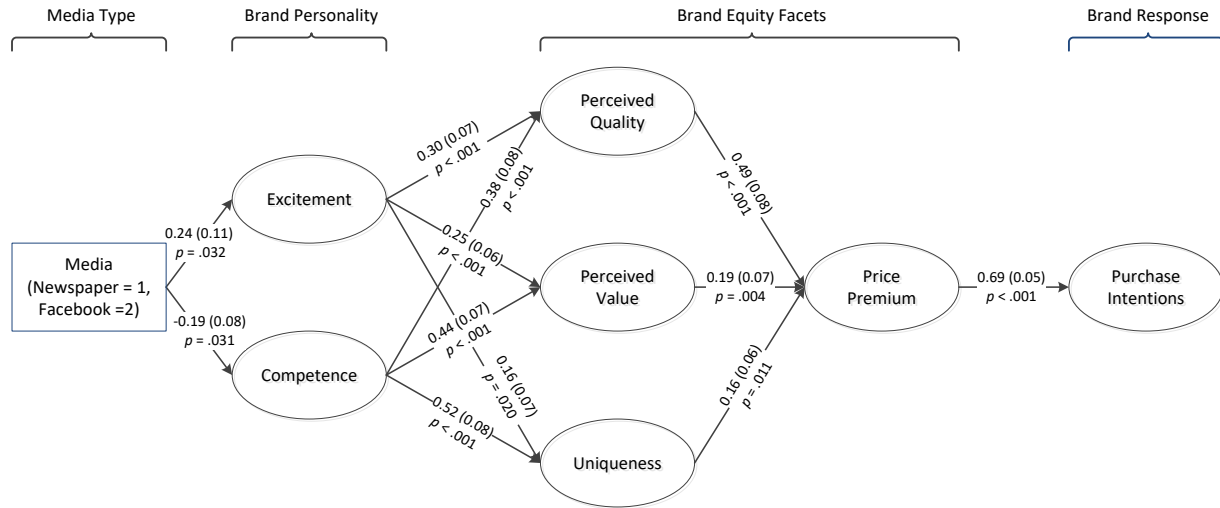


Figure 3: Unstandardized regression coefficients for the direct relationships between media type, brand personality, brand equity, and brand response constructs.

Notes. Standard errors are reported in parenthesis. Two-tailed p-values are reported.

It should be noted, however, that the total effect of media type on brand equity facets and brand response was not significant (all $ps > .50$). Mainly, that is because one of the indirect paths (i.e., excitement) is positive and the other one is negative (i.e., competence), therefore the two indirect effects sum to zero, which is manifested as a non-significant total effect (see Hayes, 2013). Put simply, when advertised on Facebook (vs. newspaper), the brand is perceived to be more exciting but less competent (and vice versa), and these effects cancel each other out on the total effect on the brand equity facets and brand response. These results suggest that neither Facebook nor the newspaper alone is sufficient to enhance brand equity and brand response.

Finally, H5 pertained to the indirect effects of brand personality dimensions on brand equity facets and brand response. As seen in Table 4, excitement and competence dimensions had significant indirect effects on purchase intentions through the brand equity facets, thereby supporting H5.

Discussion and Conclusions

Theoretical implications

This study aimed at understanding media effects on brand equity and brand response through brand personality perceptions. Given that brand personality enhances self-expressive use

of brands and thus leads to more favorable brand evaluations (Aaker 1997), understanding how brand personality perceptions are formed is of strategic importance for marketers as well as marketing scholars. The results of this study of a fictitious fashion brand confirms that media channels, in which the brand is advertised, are potential sources of brand personality development, thereby adding to the prior research in this area (e.g., Maehle and Supphellen 2011).

Indirect Paths	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
Media → Excitement → P. Quality	0.07	0.02	[0.02, 0.15]	.020
Media → Excitement → P. Quality → Price Premium	0.04	0.02	[0.01, 0.08]	.018
Media → Excitement → P. Quality → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.02	0.01	[0.01, 0.06]	.016
Media → Excitement → P. Value	0.06	0.03	[0.02, 0.13]	.023
Media → Excitement → P. Value → Price Premium	0.01	0.01	[0.01, 0.03]	.017
Media → Excitement → P. Value → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.01	0.01	[0.01, 0.02]	.017
Media → Excitement → Uniqueness	0.04	0.02	[0.01, 0.09]	.029
Media → Excitement → Uniqueness → Price Premium	0.01	0.01	[0.01, 0.02]	.028
Media → Excitement → Uniqueness → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.01	0.01	[0.01, 0.02]	.030
Media → Competence → P. Quality	-0.07	0.04	[-0.15, -0.01]	.041
Media → Competence → P. Quality → Price Premium	-0.03	0.02	[-0.08, -0.01]	.037
Media → Competence → P. Quality → Price Premium → P. Intentions	-0.02	0.02	[-0.06, -0.01]	.035
Media → Competence → P. Value	-0.08	0.05	[-0.17, -0.02]	.041
Media → Competence → P. Value → Price Premium	-0.02	0.01	[-0.05, -0.01]	.034
Media → Competence → P. Value → Price Premium → P. Intentions	-0.01	0.01	[-0.03, -0.01]	.032
Media → Competence → Uniqueness	-0.10	0.05	[-0.20, -0.02]	.050
Media → Competence → Uniqueness → Price Premium	-0.02	0.01	[-0.05, -0.01]	.053
Media → Competence → Uniqueness → Price Premium → P. Intentions	-0.01	0.01	[-0.04, -0.01]	.052
Excitement → P. Quality → Price Premium	0.15	0.04	[0.09, 0.23]	<.001
Excitement → P. Quality → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.10	0.03	[0.06, 0.16]	<.001
Excitement → P. Value → Price Premium	0.05	0.02	[0.02, 0.09]	.012
Excitement → P. Value → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.03	0.02	[0.01, 0.07]	.012
Excitement → Uniqueness → Price Premium	0.03	0.02	[0.01, 0.06]	.036
Excitement → Uniqueness → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.02	0.01	[0.01, 0.04]	.038
Competence → P. Quality → Price Premium	0.18	0.06	[0.10, 0.31]	<.001
Competence → P. Quality → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.13	0.05	[0.07, 0.22]	<.001
Competence → P. Value → Price Premium	0.08	0.04	[0.03, 0.17]	.016
Competence → P. Value → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.06	0.03	[0.02, 0.12]	.017
Competence → Uniqueness → Price Premium	0.08	0.05	[0.01, 0.18]	.050
Competence → Uniqueness → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.06	0.04	[0.01, 0.13]	.048
P. Quality → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.34	0.08	[0.22, 0.47]	<.001
P. Value → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.13	0.06	[0.04, 0.23]	.021
Uniqueness → Price Premium → P. Intentions	0.11	0.06	[0.01, 0.22]	.058

Table 4: Indirect effects in the structural model.

Notes. Two-tailed *p*-values are reported.

How brand personality perceptions are formed and what outcomes are influenced by them have been central topics in brand personality research. This study suggests that customers may in part take their cues about the image of a brand from where it is advertised. Different

media channels target different audiences, and thus possess different personalities. It is common to see, for example, luxury brands advertising in magazines associated with upper-class audiences. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, media channels have not been integrated into the broader brand personality frameworks so far. Although limited to the fashion apparel industry, the present study is a step forward in this direction.

In line with previous research (Kim and Ko 2012; Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer 2012; Draganska, Hartmann, and Stanglein 2014), our results showed an influence of media channels on brand equity. Similar to Bruhn et al. (2012), we found that media channels had significant effects on brand image perceptions. While Bruhn et al. (2012) examined broader constructs of functional and hedonic brand image, this study suggests that particular brand personality dimensions are relevant in understanding how media channels influence image associations.

In addition, while the prior findings pertained to direct effects between media channels and brand equity formation, this study presents evidence of indirect effects and shows that brand personality could be one of the mediating mechanisms in this relationship. In other words, the influence media channel on brand equity can be partly explained by brand personality perceptions, that is, different types of media can give rise to different brand personality perceptions, which in turn influence core brand equity facets and purchase intentions. Thus, the model suggests that the type of media channel may not always affect global brand equity facets and consumer response in the short term, but instead the development of brand personality over time may enhance brand equity and brand response. Analogous to the model of Keller (1993) that recommends leveraging secondary sources (e.g., corporate identity, other brands, places, people, and events) for brand building, the findings of this study suggest that media channel can be an alternative source, especially when the brand is novel.

Our results reinforce the theoretical importance of brand personality perceptions for brand equity formation. Consistent with the existing literature (O'Cass and Lim 2002; Wang, Yang, and Liu 2009; Ramaseshan and Hsiu-Yuan 2007), the findings indicate a positive influence of favorable brand personality dimensions on brand equity. The significance of brand personality for brand building has been highlighted in the mainstream brand equity frameworks (Keller 1993; Aaker 1991). This study illustrates that this association can be extended to the other more global constructs that are central to brand equity theory, namely, perceived quality, perceived value, uniqueness, and willingness to pay a price premium (Netemeyer et al. 2004).

Although there are several brand equity frameworks available and numerous studies examined various models, relatively less attention has been placed into developing more holistic models. This paper attempted to present a model that includes advertising-related antecedents, consumer response outcomes, as well as mediating variables. In this way, a more complete picture of brand building efforts can be developed. Especially in the case of novel brands that are new to the market, advertising communications are of utmost importance to brand building and initiating responses from consumers. Yet, established brand equity measurement frameworks focus on long-term outcomes like loyalty, thereby neglecting the initial steps of brand building. The present findings suggest that taking a holistic view on the brand building process could be more informative to marketing scholars and practitioners alike.

Managerial implications

Our results from the fashion industry show that consumers perceive social media advertising as “exciting” and “contemporary”. Given that virtually any company can advertise on

social media, consumers tend to take their cues about how “competent” and “reliable” a brand is from traditional media advertising. We therefore maintain that traditional media might be still necessary for brands to deliver a “competent” image (e.g., corporate, leader, secure). Marketers’ interest in the social media can be explained by the objective to reach as many with a lower cost (McKinsey & Company, 2015). However, a fashion brand that wants to have a branding strategy built on competence might run the risk of losing parts of their personality if too much of the advertising budget is allocated from traditional to social media.

Although the findings have limited generalizability to other industries, it is interesting to speculate about implications for brands in categories that in themselves are related to certain personalities. Brands specializing in consultancy, research, medicine, or complex products could consider “competent” advertising channels like reputable newspapers. Brands in the sport or entertainment industry, on the other hand, perhaps could use social media advertising to leverage their position as “exciting and contemporary” in relation to more established brands.

Today, media strategies are often separated from brand building as well as communication as many brands work with independent media agencies rather than agencies with integrated media and advertising functions. The results from this study show that media and branding strategy should be integrated and marketers and media agencies should consider combining online and offline exposure in order to tap into different sources of brand personality building. Although not addressed in the present study, it is also important to have in mind that newspapers offer combinations of offline and online interactive advertising packages. Interactive online versions, where readers can comment or share links, may also provide opportunities for advertisers to achieve a contemporary brand image.

Limitations and future research

This study is limited to the fashion and apparel category; thus, the results should be taken with caution as the same effects might not be found in other categories. Yet, given the importance of the subject, traditional versus new media effects on brand personality, which is one of the main building blocks of brand building and strategic positioning, replications in other categories are important as well as needed if one wants to generalize. Future studies could therefore test our findings as well as explore other relationships between media channels, category personality, and brand equity formation.

This study found that novel brands can leverage the existing personality associations of selected media channels. We cannot say how big effect media choice in terms of one ad would have on the brand personality of an established brand or how many exposures would be needed to get the same significant effect on an established brand. As a result, our results are limited to novel brands and cannot be generalized to established brands. Future studies could test the media influences on established brands.

This study was limited to Facebook and traditional newspapers, and future studies could look into other social media channels like Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and LinkedIn, or traditional media channels such as different magazines, radio channels, and television. Also, the newspaper in this study is limited to print media or at least electronic versions of print media. We do not know if online versions of the same paper would generate the same results. The paper chosen in this study was Sweden’s most sold morning paper situated in the capital of Sweden. Evening and tabloid papers or rural morning papers would perhaps not have the same effect of perceived brand competence. Given the limited focus of this paper on “excitement” and “competence” factors, future studies could establish links between media channels and other

dimensions of brand personality such as “sincerity” and “sophistication”. The advertising stimuli in this study were firm-generated; however, previous research has found differences between firm-generated and user-generated content on social media with regard to brand equity creation (Schivinski and Dabrowski 2015). Future research could also investigate whether user-generated content has a differential influence on brand personality perceptions.

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