



Personal aspirations and brand engagement in self-concept



Wiktor Razmus, PhD^{*}, Małgorzata Jaroszyńska, Magdalena Pałęga

Institute of Psychology, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Raclawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 July 2016

Received in revised form 29 September 2016

Accepted 10 October 2016

Available online 12 October 2016

Keywords:

BESC

Personal aspirations

Intrinsic aspirations

Extrinsic aspirations

Self

SEM

ABSTRACT

In studies on self-brand relations very little attention is devoted to the analysis of drivers which determine such relations. The article presents a study testing the way in which intrinsic and extrinsic personal aspirations are linked with brand engagement in self-concept (BESC). The results of a study on an age-diverse sample of consumers ($N = 480$) show that people who value extrinsic aspirations exhibit a higher tendency to include important brands as part of their self-concept. Intrinsic aspirations, such as self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling, are negatively associated with BESC. Of extrinsic aspirations, the only one related to BESC is striving for appealing appearance. The obtained results suggest that including important brands as part of one's self-concept stems from the desire to build and have a proper image.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Qualitative (Ahuvia, 2005; Escalas, 2004) and experimental studies (Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012; Lisjak, Lee, & Gardner, 2012) as well as ones using neurophysiological indicators (Reimann, Castaño, Zaichkowsky, & Bechara, 2012) provide evidence that consumers include brands as part of their self-concept. Why do consumers engage in the relationship with brands? What are the motivational drivers to include important brands in their self-concept? Even though researchers have been interested in the self-brand relationship for >10 years now (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015), the answers have not yet been given in the literature on the subject. This is due to the fact that most studies concern the marketing consequences of self-brand relationship (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2013; Belaid & Behi, 2011; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Kim, Park, & Kim, 2014; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005; Whan Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010).

Studies investigating key predictors to establish self-brand relations are considerably fewer. They focus mainly on the marketing determinants of such relations (Gambetti, Graffigna, & Biraghi, 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012) and on determinants connected with the congruity between brand image and consumers' self-concept (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011). Over the past years studies have also shown that people in many ways relate to brands similarly to how they relate to people (Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). This conclusion may suggest that self-brand relationships are caused by some internal motives (e.g. community

feeling). In the current literature on the subject, a holistic model of motivation to include important brands as part of self-concept has not been tested in a broader psychological context. Psychology perspective has not received the full benefit of theoretical frameworks and empirical findings into conceptual development of motivational drivers of self-brand relations. The aim of the present article is to fill this gap by referring to the construct of brand engagement in self-concept (Sprott et al., 2009) and using the psychological theory of human aspirations (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000). These motivational drivers are appropriate for studying brand engagement in self-concept, considering that aspirations meaningfully affects brand-related consumer constructs (Truong, 2010).

1.1. Extended self and brand engagement in self-concept

Researchers' interest in the phenomenon of including various objects in self-concept dates back to the times of James (1920). He observed that "in its widest possible sense ... a man's Me is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account" (James, 1920, p. 177). Apart from a person's physical and psychological characteristics, various kinds of objects may become elements of self-concept.

The extended self theory (James, 1920) was developed in the field of consumer behaviors by Russell Belk (1988, 2008). He analyzed the relationships between the self and the objects a person surrounds himself or herself with. With time, however, researchers began to show an interest also in product brands and their relations with the self (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Studies on the generally understood

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail address: wrazmus@gmail.com (W. Razmus).

issue of consumer–brand relationship, which includes the issue of brand engagement in self-concept, enjoy considerable scholarly interest (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015). They are part of the current in research devoted to the issues of engagement in marketing, explored in the last few years (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012).

There are many constructs that describe the relationship between the self and brands. The best known ones include: self–brand connections (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2003), brand attachment (Whan Park et al., 2010), consumer–brand identification (Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati, & Schillewaert, 2013; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), customer brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011). They focus on exploring the relationships between the self and particular brands of products. Of theoretical proposals, a noteworthy one is the conception of *brand engagement in self-concept* (BESC) developed by Sprott et al. (2009). BESC is a global tendency to include important brands as part of one's self-concept. According to this conception, product brands may provide consumers with certain self-schemata – structures of self-knowledge – and individuals may differ in terms of the tendency to build such brand-related schemata. The novelty of this conception lies in its focus on describing human predisposition to include important brands as part of self-concept. Previous constructs described the relationships between individual brand and the self.

Experimental studies show that BESC is applicable to explaining variables involved in consumer decision-making process. In comparison with those who exhibit its low level, consumers high in BESC recall a larger number of brands they possess, pay more attention to brands in casual situations, are more willing to pay a higher price for a new product of their favorite brand, and are characterized by a longer waiting time for that product (Sprott et al., 2009).

1.2. Personal aspirations

In their self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) observed a fairly obvious thing: people are pushed into action by a variety of factors. For example, a person may choose the profession of a doctor for financial reasons (there is a high probability of finding a good job) or due to his or her interest in this area of knowledge and practice. These are examples of two basic types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. Intrinsic motivation stems from the pleasure and satisfaction of performing a given action. Intrinsically motivated people engage in actions voluntarily, regardless of whether there are rewards to be obtained. Extrinsically motivated actions are performed not for the pleasure they give but for the results they bring. What also matters in this kind of motivation is the social aspect. A person may engage in actions in order to increase his or her value in other people's eyes.

In accordance with the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), extrinsic motivation may to a certain degree emanate from the self. Therefore, the authors distinguished four types of extrinsic motivation, differing in the degree of the individual's autonomy in its formation: (1) controlled motivation, (2) moderately controlled motivation, (3) moderately autonomous motivation, and (4) autonomous motivation.

The main human needs are: the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for psychological relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The needs are satisfied by the achievement of life goals, or aspirations (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In the self-determination theory, two types of goals are distinguished: intrinsic and extrinsic (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996). The number of categories of goals in this theory evolved from four (Kasser & Ryan, 1993) to the currently distinguished seven categories (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Intrinsic goals include: (1) self-acceptance (the sense of competence and autonomy); (2) affiliation (satisfactory relationships with close others); (3) community feeling (the desire to act for global good), and (4) physical fitness (the lack of health problems). Extrinsic goals are: (5) financial success (possessing material goods); (6) social recognition (being famous and admired), and (7)

appealing appearance (having fashionable clothes and a shapely body) (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

As research shows, extrinsic aspirations are positively related to the consumption of luxury goods and intrinsic aspirations are negatively related to it (Truong, 2010). Extrinsic aspirations also determine shopping activity. In the case of men, shopping activity is positively related to appealing appearance, and in women also (negatively) to financial success (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Clark, 2011). Participants with a high compulsive buying propensity showed a life aspiration system characterized by high scores in extrinsic personal aspirations (Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2015). What is the role of these two types of aspirations in the case of brand engagement in self-concept?

1.3. Brand engagement in self-concept motivations

The question of motivation for including brands as part of self-concept has not attracted much interest among researchers, even though manifestations of this tendency can be observed in many situations. Why do consumers identify with Harley Davidson motorcycles, establish close relations with Manolo Blahnik shoes, or become close partners of Apple products?

Few as they are, studies on the motivational determinants of self-brand relationship are conducted in accordance with various approaches. Comparing results and drawing general conclusions from research is made more difficult by the fact that they refer to different constructs. In the marketing approach, commercial determinants are sought. Studies show that consumer–brand identification depends both on cognitive variables (brand–self similarity, brand distinctiveness) as well as on affectively rich brand-related factors (brand social benefits, brand warmth, and memorable brand experiences) (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). It turns out that the determinants of consumer–brand relationship may change in time, depending on the phase of that relationship. Perceived quality is a temporally stable predictor of consumer–brand identification, whereas self–brand congruity leads to increasingly strong growth of consumer–brand identification (Lam et al., 2013). Studies focusing on a different construct describing self–brand relations (brand attachment) also stress the role of self–brand congruity. Brands with actual self-congruence generated higher levels of emotional brand attachment than brands with ideal self-congruence (Malär et al., 2011).

The literature provides little in the way of a more holistic approach which examines not only marketing determinants of consumer-brand relationship but also a vast range of psychological antecedents. A considerable number of researchers are inclined to believe that consumers use brands to send certain signals to society (Frank, 2010; Miller, 2010). Luxury brands can bring benefits to their consumers in social interactions (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). It can therefore be supposed that consumer–brand identification will be related to striving for extrinsic aspirations because they are connected with increasing one's worth in other people's eyes. Based on these, the first research hypothesis can be formulated:

H1. There is a positive and direct relationship between extrinsic aspirations and BESC. Financial success (H1a), social recognition (H1b), and appealing appearance (H1c) are positively and directly related to BESC.

Intrinsic aspirations as described in the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000) are general and refer to self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, and physical fitness. Even these aspirations are an element in the image of many brands (e.g., the main slogan of the Apple brand, “Think different,” refers to self-acceptance; Harley-Davidson brand has developed a very strong culture of community feeling). Studies following the marketing approach show that brand identification depends on the consumer's intrinsic emotional motives (brand warmth and memorable brand experiences) (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). However, a recent study demonstrates that the

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5036063>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5036063>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)