

Who You Are Affects What You Buy: The Influence of Consumer Identity on Brand Preference

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Abstract

This study examined the extent to which individuals used their self-concepts to determine brand preference. It was predicted that individuals would prefer brands with images congruent with their own self-image more than brands' images inconsistent with their self-image. The study also predicted that others would influence consumers' brand preference, and participants would prefer brands consonant with their in-group associations. A total of 65 participants completed a survey inquiring about their self-image congruity, social identity and brand preferences. Linear regression analyses showed significant support for both hypotheses. Additional analyses among subgroups showed a statistically significant relationship between the self-image congruity and brand preference relationship among whites, minority group, males and females. But the statistically significant relationship did not exist between social identity and brand preference among whites and females.

I. Introduction

Walking down the street, one may observe an individual sporting a Yankee sweatshirt, carrying a Starbucks coffee mug, and wearing a pair of Levis jeans. The onlooker may deduce that the walker is a baseball fan, enjoys high-quality coffee, and appreciates the authenticity and heritage associated with a historical brand. Whether or not that Yankee fan was aware, the brands he chose to consume made a statement about who he was, what he was like, and what he enjoyed. The products people buy can act as signals of identity, allowing consumers to construct, express and communicate useful information about their self-image to themselves and to others. Consumers not only purchase products, but lifestyles. As a result, consumption becomes a vehicle for exhibition of their identity construct.

Over time, consumer researchers have acknowledged the important interplay between the self-concept and the purchasing behaviors of consumers, showing that consumer purchase brands or products that were consistent with their self-image. This current research aims to investigate the extent to which consumers search for brands with symbolic images similar to their self-identity as a way to enhance and display who they are to the world. Further, this study will examine how consumers prefer certain brands based on their individual self-concepts.

Keywords: self-concept, self-image congruity, social identity, brand preference

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II. Literature review

The author reviewed literature regarding the various aspects of the self, identity and symbolic brand meaning to provide a foundational background necessary to understand these associations.

The self

According to researchers, the self – a psychological construct that denotes who and what we are – represented the totality of one's attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of oneself that influenced behavior (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen, 2012). As one develops, the individual further defines a principal value of self that regulates one's life. The more valued the self, the more organized and consistent the individual's behavior. The structure of the self was organized as a result of the interaction with the environment, such as interactions with parents, families and significant others. As the individual received reactions from his environment, his self-concept formed, which was a component of the self-system influenced by contextual factors (Grubb, Harrison & Grathwohl, 1967). A definition created by Sirgy (1982) that many scholars used, referred to the self-concept as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object." Basically self-concept is how people understand, think about and represent themselves (Leary & Tangney, 2003).

As psychological and sociological research increased, the complexity of the construct did as well. Numerous investigators have explained self-concept as a single variable of the actual self-concept. Others have construed the self-concept as a multi-dimensional construct comprising of two or more components including the actual self-concept and the ideal self-concept. Despite the various terminologies, this paper will refer to the self-concept as a single construct, referring to all ideas one has about himself; the "totality." This avoids the risk of the concept losing its meaning, and allows it to continue to be a well-organized and consistent construct that guides behavior (Mehta, 1999).

While the current study will define self-concept as a single construct, an important perspective on self-concept is social identity theory, which has received support from consumer research and is worth mentioning. Scholars have defined social identity theory as a subset of the self-concept that is derived from group membership of social groups. In other words, social identity refers to the individual's subjective perception of what defined the "us" in the internalized group membership with which one belonged. It is the sense of belonging one felt to that group or organization (Han, Kim & Park, 2001). Previous research indicated that consumers were likely to accept meanings from brands associated or consistent with their own group (an in-group), and reject meanings associated or consistent with a group to which they did not belong (an out-group). For example, if one considered herself to be an athlete, and her member group of athletes wore Asics running shoes, she may have chosen to wear Asics as a symbol of her affiliation. Additionally, consumers avoided out-group brands, because they did not want that meaning to be attributed to themselves, such as a "preppy" individual not wanting to be associated with the "Etnies" shoe brand that skaters may wear. This research examines the effects of self-concept and social identity theory on consumer brand preference.

Increasing consumer research literature has explored the self-concept as a useful construct to understand consumer choice. In earlier works, self-concept has been used to investigate product perception, implicit behavioral patterns, and specific behavior; however, the bulk of the current research is devoted to understanding brand/product preference, purchase intention and usage (Malhotra, 1987). Because this paper will also focus on consumer brand preference, understanding how individuals perceive brands as a way to enhance their self-image is important. Following these findings by Levy (1959), a series of self-concept theories were created to predict the role of consumer self-concept in purchasing behaviors, such as Sirgy's self-image congruity theory.

Self-concept and self-image/product-image congruity

Previous studies have emphasized the significance of self-concept and consumer preference, as purchases made by consumers were directly influenced by the image individuals had of themselves (Onkivist & Shaw, 1987). Sirgy (1982) defined self-image congruity (also often referred to as product-image congruity) as the process of consumers purchasing products/brands that they perceived as possessing symbolic images similar to the image they hold of themselves. This theory postulated that products and brands have symbolic meanings and display certain images. Consumers' choices to purchase, display, and use the products or

brands helped them communicate the symbolic meaning to themselves as well as to others. Thus, the greater the congruity between human characteristics that exhibit consumers' senses of self and the characteristics that depicted a brand, the greater the consumers' preferences were for the brand (Sung, Choi & Tinkman, 2012).

Support for this theory has been found through numerous studies, suggesting that congruity can influence consumers' product preferences and their purchase intentions (Jamal & Goode, 2001). Belk (1988) determined that consumers preferred products that matched their self-concept because the purchases acted as forms of self-expression. Ericksen's (1996) study indicated that a relationship between self-image congruity and purchase intention existed among European consumers who most related to the American car, the Ford Escort. Those with more congruence to the Ford Escort were more likely to purchase the automobile. Other researchers concluded that purchase was not likely to occur when there was a lack of congruency between a product-image and self-concept (Onkivist & Shaw, 1987), suggesting that "any product information that isn't consistent with a consumer's self-concept is unlikely to gain their attention, acceptance or retention" (Heath & Scott, 1993).

Due to this paper's concentration on the self-image congruity, it is crucial to examine the process through which brands become symbols. This next section emphasizes how brands achieve meaning through associations, and the process that consumers undergo to attribute the brand's characteristics to their own identity.

Brands as symbols

The terms "brand" and "product" have been used frequently throughout this paper, though proper distinction has not been attributed to each term. Product refers to the single, tangible item or entity a company creates (Kaufman, 2010), while a brand is the "promise, the big idea, and expectations that reside in each consumer's mind about a product, service or company." Thus, as the use of brands to express and validate consumer identity becomes a central tenet through consumer research, exploring the process through which brands achieve symbolic promise has become increasingly interesting; particularly how it achieves enough recognition to serve as a communicative representation of one's identity.

In order for a symbol to serve as a communicative device, the brand must achieve social recognition, and its meaning must be clearly understood in society (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). A symbol refers to anything that stands for or represents something else. People have learned to react to symbols by associating the symbol with other things. A red light has not always compelled people to hit the brake pedal, but after pairing the color red and the stopping behavior long enough, they naturally became accustomed to the symbol. Once the symbol develops and becomes known, it influences consumers on its own, evoking common reactions. It's no longer necessary to know the origin or how the reactions to the symbol came about once the symbol is learned, as the meaning of the symbol remains potent in the mind of consumers. For example, consumers use bottled water because it began as a symbolic statement about our identification with a healthy, active lifestyle learned in the late 1970s, which continues to propel consumer behavior today (Sutherland, 2008).

Brands are often viewed as marketing tools developed to differentiate the company from its competition as well as provide value to consumers. Brands are valued because they reaffirm people's principles or beliefs. They may also be used to display consumers' knowledge of culture, taste or style, exhibit income or wealth or communicate membership to particular social or professional groups. Additionally, research has shown that brands conveyed buried aspects of one's self-image, as consumers often chose products that were considered appropriate images of themselves (Chernev, Hamilton & Gal, 2011). Therefore, "the brands we buy and the brands we associate with often make powerful statements about us to ourselves as well as to others" (Sutherland, 2008).

Much research has supported the notion that brands are emblems of identity, and viewed as vehicles for expression for consumers. Through the development of self-concept and social identity, consumers search for goods and symbols to represent externally how they feel internally. Scholars have defined the extent to which the perceived image matches the individual's self-image as self-image congruity, which as a theory, has received much support from studies over the years. However, the majority of the research conducted about consumer self-concept and brand preference was performed decades ago, some as late as the 1950s and 60s. Therefore, revisiting studies examining the influence of the self on brand preference is warranted.

The current study

This current study aims to reproduce previous findings concerning the self-concept and brand preference by investigating the extent to which individuals' internal identity impacts brand choice among a set of given brands. Expanding upon the aforementioned research, this current study intends to identify relationships between self-concept, social identity and brand preference, particularly by examining whether self-image congruity positively affects consumer brand preference. A survey methodology was employed to evaluate participants' self-concepts, social identities, and brand preferences. Applying the self-image congruity theory, consumers will prefer brands that are more consistent with their self-concept more than brands that are not consistent with their self-concept. Additionally, to account for the influence of others on the self-concept, the second hypothesis is based on the social identity theory, and predicts that consumers will prefer brands consonant with their in-group associations.

III. Method

Participants

Participants included 65 people, 17 males and 48 females, who were recruited through online posts to social media sites and through email. They were asked to complete the short survey by clicking the link in the message. Participants consisted of students from a southern liberal arts university as well as a graduate student from another institution, and non-students familiar to the researcher. There were five freshmen (7%); eight sophomores (12.3%); nine juniors (13.8%); 34 seniors (52.3%); one graduate student (1.5%); and eight non-students (11.6%). There were 43 whites (66.2%); 11 blacks (16.9%); one Asian (1.5%), seven Hispanics (10.8%) and three who did not indicate their race (4.6%). Compensation for completion of the questionnaire was not provided.

Measures

A total of 18 items were adapted from previous studies so that they can operationalize self-image congruity, social identity and brand preference. Refer to Appendix A, especially questions 4, 5 and 6, for a complete list of the items used in the study.

The first question asked participants to choose one of the five brands offered and then use that brand to answer the following questions. The list of brands included Lululemon, Heineken, Mac, Pampers and TOMS shoes. The researcher arbitrarily chose these brands to reflect the different personalities and traits the sample may embody. Most of these brands were prevalent on the college campus as well, as most students consumed these brands or were aware of them, with the exception of Pampers. Pampers was chosen to test a brand that was typically inconsistent with participants' social identities that influenced brand preference. Furthermore, the researchers coded each brand with five to seven adjectives, which were devised from brand positioning statements and consumer profiles, as shown in Appendix B. For example, a few characteristics that described Lululemon included "Athletic," "Healthy," and "Relaxing." Participants were shown the adjectives listed in Appendix B in questions 2 and 3, to prime them into thinking about the brand's personality traits and perceived images. These questions were also used to bring awareness to participants' traits associated with themselves and the brand, transferring the brand's perceived image from their subconscious to their consciousness. This allowed them to consider these adjectives when completing the rest of the survey, which focused on self-image congruity, social identity and brand preference.

Self-image congruity was assessed using items that asked about participants' brand consumption and their self-image. A set of six items asked participants to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding their self-image congruity with the brand. Several of these items were adapted from Hohenstein, Sirgy, Herrmann and Heitmann (2007) or developed using similar guidelines. Using a Likert-type scale, participants rated each question on the scale of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *agree* or *strongly agree*. These items can be found in question 4 under Appendix A.

Brand preference was operationalized with a set of six items also adapted from the work of Hohenstein et al. (2007). Participants also rated the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with each statement using the same rank-order assessment. The response options ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

These items can be found in question 5 under Appendix A.

Finally, six items were used to measure social identity, of which the same rank-order used in the previous questions was used for this question. Response options ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The operationalized social identity items can be found in question 6 under Appendix A.

Question 7 asked individuals to indicate how familiar they were with the particular brand they chose. Response options were *very familiar*, *familiar* or *never heard of it*. This was used to gauge how well participants were aware of the brand's images, and whether this influenced the relationship between the self-concept and brand preference.

Demographic information was gathered about their gender, grade level, and racial origin. These questions were optional; however, all respondents who completed the questionnaire offered their demographic information.

Procedure

The survey questionnaire on Survey Monkey was tested on a few participants for comments and edits before final release. Once revisions were completed, the link to the survey was sent out via social media websites (Facebook and Twitter) as well as through email. Participants in a convenience sample completed the survey. The survey took no longer than five minutes to complete.

IV. Results

Among 69 participants who began the survey, only 65 completed it properly. Each item under Question 4 measuring self-image congruity was assigned a numerical value, for example, 1 for strongly disagree; 2 for disagree; 3 for Neither A/D; 4 for agree; and 5 for strongly agree. All item scores were added to create a total score for this variable of self-image congruity. All items under Question 5 were treated in the same way to calculate a total score of brand preference. All items under Question 6 were used to calculate a total score of social identity. The brand preference total score was used as the dependent variable in all analyses, whereas the self-image congruity score and social identity score served as the independent variables.

Descriptive statistics regarding brand name were computed to determine the percentage-breakdown for each of the five brands listed. Of the 65 participants, eight chose Lululemon (12.3%); 11 for Heineken (16.9%); 27 for Mac (41.5%); three for Pampers (4.6%); and 16 for TOMS Shoes (24.6%). The majority of the respondents were either very familiar ($n = 38$, 58.5%) or familiar ($n = 27$, 41.5%) with the brand they chose. Of the brands provided, the majority of males chose Heineken ($n = 9$, 52.9%) and Mac ($n = 6$, 35.3%), while the majority of females chose Mac ($n = 21$, 43.8%), TOMS Shoes ($n = 15$, 31.3%) and Lululemon ($n = 7$, 14.6%).

Self-image congruity

A simple linear regression was conducted to predict the extent to which the self-image congruity score predicted the brand preference score among all participants. Similar to previous research, results found that self-image congruity strongly predicted brand preference, $F(1, 63) = 20.74$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .24$, $\beta = .50$. To further examine this relationship, supplementary linear regressions were performed to examine how sex and racial group influenced the relationship between the self-image congruity and brand preference.

To examine whether race has any impact, participants were divided into two groups. Those who identified as "Black," "Hispanic," "Asian," "American Indian," or "Other" were classified as one group called "Minority." To examine the extent to which the Minority group accounted for the self-image congruity and brand preference relationship, a linear regression was conducted. Results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the two variables among the minority group: $F(1, 20) = 18.54$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .46$, $\beta = .69$. A second linear regression analysis examining those who identified as white also yielded a significant relationship, suggesting that this subset also accounts for a statistically significant relationship between self-image congruity and brand preference as well, $F(1, 41) = 6.04$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .13$, $\beta = .36$.

Another set of regression analyses was conducted to examine differences between males and females' influences on the self-image congruity and brand preference relationship. Results found for males: $F(1, 15) = 6.16$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .24$, $\beta = .54$, and females: $F(1, 46) = 8.14$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .13$, $\beta = .39$. This sug-

gested a statistically significant relationship between the self-image congruity and brand preference relationship for males and females each.

Social identity

To test the second hypothesis, which predicted that consumers would prefer brands consonant to their in-group associations, a linear regression analysis was conducted. Results indicated that social identity significantly predicted brand preference, $F(1,63) = 13.79$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .17$, $\beta = .42$, indicating that those with higher social identity scores also had higher brand preference scores. To further examine this association when accounting for racial and sex differences, supplementary simple regressions were run on subgroups, such as whites, minorities, males and females.

Scholars have mentioned the disparity between social identity influences on white and minority individuals, suggesting that black, Hispanic and Asian individuals tend to be more influenced by their in-group than white individuals and their in-group (Mihalcea & Catoi, 2008). This current study sought to find support for this claim by conducting a second linear regression analysis by separating the Minority group ($n = 22$). Results indicated that this subgroup shows a statistically significant relationship between social identity and brand preference $F(1, 20) = 13.34$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .37$, $\beta = .63$. A linear regression analysis on whites, however, did not yield significant results, $F(1,41) = 3.02$, $p > .05$.

To examine whether sex made a difference in the relationship between the social identity and brand preference, a linear regression analysis was run on males ($n = 17$) and females ($n = 48$) separately. A statistically significant relationship was found between these two variables among males: $F(1, 15) = 6.69$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .26$, $\beta = .56$, but not females: $F(1, 46) = 3.39$, $p > .05$.

V. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to reexamine the extent to which individuals rely on their self-concepts when they determine their brand preference. Consistent with previous research, the two hypotheses regarding self-image congruity and social identity were fully supported, suggesting that both variables strongly influenced brand preference. Significant differences between minority and non-minority participants were not found for self-image congruity, but were found for social identity. Gender differences were also not found for self-image congruity, but for social identity, as males accounted for more of the relationship between social identity and brand preference than females.

Self-image congruity

As described by the self-congruity theory, the congruence between one's self-concept and the product/brand's image significantly influenced consumer behavior, particularly brand preferences. Support for the self-image congruity theory was found in this study, as the self-image congruity score strongly predicted brand preference score. Consistent with previous research, these findings suggested that these participants perceived the cues offered by the brands as images similar to their own self-concept more than not, and used that information to determine whether they preferred that brand more than any other brand of the same product (Schneck & Holman, 1980).

This supports the conclusion Okivist and Shaw (1987) made: purchase or preference was not likely to occur when there was a lack of congruency. This relationship exists because any information inconsistent with a consumer's self-concept was unlikely to gain their attention, acceptance or retention, thus not impacting their desire to choose that brand over the next (Heath & Scott, 1993). They also may have not viewed the brand's attributes as being similar to their own, therefore, not influencing their brand preference scores.

The statistically significant relationship between self-image and brand preference among all genders and all races/ethnicities should not be too surprising because the process of expressing and reinforcing one's self through the use of brands is not a discriminatory practice: All men and women of all races desire to convey their internal values and beliefs to the external world. Thus, brand preferences based on congruency between brand images and individuals' self-concepts should be equally strong as every individual undergoes identity formation, and searches for symbols whose meaning can further create or define his or her self-concept (Mihalcea & Catoi, 2008).

A set of four studies conducted by Chaplin & John (2005) sought to examine the age at which individuals began using brands to create and communicate their self-concepts. Results found that self-brand connections formed between middle school and early adolescence, and these connections increased as the individuals' experiences and conceptual understanding of brands increases. But this study cannot run a regression analysis based on age because the number of participants was too small ($n = 5$).

Social identity theory

Previous research highlighted that consumers were more likely to accept brand meanings that are associated with their own group (the in-group) versus brands that were associated with groups to which they don't belong (the out-group). Although not as strong as a predictor as self-image congruity, as hypothesized, those with higher social identities (i.e. higher in-group associations) had higher brand preference scores. Further support by previous research indicated that those with high group identification were more likely to "see and think of themselves as in-group members, to feel close and similar to in-group members . . . and to behave in ways that benefit the in-group" (Tropp & Wright, 2001).

Scholars have noted that the social categories that individuals placed themselves into were parts of a structured society that only existed relative to contrasting categories (i.e. men vs. women). They gained their sense of self largely from these social categories which they belonged to, and developed a unique self-concept from belonging to a variety of different groups. Having a particular social identity means "being at one with a certain group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective." (Stets & Burke, 2000). To further understand how individuals used their group identification to make decisions about brand preference, additional analyses examined whether race or sex affected the relationship.

The current study found a statistically significant relationship between social identity and brand preference. This finding is consistent with past research, which suggested that members of minority groups valued the "distinctive qualities of their group . . . more than do majority group members." Additionally, members of the minority group tended to identify more with their group than the majority group members (Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, 2007). Other research concluded that compared to whites, Asian-Americans and Hispanic-Americans tended to be more interdependent and less independent in their self-construal, meaning the minority group focused more on the social self and how the self related to others than their subjective opinions of themselves when determining their self-concepts (Mihalcea & Catoiu, 2008). Relating to this previous research, the results from this study are relevant, as minority individuals relied more on the social feedback from their in-group associations to guide their behavior than the non-minority individuals, which influenced their brand preferences.

Although previous research has not highlighted significant sex differences on the relationship between social identity and brand preference, this study found a statistically significant relationship between the two variables among males, not among females. This surprisingly suggested that males relied more on the feedback from their friends and membership of their group than females to make decisions about their brand preferences. Contrary to previous research, men were more likely than not to "participate in the group's culture, to distinguish themselves from the out-group and to show attraction to group in their behavior" (Cameron & Lalonde, 2001; Stets & Burke, 2000).

A possible explanation for this may be because the brands chosen were more salient for males than females, meaning that the brands increased the influence of the male's membership to the "men" gender social identity and in-group. According to Stets and Burke (2000), salience is determined by accessibility, or the readiness of a given category to become activated in a person. Of five the brands accessible, the majority of the males chose either Heineken or Mac, with the exception of two who chose Lululemon or TOMS. In summary, male's social identities may have been triggered more so than female's based on the brand choices available. While males may have perceived Heineken and Mac as the only brands consistent and acceptable to their social group (i.e. men), triggering a salient social identity, female participants may have found that all brands available were consistent to their in-group, as it was acceptable to consume all five brands as a "woman." Since the options weren't as clear-cut in triggering an identity as it was for the males, a less "women" identity may have been activated, and instead an identity such as "athlete" "service-oriented" may have been stimulated, allowing the females to think of this subgroup when completing their responses. Support for these inferences were noted by Stets and Burke (2000), who stated that when an identity was salient, responses were "deliberate and self-regulated" and group members behaved in a manner "to match their behavior to the standards relevant to the social identity, so as to confirm and enhance their social identification with the

group.” The prominence of the male’s social identity and in-group association to the group “men” could explain why the relation between social identity and brand preference was stronger for males than females.

Lastly, an interesting relationship worth noting is the influence of social identity threat and consumer preference. As mentioned previously, according to White and Argo (2008), when an aspect of a consumer’s identity was threatened in a specific situation, consumers were motivated to avoid products associated with that threatened identity and instead preferred products associated with an alternative identity. To test this finding, the Pampers brand was included in the list of brands for participants to choose from with the understanding that many would not choose this brand, for fear that it was not congruent with their social identity. Only three participants chose the brand in the first question, suggesting that the majority chose only the brand that was consistent with a protected aspect of their identity.

VI. Conclusion

Despite the limitations, the current study reaffirms insights into the relationship between the self-concept and social identity on the one hand and brand preference on the other. Marketers and advertisers interested in developing brands or campaigns could benefit most from this information. By understanding how brands are consumed as symbols of identities, marketing and advertising companies must ensure they understand the main attributes that constitute their target audiences’ self-concepts to develop distinctive and attractive brands that match those same traits. To ensure that a brand is preferred in untapped markets, marketers must develop brand images closely matching the self-perceptions of potential consumers, and should design advertising messages to target their self-concepts. Additionally, campaigns focused on attracting minority groups should focus on characteristics consistent with minority cultural identity. Although self-image congruity and social identity do not guarantee brand preference, crafting messages that are directed to consumer’s self-concepts streamlines marketing plans to be most effective.

Limitations

While the present research had strengths, several limitations of the study should be noted. The results of the study may not be generalizable to other populations, as the majority of the sample were females from a small southern liberal arts school, self-identified as white, and were seniors in college. Additionally, the brand choices were limited so they may have not been reflective of the personalities the participants believed they embodied, thus resulting in less congruence with self-image and the perceived image of the brand. A third limitation of the current study was the use of only the actual self-concept. The findings obtained could have yielded different, stronger results if the ideal and social self-concept had been examined as well. Finally, the use of “Mac” as a brand could have confused participants, as Mac is a product, whereas Apple is overarching brand. However, respondents who completed the survey did not seem to be discouraged by using the response option to answer questions, suggesting that they thought of the Apple brand when completing the questions anyway.

Factors other than self-image congruity and social identity influenced their brand preferences, such as brand advertising, brand affordability, or brand availability (Ayanwale, Allimi & Ayanbimipe, 2005). Future studies can incorporate these factors.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. Please choose one of the following 5 brands and then use this brand to complete questions 3 through 7.

- Lululemon
- Heineken
- Mac
- Pampers
- TOMS Shoes

2. I am ...

[List of 30 adjectives that would describe yourself]

3. Brand X (the one you chose above is)...

[List of 30 adjectives that describe the product you chose in question 1]

4. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to the product you chose in question 1 (below is called brand X):

Strongly Disagree *Disagree* *Neither A/D* *Agree* *Strongly Agree*

Wearing/carrying/consuming brand X is consistent with how I see myself.

Wearing/carrying/consuming brand X reflects who I am.

I can completely identify with brand X.

If I were a brand, I would be brand X.

The brand X image corresponds to my self-image in many respects.

Through brand X, I can express what I find important in life.

5. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree *Disagree* *Neither A/D* *Agree* *Strongly Agree*

Brand X is my preferred brand over any other brand of the same product.

I would use brand X more than I would use any other brand of the same product.

When comparing similar products, I would be inclined to buy brand X over any other brand.

I value brand X more than other brands of the same product.

Brand X's products meet my expectations.

Overall, I am satisfied with brand X.

6. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Disagree *Disagree* *Neither A/D* *Agree* *Strongly Agree*

Brand X helps me feel a part of a bigger group.

I use brand X to feel a part of a larger group.

My friends use brand X.

I use brand X to be like my friends.

I receive positive feedback from people while using brand X.

I feel connected to my friends while using brand X.

7. How familiar are you with the brand you chose?

Very familiar

Familiar

Never heard of it

8. Sex

Male

Female

9. Racial background

White

Black

Asian

Hispanic

American Indian

Other

10. Year

First-year

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Grad student

Non-student

Appendix B: Words used to assess participants' brand and self-identities

Lululemon

Healthy
Athletic
Enjoyable
Warm
Positive
Relaxing
Energetic

Heineken

Innovative
Ambitious
Assured
Dynamic
Witty
Worldly
Friend-oriented

Mac

Intelligent
Sophisticated
Chic
Liberal
Unique
Creative
Mature

Pampers

Youthful
Family-oriented
Trustworthy
Happy
Practical

TOMS Shoes

Simple
Environmentally-friendly
Collaborative
Caring
Inspiring
Honest
